

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: TOWARD A THEORY OF JUST COMMUNICATION:
A CASE STUDY OF NATO, MULTINATIONAL
PUBLIC RELATIONS, AND ETHICAL
MANAGEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

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This dissertation used a qualitative, case study to explore how the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) applied strategic public relations management during peace operations in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1995 to 1996. The purpose of this research was to propose a model of ethical communication that extended the excellence theory in public relations and contributed to a global public relations theory. This proposed model relies on an ethical framework for moral reasoning that helps justify public relations decisions. The model incorporates interdisciplinary concepts drawn from the situational theory of publics, the excellence theory, an activist theory of communication, a moral theory of just war, and game theory.

Fourteen long interviews, four elite interviews, and three focus group interviews explained how NATO applied principles of the excellence theory and global theory in public relations, how organizational culture and conflict influenced NATO communication management, and how NATO leaders made communication decisions.

It had been assumed that NATO's political-military, authoritarian nature would lead the alliance to reject symmetrical communication and to adopt asymmetrical communication strategies. The study found that NATO mixed symmetrical communication – and other principles of the excellence theory and global public relations – with asymmetrical strategies like coercion to manage conflict. The study also identified a constellation of divided cultures among NATO's 26 member nations that influenced alliance public relations. Furthermore, senior NATO leaders relied heavily on intuitive knowledge when making decisions, leaving communication choices vulnerable to ethical relativism.

In conclusion, this study has significant implications for theory and practice. The integrated, coercive-collaborative model of ethical communication developed through this study offers normative *and* positive value for managing asymmetrical conflict situations in which one or more parties demonstrate no willingness to cooperate. This model retains the value of excellence in public relations, which produces strategic, long-term, symmetrical relationships. Demonstrating how symmetrical outcomes can be achieved through *ethical* application of short-term coercive as well as collaborative communication tactics represents a major leap forward for the excellence theory. Practical implications of this study extend to any organization that relies on communication to manage conflict, build strategic relationships, and reduce costs – especially in a global, multinational context.

TOWARD A THEORY OF JUST COMMUNICATION:
A CASE STUDY OF NATO, MULTINATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS, AND
ETHICAL MANAGEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

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PREFACE

Locating the Researcher as Practitioner and Scholar

Professor William P. Ehling, my teacher, mentor, and master's advisor at Syracuse University, once observed that we are all products of our education and experience. My approach to public relations practice and study – including this dissertation – was shaped by more than 19 years of formal education and 25 years of experience as a public relations practitioner in the U.S. Navy. Wolcott (2001) reported that personal accounts of such experience can serve as an effective way to introduce and provide essential context to qualitative studies. Thus, I begin by describing two deeply personal and profound experiences that provide inspiration and context for this study.

1988: The Persian Gulf

The white missile roared skyward in a cloud of smoke and streaked for the horizon, as the men on the Williams' bridge cheered wildly.... A flash and white smoke erupted on the horizon, followed by a long series of heavy explosions as the weapons and ammunition aboard the [Iranian Navy warship] Sahand blew up..... [A] U.S. pilot who observed the Sahand reported it 'listing badly, with a big hole in its port side, the superstructure on fire and a lifeboat with some survivors in the water.' (Pyle, 1988, ¶ 17)

This excerpt, part of an Associated Press wire service report transmitted from a pool of journalists on board the U.S. Navy guided-missile frigate USS Jack Williams (FFG-24) on April 18, 1988, described a brief but violent moment in Operation Praying Mantis.¹

¹ The term *pool* refers to a group of journalists formed to cover military operations taking place in a location not normally accessible to members of the news media (e.g., at sea or remote land-based site). Pools consist of up to a dozen journalists representing wire service, magazine, newspaper, television, radio, and photographic media. Material reported by these journalists is *pooled*, or made available to other news

This U.S. military operation sank Sahand and destroyed or severely damaged half of Iran's active navy (Marolda & Schneller, 1998). The exchange of military hostilities between U.S. and Iranian forces also resulted in the loss of two U.S. Marine helicopter crewmen and the deaths of 44 Iranian sailors (Willey, 1991; Ziade, 1988). The U.S. government authorized Praying Mantis shortly after another U.S. Navy guided-missile frigate, USS Samuel B. Roberts (FFG-58), struck a mine that Iran had sown in international shipping lanes of the central Persian Gulf. The blast injured 10 U.S. sailors and nearly sank the ship, prompting the United States to take retaliatory action. Of note,



Figure 1. The Iranian frigate IS Sahand burns after retaliatory strikes by U.S. Navy ships and aircraft on April 18, 1988. (U.S. Department of Defense, 2004)

organizations that do not have access to the operations in question. See Thompson (2002) for historical background on pools.

the United States severed direct diplomatic channels with Iran in 1980, several months after Iranian revolutionaries overran the U.S. embassy in the Iranian capital of Tehran and took hostage 52 U.S. citizens (U.S. Department of State, 2003). Consequently, with limited communication options, the U.S. response to the USS Samuel B. Roberts mining took the form of military combat strikes.

As one of two U.S. military escorts for the pool of journalists aboard the USS Jack Williams on April 18, I participated in Operation Praying Mantis. I also helped carry out a public relations program that sought to explain the U.S. rationale and to promote public support for Praying Mantis. Finally, I observed firsthand the lethal results of this conflict. I felt the shockwaves ripple across the sea from the dying Sahand and minutes later heard an emergency band radio above my head broadcast cries of men screaming for help. I still hear these screams and they remind me of the close relationship between conflict and communication. Moreover, this experience has led me to confront the ethical nature of public relations activities that could result in lethal consequences – and the moral responsibility that the managers of such activities must bear.

Jack Fuller, president of Tribune Publishing, once wrote about the daunting social and technological barriers that complicate communication and inhibit understanding in today's complex world. Fuller (1996), a former soldier and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, observed, "In some of the most complicated fields, misperception can mean errors in social policy that have mortal consequences" (p. 169). I am a witness to these mortal consequences. Following my Persian Gulf experience and after much reflection, I sought opportunities to apply public relations management to political-military operations

in a way that might save rather than take lives. I was presented with that opportunity seven years after Praying Mantis, in another region torn apart by war.

1995-1996, Bosnia-Herzegovina

Between 1991 and 1995, close to three hundred thousand people were killed in the former Yugoslavia. The international response to this catastrophe was at best uncertain and at worst appalling. While both the United States and the European Union initially viewed the Balkan wars as a European problem, the Europeans chose not to take a strong stand, restricting themselves to dispatching U.N. ‘peacekeepers’ to a country where there was no peace to keep, and withholding from them the means and authority to stop the fighting. Finally, in late 1995, in the face of growing atrocities and new Bosnian Serb threats, the United States decided to launch a last, all-out negotiating effort.... Belatedly and reluctantly, the United States came to intervene and ... that intervention brought the war in Bosnia to an end. (Holbrooke, 1998, p. xv)

On December 14, 1995, a peace agreement signed in Paris, France, ended nearly four years of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Two days later, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) began deploying to this region a heavily armed military force that would eventually include 60,000 troops from more than 30 nations to implement military provisions of the peace agreement. Joint Endeavour also exemplified a new era of Post-Cold War political-military missions: using powerful military forces to wage peace instead of war and diplomacy instead of combat.



Figure 2. “Welcome to Sarajevo” house, near Sarajevo airport – symbol of war’s destruction in Bosnia-Herzegovina, circa 1995. (Allied Forces Southern Europe, 1996)

On December 20, 1995, I stood in a bombed-out airport in Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, arranging a press conference marking the establishment of NATO’s new peace implementation force (IFOR) in the Balkans. As IFOR’s chief of public information, I was finally able to apply strategic public relations principles to a cause designed to save lives. I flew out of that same Sarajevo airport 12 months later under peaceful conditions. IFOR’s second commander, U.S. Navy Admiral T. Joseph Lopez, credited public relations with being instrumental in managing IFOR’s peace mission and preventing a return to war. According to Lopez, public relations was “the single most important action that again prevented loss of life.... Public [relations] leadership can not only report war and near war, but more importantly use their skills to prevent war and loss of life” (personal communication, July 10, 2000).

Doctoral study has provided me with a unique opportunity to apply what I have learned through decades of graduate work and practical experience in public relations. When I arrived at the University of Maryland in the fall of 2000, I continued a search that began in 1988 with deadly conflict in the Persian Gulf. This search has led me to identify public relations strategies that could provide public relations managers and the organizations they serve with ethical means to manage international conflict. Both my education and my experience have convinced me that *ethical* management of communication is the cornerstone of professional public relations. Ethics is the dividing line that distinguishes professional public relations from, as my mentor Bill Ehling once described, cheap imitations of public relations that are “sleazy, shoddy, simplistic, and shallow” (personal communication, October 24, 1988). An ethical framework that guides use of persuasive communication could allow public relations managers to remain engaged in strategic decision making even after collaborative communication fails.

I am hopeful that my work will be well received by scholars and practitioners alike. Still, critics may find my motives suspicious – especially given my political-military background. Nevertheless, I have done my best to produce a credible study that will present new possibilities for others to explore. Together, as considering the ideas in this dissertation, I propose agreement on at least one ideal: the need to belong to a global public relations community, guided by moral principles, which places the utmost value on *peaceful* resolution of conflict.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the people who inspired it. First, I will always remember the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina: Croats, Muslims, and Serbs alike. Between 1992 and 1995, war in Bosnia-Herzegovina killed between 100,000 (Dervišbegovic, 2004) and 250,000 men, women, and children (U.S. State Department, 1997). Every survivor of that war seems to have a story to tell; and Balkan graveyards – marked and unmarked – provide mute testimony of those who perished. I hope that NATO operations that began there in 1995 bring lasting peace to this beautiful country.

I also dedicate this dissertation to NATO's peace implementation force (IFOR). I remember the nearly 60,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, coast guardsmen, and civilian workers from more than 30 nations who risked their lives and endured long separations from their homes and families in order to bring peace to Bosnians.

Finally, I dedicate this research to the journalists who reported on the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and on subsequent peace operations there – especially to Kurt Schork, the Balkan's bureau chief for Reuters wire service. Kurt and other correspondents risked their lives to provide war-time accounts of atrocities in the Balkans that shamed and angered the world into taking action. Kurt, who was widely respected as one of the finest war correspondents of his time, was later killed during a rebel ambush while covering conflict in Sierra Leone on May 24, 2000. Before he died, Kurt used his reporting to shine the light of truth into the darkest places on earth in an effort to right a few wrongs. It was a privilege to have known and worked with Kurt. I miss him and hope that this dissertation contributes in some small way to the work he committed himself to – and ultimately gave his life for (see <http://www.ksmemorial.com/>).

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Second, thank you to my committee. To Jim, my advisor, and Lauri Grunig, for your many years of friendship and for the last five years of scholarship under your guidance. I will always admire your dedication to the public relations profession, your commitment to students, and your high standards. To Tom Schelling, for sharing with me your decades of wisdom in game theory and for helping me to discover ways to manage communication in times of conflict and cooperation. To Deb Cai, for reminding me about the importance of culture in communication and for encouraging me to look beyond public relations to the broader body of knowledge in communication theory. And to Linda Aldoory, who convinced me over a cup of coffee to come to the University of Maryland. You have been an inspiration, a role model, and a friend throughout my time at College Park. Thanks to all of you.

Third, to my international colleagues at the University of Maryland, who were and continue to be a constant source of advice, encouragement, and friendship. I will miss our espresso breaks and the time we took to share stories. Special thanks to Jeong-Nam Kim, a master of modeling on the chalkboard, who helped me illustrate ideas in Figures 5 and 7.

Fourth, to my parents, Elizabeth and the late Arden Van Dyke. You helped me to realize the importance of education in my life and instilled in me the discipline needed to complete doctoral study.

Finally, I acknowledge the most important people in my life: my wife, Joan, and our children, Megan, Robert, Cristin, and Jonathan. To Joan, for standing by me even when I know you were ready to change the locks on the house and leave my bags on the front porch. For the last five years, the commitment needed to complete this dissertation diverted most of my time, energy, and attention from more important things in life – namely, you. Once again, I am indebted to your patience, devotion, and love for helping to see us through hard times. And, to my children, for your love, for your support, and for putting up with my many hours in the “cave,” where I toiled on research and writing when I should have been outside playing with you. Choose your own path, but please don’t ever lose your love for learning and don’t let some of my dark days “in the cave” ever deter you from pursuing your own doctorate one day. I’m proud that I succeeded in achieving my degree.

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CHAPTER I

PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE

One thing that we probably did not do was pay enough attention to the situation in certain individual NATO governments, which of course had public opinion which was not always favorable to what NATO was doing. And one lesson in the future is that we probably need a more diversified information strategy ... and not just an Anglo-Saxon essentially addressing an Anglo-Saxon world in the hope that it will also be picked up favorably in other countries. In an alliance like NATO of 19 countries ... you definitely do need not just a general media strategy, but also individual national media strategies. (Shea, 2000)

-- Dr. Jamie P. Shea, NATO Spokesperson

Introduction

On April 4, 2000, Dr. Jamie P. Shea, then deputy director of press and information and spokesperson for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, addressed a conference hosted by the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, DC. Shea described a variety of lessons learned during Operation Allied Force, the 1999 NATO-led combat operations to halt Serb aggression against ethnic Albanians in the Kosovo region of former Yugoslavia. Allied Force exemplified controversial, political-military missions of the post-Cold War era: using military force to preempt threats to national and regional security and issuing threats of military force as a means of coercive diplomacy. Allied Force also generated international attention, which required NATO to develop a public relations program to support the operation's political and military goals. However, Shea,

noting the unique nature of NATO's multinational alliance, lamented the absence of a public relations strategy that could address the needs of NATO headquarters *and* each of NATO's 19 member nations during post-Cold War hostilities.

Shea's remarks underscore how the end of the Cold War, advances in communication technology, and growth of a globalized society have transformed economic, political, military, news media, and other organizations around the world. This transformation has been characterized by a convergence of cultures; and this convergence has threatened or changed traditional social norms that constitute nations and their citizens (Huntington, 1996; Wakefield, 1996). Although many regions, nations, and social groups have embraced these changes, others have resisted them. Thus, globalization has spawned asymmetrical turmoil such as terrorism, economic instability, political conflict, and activism (Aldoory & Van Dyke, 2004; Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 1997; Danzig, 1999; Fitzpatrick & Whillock, 1993; Gandy, 1992; L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Naples, 2002).

The *excellence theory*² in public relations links the type of turmoil or conflict described by Shea with the need for public relations. According to the excellence theory, public relations creates value by establishing and maintaining effective relationships between an organization and its publics, thus reducing costly conflict (Dozier, 1995; J. Grunig, 1992a; L. Grunig et al., 2002). Furthermore, "Communicators can develop relationships more effectively when they communicate symmetrically with publics rather than asymmetrically" (L. Grunig et al., 2002, p. xi).

² Readers familiar with published reports of excellence theory may be accustomed to seeing its name capitalized. However, with due respect to authors of this theory, I will lowercase its name in order to comply with American Psychological Association style, which prohibits capitalization of "laws, theories, models, or hypotheses" (American Psychological Association, 2001, p. 97) that are not personal names.

Problem and Purpose for Study

As the preceding introduction suggests, conflict, communication, and public relations are deeply intertwined. I adhere to Deutsch's (1973) definition of conflict as the occurrence of "*incompatible activities*" (p. 10) and his notion that communication can represent a cause of conflict, a symptom of conflict, and a mode of conflict. I also refer to Roloff's (1987) observation that lines of communication are necessary to reduce conflict. Furthermore, I align myself with public relations scholars who have described public relations from a conflict-management perspective (e.g., Ehling, 1984, 1985; J. Grunig, 1992a). Hence, communication and conflict are interdependent and this interdependence "produces relationships and the need for public relations" (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992, p. 313).

Perhaps no single factor has been more influential in producing post-Cold War conflict than the rapid advances in communication and information technology (Solomon, 2004). As Arquilla and Ronfeldt (1997) observed, the Internet and other information media empower individuals and small groups to influence large organizations – even states – by converting information into power and applying it in non-traditional ways. Conversely, advances in communication – such as development of public relations theory – can help reduce conflict. However, symmetrical communication strategies suggested by public relations theory (J. Grunig, 1992a) may not be sufficient to help organizations cope with asymmetrical situations like the threat of terrorism (Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, & Mitrook, 1997; Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999; Leichty, 1997; Leichty & Springston, 1993; Murphy, 1991). Moreover, scholars such as L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Verčič (1998) and Sriramesh and Verčič (2001, 2003a) are only beginning to

develop a global theory of public relations, which is needed to manage international conflict like that faced by NATO.

I used the case of NATO's historic entry into former Yugoslavia, between 1995 and 1996, to examine and reveal how multinational organizations apply principles of public relations to their operations. I investigated the existence of generic principles that support a global theory of public relations. I analyzed how NATO managed public relations activities during international conflict. I presumed upon entry into this study that NATO would apply a variety of asymmetrical and symmetrical communication strategies to its operations – given the authoritarian, political-military nature of the NATO alliance. Furthermore, public relations theory predicted that NATO's hierarchical organizational culture would influence the alliance to reject symmetrical strategies in favor of asymmetrical strategies – at least in some situations (J. Grunig, 1992a). This confirmed these presumptions. Therefore, I proposed an ethical framework for communication, based on moral reasoning and principles of an emerging global theory in public relations, which NATO and other multinational organizations could use to guide integration of symmetrical and asymmetrical communication strategies. This ethical framework should be of particular value to scholars and practitioners who study or work in international settings.

Recent development of a general public relations theory and work toward a global theory have added much to the field's body of knowledge and understanding of public relations practices in various regions of the world. Efforts to professionalize the field of public relations around the world have been helped by globalization: "Globalization has ... resulted in the influx of multinational corporations and public relations agencies into

new markets, which has helped push the industry in these countries to greater professionalism” (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a, p. xxix). However, globalization also has created new theoretical, practical, and ethical questions for public relations practitioners and scholars.

This study examined how a single multinational organization applied principles of the excellence theory in a turbulent, globalized environment: NATO in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1995-1996. However, this study was not merely descriptive. Rather, description of NATO’s behavior in Bosnia-Herzegovina promoted deeper understanding of how a multinational organization applied the excellence theory – even while using coercive communication to manage international conflict. This understanding contributes to development of a global theory of public relations by exemplifying how ethics becomes a generic principle in global communication management (see L. Grunig et al., 2002, p. 554). Hence, my purpose in this study was to propose a model of ethical communication that extends excellence theory and contributes to development of a global theory in public relations. Results of this study add to the public relations body of knowledge and inform practice by promoting development of professionalism, ethics, and global perspectives in communication management.

Theoretical Concepts and Terminology

Interpretation of research results in this study requires understanding of several theories and concepts. Before proceeding, I will define the terms *theory* and *concept* in a general sense. Second, I will identify classifications of theory used in this dissertation. Third, I will describe theoretical concepts derived from studies of organizations, communication and public relations management, conflict management, and ethical

behavior. Finally, I will explain how specific theories construct a theoretical framework for this dissertation.

First, I adopted Littlejohn's (2002) broad definition of theory "as any organized set of concepts and explanations about a phenomenon" (p. 19). Theories are abstract constructions that explain how individuals see the world and understand experiences in that world. By explain I refer to *practical* explanation rather than *causal* explanation. Since this study incorporated a qualitative methodology, I did not attempt to identify causal relationships between communication activities and outcomes. Instead, I sought to understand *how* NATO applied principles of the excellence theory in public relations – principles that address communication outcomes. In a practical sense, the excellence theory helped to explain how NATO's strategic management of public relations guided controllable actions and choices that were associated with excellent communication and outcomes (e.g., production of mutually beneficial, long-term relationships between NATO and the alliance's key publics).

Concepts are the building blocks of theory. Concepts are equivalent to categories of "observed qualities" (Littlejohn, 2002, p. 20) that represent classifications or patterns, which become integral parts of a theory. For example, in the excellence theory in public relations, concepts are represented by principles of communication and public relations management that are grouped according to program level, departmental level, organizational level, and effects of excellent public relations (see Table 2).

Second, theories can be classified according to their explanatory or descriptive nature and according to their scope and precision. In this study, I refer to *normative* or *positive* theories. Simply, normative theories *explain how* natural phenomena or

activities *should* occur. Positive theories *explain* phenomena or activities that *do* occur. According to J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1992), “a normative theory defines how things should be or how some activity should be carried out” (p. 291). Normative theories provide models that could *theoretically* improve a practice like communication if the model were implemented. However, as J. Grunig and L. Grunig reported:

In developing normative theory, theorists have no obligation to show that an activity actually is conducted in the way the theory describes. They must show only that if an activity were to be conducted as the theory prescribes, it would be effective. (p. 291)

Hence, normative theories are thought to provide logical and useful means to understand problems (J. Grunig & L. Grunig); however, some scholars consider normative theories to be underdeveloped because they do not apply to actual practices or describe what practitioners actually do in many situations (Cancel et al., 1997, 1999; Murphy, 1991).

Positive theories, on the other hand, are useful in explaining real-world experiences and problems. Comparing normative and positive theories, J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1992) reported, “Positive theories describe phenomena, events, or activities as they actually occur” (p. 291). The Grunigs also observed that normative and positive aspects of theory often overlap and suggested that such is the case with the dialogic model of communication prescribed by the excellence theory in public relations: “We believe, therefore, that – normatively – the two-way symmetrical model defines the most excellent way of practicing public relations and that – positively – research will show that model does the most to make organizations effective” (p. 292).

I also discuss in this study a *general* theory of public relations. Littlejohn (2002) described the concept of generality as “the idea that a theory’s explanation must be sufficiently general to cover a range of events beyond a single observation” (p. 30). Therefore, general theories apply to many phenomena and explain many activities. For instance, J. Grunig (1992a) posited that the study of excellence in public relations had produced a *general* theory of public relations that “integrates the many theories and research results existing in the field” (p. 2).

Littlejohn (2002) also noted that a theory does not need to be broad in order to be judged as a good theory. Theories could also be narrow in scope yet still apply to many situations. Burleson (1992) wrote that theories of communication must also be precise and he warned that general theories of communication could be difficult to achieve: “While it is desirable for philosophies [of communication] to be broad, expansive, and general, scientific theories need to be focused and specific” (p. 84). He added, “Taking communication seriously means giving up the idea of developing a general scientific theory of communication” (p. 85). As an alternative to general theories, Burleson suggested building theories that focus on specific communication features, processes, or situations. For example, this research examined the ethical nature of communication management practiced by NATO in the turbulent setting of Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1995 and 1996. Therefore, this study focused on a single organization, a specific range of communication processes, and a narrow timeline. However, any models or theories developed by this study could become powerful if they also explain and describe ethical communication processes in other organizations and in similar situations.

Third, I conceptualized an organization to include an alliance such as NATO. I operationalized this concept by describing how NATO performed in an international, intercultural environment. *Conceptualization* identifies the fundamental concepts or building blocks of theory. A concept is “the most basic element of a theory” (Littlejohn, 2002, p. 20). *Operationalization* explains how to observe and understand a concept or concepts in a research setting. Hence, this study explains how concepts of communication and conflict are intertwined in organizational settings. My conceptualization grew from Deutsch’s (1973) representation of communication as a cause, symptom, and mode of conflict; and from Roloff’s (1987) description of communication as conflict resolution. I also borrowed from J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1992), who reported on the interdependency among conflict, communication, and public relations. Thus, conflict, interorganizational communication, and public relations are co-created. Herein, I define public relations as a strategic management process described by a set of empirical principles. Finally, I discuss how a philosophy of public relations requires a moral framework that guides the ethical decision-making of organizational leaders and public relations managers – especially in times of international conflict.

Interorganizational Theory: Multinational Alliances and Coalitions

I adopted an interorganizational approach in this case study, similar to that taken by J. Grunig and Hunt (1984), Mintzberg (1983), and Pfeffer and Salancik (1978). Interorganizational theory has grown from the development of open systems theory. Wakefield (1996), drawing upon the work of Katz and Kahn (1966), posited that effective organizations apply an open systems perspective to adapt to their external environments. Thus, rapid changes in an organization’s environment could generate

unorthodox approaches to communication. Given that NATO often operates in hostile, life-threatening situations, such multinational organizations might rely on a variety of communication strategies and tactics to manage dynamic and turbulent situations.

In this regard, I focused on the interaction between organizations and their publics and the often hostile context in which these organizations operate. Hence, I was more interested in how organizations manage this interaction than I was in the specific structure or purpose of individual organizations. Mintzberg (1983) discussed how power is exercised through internal and external forces that control organizational decision-making. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) observed that organizational effectiveness “derives from the management of demands, particularly the demands of interest groups upon which the organizations depend for resources and support” (p. 2). J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) were among the first scholars to conceptualize how demands placed on organizations and organizational power can be managed most effectively by building effective relationships between organizations and their publics. By definition, public relations then becomes an essential management function in organizations.

I used the case of NATO’s deployment of a peacekeeping force to Bosnia-Herzegovina to illustrate how powerful internal and external forces could influence an organization’s operations and how the success of organizations like NATO depends on its relationships with publics. I regarded NATO as an *alliance* of nations, joined for the purpose of collective defense, “united in their determination to preserve their security through mutual guarantees and stable relations with other countries” (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1998, p. 23). More precisely, I examined a subordinate

organization under NATO's political and military authority: the peace implementation force (IFOR) deployed by NATO to Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1995 to 1996.

I described IFOR as a *coalition*. Pien (1994) described coalitions as a product of “conflict between an organization and its stakeholders or of the desire by disparate groups, each with a stake in an issue, to collectively address that issue” (p. 11). Furthermore, like Pien, I regarded coalitions as “strategic alliances” (p. 133) in which public relations is viewed as communication management activity. L. Grunig (1992a) explained that coalitions are characterized by interaction between groups of people, formed for a specific purpose, and focused on external goals that require cooperation between members (p. 487). Mintzberg (1983) described a typology of internal and external coalitions that form “rather stable systems of power, usually focused in nature” (p. 27), that combine to influence organizational decisions.

I differentiated my concept of coalition from that of L. Grunig (1992a) and Mintzberg (1983), however. I agree with L. Grunig (p. 487) that examination of coalitions as a unit of analysis extends research from the individual level to group level and that coalitions change composition and remain stable only as long as each coalition's purpose remains relevant and effective. However, I disagree with L. Grunig's and Mintzberg's conceptualization of coalitions as groups of individuals. I favor Pien's (1994) notion of coalitions, which she conceives of as groups of agencies or organizations, rather than groups of people. This approach allowed me to focus attention on the interaction between organizations – or between organizations and their publics. Thus, I identified the IFOR coalition as a group of nations, born of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, formed by a NATO alliance that was rapidly changing to meet post-Cold

War security needs, and focused on the specific purpose of implementing the post-war peace agreement in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Furthermore, like L. Grunig's concept of coalition, IFOR existed and remained relevant only for one year: from the time it deployed in December 1995 until it completed its mission in November 1996.

The multinational nature of NATO and IFOR also differentiates the concepts of alliance and coalition used in this study from similar concepts used in other public relations studies. I drew upon the work of Kruckeberg (1996a) to further distinguish NATO and IFOR as *multinational* organizations. Kruckeberg defined multinationals as organizations whose "impact may, indeed, extend across several nations" (p. 82), rather than transnational organizations that also operate across national borders but "neither belong to, nor ... pledge any patriotic allegiance to, any home nation-state" (p. 82). Thus, NATO and IFOR, by virtue of their external operations across national borders and their internal, political commitments to member nations, represent multinational organizations.

Multinationalism also provided fruitful ground for the theoretical study of *worldview* and *acculturation* within organizations. I applied Kearney's (1984) definition of worldview as sets of assumptions and J. Grunig and White's (1992) definition as "abstract structures of knowledge" (p. 33) that people use to make sense of the world around them. The excellence theory posits that a dominant organizational worldview of public relations as symmetrical communication is most likely to produce mutually beneficial relationships. I also referred to Wakefield's (1996) discussion of acculturation and acculturation theory from anthropology as it relates to public relations and communication management in multinational organizations. As other scholars have

explained, communication is culture specific (e.g., Sriramesh & White, 1992); and dimensions of culture can identify nations and societies (e.g., G. Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2001). Furthermore, according to Wakefield, acculturation helps to explain how intersections of culture could produce changes in organizational behavior, culture, or both. He also suggested that these changes could depend on situational factors such as nature of conflict and communication processes. Thus, theory suggests that acculturation in culturally diverse, multinational organizations like NATO and IFOR could lead to cultural changes or production of sub-cultures that operate within the dominant culture and affect communication. I used qualitative interviews with current NATO officials and former IFOR officials to identify characteristics of NATO's and IFOR's public relations worldview, communication programs, and possible effects of acculturation.

Public Relations as Management of Communication and Conflict

Scholars have documented as many as 472 definitions of public relations (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1999; J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Guth & Marsh, 2003; Seitel, 2000). There is a much smaller number yet confusing array of perspectives from which public relations can be viewed. I referred to Toth's (2002) identification of four paradigms that have been the focus of much post-modern and critical research in public relations: communication management (e.g., J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984), relationship management (e.g., Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000; Ferguson, 1984; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000), issues management (e.g., Heath, 1997), and rhetorical (e.g., Toth & Heath, 1992). Scholars and practitioners also have discussed and studied at length the controversial concept of integrated marketing communication, which merges the historically separate

functions of public relations and marketing functions into one (see Wilcox, Ault, Agee, & Cameron, 2000; Wilcox & Nolte, 1997).

To delimit my conceptualization of public relations, I adhered to one definition and one perspective of public relations in this research. Many definitions are worth considering and several of the perspectives addressed by Toth (2002) have merit; however, it was not feasible to discuss them here. Therefore, I subscribed to J. Grunig and Hunt's (1984) widely-used and parsimonious definition of public relations as "the *management of communication between an organization and its publics*" (p. 6).

Furthermore, I adopted Ehling's (n.d., 1984, 1985, 1992) multidisciplinary perspective of public relations as communication management, which draws upon management theory, conflict theory, organization theory, and communication theory (see Van Dyke, 1989).

This perspective has evolved into the excellence theory in public relations, which provides a set of principles and a single *excellence factor* (Dozier, 1995; L. Grunig et al., 2002). This factor, which "provides a concrete measure" (Dozier, p. 19) of communication excellence, characterizes an organization's level of professional public relations knowledge, the degree to which organizational leaders and public relations managers share understanding, and the extent to which the organization adopts a participative culture. This conceptualization enables empirical study of communication management and decision-making in multinational organizations like NATO.

New Directions: Toward Ethical Theories of Public Relations

Ethics has been the focus of much recent debate and criticism in public relations, which has fueled the need for research in this area. Critical scholars such as L'Etang (1996) have challenged the excellence theory based on the notion that public relations is

inherently “partisan and, furthermore, by operating on behalf of certain interests, intrinsically undemocratic” (p. 105). Citing the influence of self-interest and advocacy in public relations, L’Etang (1996) reduced public relations to “a technique or tool for enhancing reputation” (p. 105). Holtzhausen and Voto (2002) extended this critical notion of public relations advocacy to a postmodern perspective. J. Grunig (2001) challenged such critical views and provided support for the ethical nature of public relations. In supporting his position, J. Grunig referred to Heath (1992), who posited that public relations contributes to the “marketplace of ideas – the dialogue in behalf of various self interests” (p. 20). In this marketplace, “each practitioner labors on behalf of some specific interest, but collectively these statements add to or weaken the standards by which activities – corporate, nonprofit, and governmental – are evaluated” (p. 30). Furthermore, development of the excellence theory in public relations over the last two decades has produced a substantial body of empirical evidence supporting the notion that symmetrical communication in public relations is ethical and represents “the most effective model in practice as well as in theory” (J. Grunig, p. 17).

The debate over public relations ethics – in both a normative and positive sense – establishes the need for additional research in this area. L. Grunig et al. (2002) cited ethics as one of the principal directions for future research in public relations. J. Grunig (2001) also concluded, “In a professional field such as public relations ... scholars must go beyond criticizing theories; they also have the obligation to replace theories with something better” (p. 17). Research by scholars such as Bowen (2000), who proposed a theory of ethics that supports decision-making in public relations from an issues management perspective, responds to this call. I contributed to further development of

ethical theory in public relations by using this research to build on the work of Bowen (2000) and others. I also refrained from continued debate about the ethical nature of public relations. Instead, I relied on evidence provided by the excellence theory to establish as ethical certain forms of public relations; but I acknowledged the existence of certain situations that require elaboration of ethical models in public relations. Hence, I used my research to explore and propose an ethical framework that could be applied to organizational decision-making and mixed-motive communication programs in asymmetrical conflict situations.

I intended this dissertation to extend the excellence theory rather than replace or reconstruct it, as others have suggested. Murphy (1991) drew from *game theory*, which incorporates an interactive approach to decision-making, to propose an alternative to the symmetrical model of communication from the excellence theory. She recommended reconceptualizing symmetrical communication “along less rigorous lines that include shades of behavior along a continuum ranging from conflict to cooperation” (p. 124). Other scholars (Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, & Mitrook, 1997; Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999) have proposed an alternative *contingency theory* of public relations that identified dozens of situational variables presumed to affect choice of communication strategies and the degree to which accommodation can be achieved. Furthermore, Leichty and Springston (1993) distinguished between integrative approaches to conflict management such as symmetrical communication that are “*most desirable*” and other approaches that might be “*most appropriate under the circumstances*” (p. 334). However, other scholars have argued that contingency approaches and shaded boundaries in ethical decision-making render public relations susceptible to *ethical relativism* (e.g., J. Grunig & L.

Grunig, 1996; Pearson, 1989a). Relativism could enable organizations to justify any means of communication to achieve desired end states. Thus, a relativist approach could lead public relations practitioners down a slippery slope, which ultimately ends in the adoption of *distributive* win-lose strategies that are generally unethical (L. Grunig et al., 2002, pp. 551-552).

Dozier (with L. Grunig & J. Grunig, 1995) and L. Grunig et al. (2002) incorporated elements of situational and contingency theories in latter phases of the excellence theory. Building on the work of Murphy (1991) and guided by results of the excellence study, Dozier (1995) developed a new contingency model of communication that incorporates a *mixed-motive* continuum of symmetrical and asymmetrical communication strategies. Excellence theory research has confirmed that pure asymmetry does not produce excellent results, however:

Persuasive tactics sometimes may be used to gain the best position for organizations within the win-win zone. Because such practices are bounded by a symmetrical worldview that respects the integrity of long-term relationships, the two-way model assumes that professional public relations is based on symmetrical, collaborative values. (L. Grunig et al., p. 358)

Finally, J. Grunig and L. Grunig's (1997) review of research on *activism* contributed to knowledge of mixed-motive communication by proposing a framework that could guide public relations practitioners' use of symmetrical and asymmetrical strategies. Specifically, this framework described how activist groups could employ both symmetrical and asymmetrical communications to establish and manage relationships with organizations. This framework strengthens the positive aspects of the excellence

theory and extends the range of situations in which symmetrical communication might apply. However, this framework still “represents a relatively undeveloped normative theory of public relations for activist organizations” and requires additional empirical support (J. Grunig, 2001, p. 19).

Next Steps: An Approach to Just Communication

I find critical approaches to theory of value, in that criticism could stimulate the kinds of debate that might lead to tests of theory; and I support, in general, J. Grunig’s (2001) call for building as well as criticizing theory. By critical approaches, I mean perspectives of public relations that “focus on the symbolic processes of organizational behavior” (Toth & Heath, 1992, p. 7). Critical perspectives of public relations break from studies that focus on the processes of communication management. Critical scholars like L’Etang (1996) examine sources of power in organizations and ask questions about how public relations is used to control power and dominate publics, including members of an organization or profession. For instance, some public relations scholars have directed their research toward feminization of the public relations profession and gender differences that affect the advancement of women in the field (e.g., L. Grunig, 1988; Toth, 2002).

By criticizing theory, I refer in a rhetorical sense to a need to question the value of a theory and propose improvements. According to Toth and Heath (2002), “critical judgment is needed to improve skills and to insure that a profession is responsible and sound” (p. 33). Hence, scholars use criticism to question, interpret meaning, provide insight, express likes and dislikes, and offer theoretical and practical suggestions that might improve society. I agree with Toth and Heath that criticism should be a

constructive rather than a destructive activity. Thus, critics should “have something important to say and ... say it to foster harmony and trust” (p. 2). Criticism should rely on specific criteria to describe what is being criticized, judge and evaluate the object of criticism, justify claims or warrants, and support analyses by others.

There is room in the public relations field for debate and development of specific theories that serve as alternatives to a broader, general theory of public relations. As Burleson (1992) suggested, efforts to develop general theories of communication reflect misunderstanding of the complex nature of human communication. Berger (1991) advocated, instead, development of more varied, focused, and specific scientific theories in communication. Thus, I believe critical inquiry and subsequent scholarly debate or criticism could help to strengthen and extend theories like the excellence theory in public relations – and perhaps lead to discovery of new theories.

Like J. Grunig (2001) and Toth and Heath (1992), I believe that scholars have an obligation to not only criticize theory but also suggest improvements to theory. Criticism and debate of theory, alone, can obscure discovery of new ideas and theories, just as debates over research methods can lead to “methodological fixation ... in discussions of the relative merits of qualitative and quantitative approaches ... [that] only serve to obscure the vastly more important issue of the scientific value of empirical data” (Berger, 1991, p. 106). Thus, *constructive* suggestions for improvement in public relations theory should be a product of criticism. Therefore, in this dissertation, I did not recommend wholesale “replacement” of theory (J. Grunig, 2001, p. 17), since the excellence theory is not irreparably flawed

This is not to say that the excellence theory is fully developed and universal in a normative and a positive sense. L. Grunig et al. (2002) said that challenges remain for research in public relations and there is room for growth in the excellence theory, especially in the areas of globalization, strategic management, relationship building, ethics, and change management. In this spirit, I recommended improvement of the excellence theory, through extensions that could enhance the theory's practical value – an aspect of the theory that is often criticized as underdeveloped (e.g., Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, & Mitrook, 1997; Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999; Murphy, 1991). By building on the theoretical foundations provided by previous scientific discovery, the community of scholars and practitioners in public relations can help their field *progress*, which Kuhn (1996) defined as “the result of successful creative work” (p. 162). This study was intended to contribute to growth in public relations theory – specifically, elaboration of ethical and global approaches to public relations. My pursuit of this purpose responded to Berger's (1991) call for development of specific theories of communication (as opposed to broad, general theories) and J. Grunig's appeal for more “sophisticated means of symmetrical communication and conflict resolution” in multiparty conflicts (L. Grunig et al., 2002, p. 316).

I based my dissertation on extensive work already completed in excellence theory research and also drew upon concepts suggested by alternatives to the excellence theory's symmetrical model. I supported this dissertation with principles of ethics and communication that could be applied in a variety of global settings and cultures. In brief, I proposed a model of ethical communication that could help decision makers choose between asymmetrical, symmetrical or mixed-motive communication strategies that are

situation-specific strategies. To avoid problems with relativism in this approach, I grounded the framework for this model in moral theory (Grassey, 1861/2000; L'Etang, 1996).

I recognized the need to address in this model communication strategies that could include persuasion and coercion, given the political-military nature of the NATO organization and the alliance's role in managing international conflict. I defined concepts of persuasion and coercion in Chapter II. These concepts were important to my research because the practice of persuasion and coercion sometimes conflicts with theoretical notions of excellence in public relations. Therefore, I have addressed the significance of these concepts in this introduction.

Miller (2002) associated the act of "being persuaded" with "situations where behavior has been modified by symbolic transactions (messages) that are sometimes, but not always, linked with coercive force (indirectly coercive) and that appeal to the reason and emotions of the person(s) being persuaded" (p. 6). Various authors have defined coercion as a form of social control characterized by an application of power by one party over another to achieve compliance through promises of rewards or threats of punishment (e.g., Dillard & Pfau, 2002; Gibbons, Bradac, & Busch, 1992; Miller, 2002; Pennock, 1972; Rosenbaum, 1986). Furthermore, according to Miller, persuasion and coercion are linked. Persuasive acts rely on rhetorical forms of communication while coercion relies on physical symbols like "guns or economic sanctions" (p. 4). Still, both forms of communication are often associated with application of indirect (e.g., rhetorical) or direct (e.g., physical) power by one party over another to gain compliance of the second party.

As a scholar of the excellence theory in public relations, I value dialogic communication over one-way or asymmetrical communication as a preferred means to resolve conflict and establish mutually-beneficial relationships that reduce costs to organizations. From an excellence theory perspective, persuasion is classified among two-way asymmetrical forms of communication (see J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984), which attempt to influence “publics to accept the organization’s point of view and to behave in a way that supports the organization” (p. 22).

From this perspective, excellence theory scholars distinguish between symmetrical public relations and other organizational communication functions like *marketing* that are asymmetrical. Marketing is based on “asymmetrical presuppositions” (J. Grunig, 1992b, p. 20) that are inconsistent with symmetrical principles of excellence theory in public relations. For instance, marketing communication tends to be tactical, focusing on the pricing and publicity of products that are directed toward specific, target “markets for an organization’s goods and services” (p. 20). On the other hand, *strategic* communication and public relations management efforts consider all publics that might have a relationship with an organization.

Thus, two-way asymmetrical communication activities like persuasion and marketing are less likely to consider or produce healthy relationships than dialogic or two-way symmetrical communication forms that have as their goal a desire to create “mutual understanding between organizations and their publics” (p. 22). Studies of excellence in public relations have shown that “communicators can develop relationships more effectively when they communicate symmetrically with publics rather than asymmetrically” (L. Grunig et al., 2002, p. xi). Therefore, excellence theory scholars like

J. Grunig (1989b) have expressed a preference for collaborative forms of communication like negotiation over asymmetrical communication like coercion as a *preferred* means to resolve conflict. Grunig also compared coercion to “force, manipulation ... or violence” (p. 39) and he noted:

I am tempted to include the word persuasion here as something that should not be involved in conflict resolution. I would include the word when it refers to manipulative kinds of persuasion as are used in the asymmetrical models [of communication]. (p. 39)

This does not mean, however, that I reject persuasive or coercive approaches to communication. On the contrary, I accept persuasion and coercion as legitimate, commonly used forms of communication. Lucas (2004) observed, “Most of us do a certain amount of persuading every day, although we may not realize it or call it that” (p. 394). J. Grunig (1989b) also wrote that persuasive communication can be appropriate – even symmetrical – in that a “reasoned argument in support of one’s position is an important part of conflict resolution” (p. 39).

However, parties that engage in persuasion and coercion should begin communicating through dialogue before switching to persuasion or coercion. Communicators must also remain ready and willing to switch to other tactics when persuasion and coercion fail. Furthermore, uses of persuasion and coercion should be situationally appropriate, guided by ethical intentions and principles, and relied upon as something other than a *central* means of communication. Lucas (2004) cautioned, “No matter what the ... situation, you need to make sure your goals are ethically sound and that you use ethical means to communicate your ideas. Meeting these obligations can be

especially challenging when you speak to persuade” (p. 395). Thus, applications of persuasion or coercion that destroy trusting relationships or damage the credibility of a speaker or an organization contradict the value of excellence in communication and public relations management, which “comes from the relationships that communicators develop and maintain with publics” (L. Grunig et al., 2002, p. xi).

To ethically evaluate the viability of persuasive and coercive actions, I relied on the work of Gilbert (1997) in *coalescent argumentation*, which identified a symmetrical approach to persuasive arguments based on agreement rather than dispute. From game theory, I referred to Schelling’s (1980) distinction between persuasive *threats* and *warnings*. Also from game theory, I incorporated the notion of *tit-for-tat* (Axelrod, 1984), which refers to a type of reciprocal, communication strategy that allows people in a bilateral relationship to “act in various ways that are unconditional” (Fisher & Brown, 1988, p. 197).

Practical Applications: Beyond the Limits of Symmetry

In practice, the results of this study should help guide the decisions of public relations managers and ensure that choice and application of communication strategies are justified. Post-Cold War threats have rendered inadequate traditional forms of national power (Mandelbaum, 2002) while increasing reliance on communication strategies such as public affairs and diplomacy (Peterson, 2002). Alliances such as NATO and the member nations of such alliances have routinely employed a mixed-motive continuum of communication strategies in various post-Cold War conflicts (Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 1997; Clark, 2001; Ignatieff, 2000). These strategies incorporate a

variety of communication functions that employ various communication tactics: from collaboration (e.g., diplomacy) to coercion (e.g., threats of force).

In alliances like NATO, several organizational functions play a role in planning and delivering strategic communication. For example, military operations since the late twentieth century have incorporated the concept of *information operations*³ in communication planning. Information operations integrates public affairs with other military information and communication functions such as psychological operations (PSYOPS), civil-military information (CIMIC), intelligence, electronic warfare, computer security, and diplomacy. Psychological operations could include propaganda and deception operations. I defined these and related information operations activities in the Glossary of Terms. While many information operations activities are treated as separate functions, their planning and application to military operations are integrated under a single coordinating body, depicted in Figure 3 on the following page.

Also, organizations deliver strategic messages through a variety of public relations and non-public relations channels. Public information, politics, economics, and military force are considered by nations like the United States as elements of *power* in national security strategy. A nation's membership in organizations like NATO often diffuses thinking about strategic communication throughout a multinational alliance. Figure 4 depicts one way the U.S. military has identified power and considered applying a spectrum of powerful communication forms during times of peace and conflict. Figure 4, on the following page, illustrates how the United States could engage in early stages of conflict by using negotiation (political influence).

³ See the Glossary of Terms.

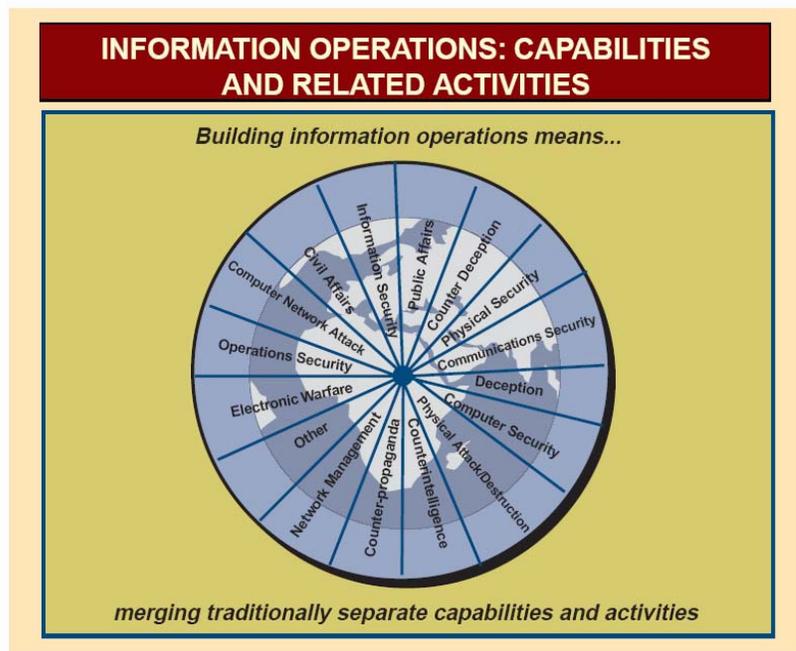


Figure 3. Elements of information operations, adapted from U.S. Joint Doctrine for Information Operations, Joint Pub 3-13 (U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1998, p. I-10).

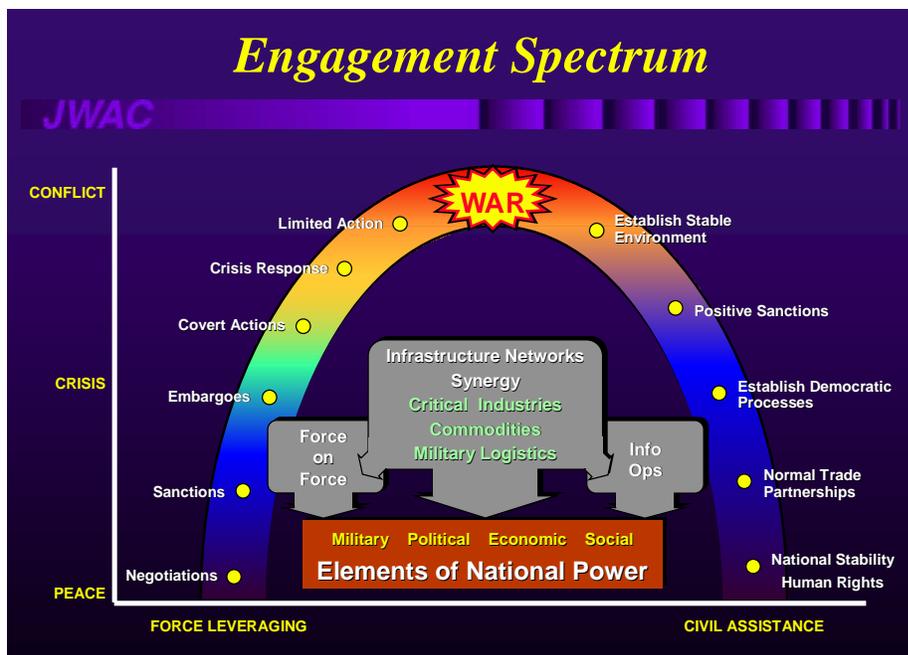


Figure 4. Elements of national power and spectrum of engagement in conflict and peace (U.S. Joint Warfare Analysis Center, 1999).

As a crisis develops, the United States might resort to sanctions and embargoes (political and economic influence). As conflict emerges, the United States could commit to limited, armed actions or declare war (military and political power). As a crisis deescalates, the United States would hypothetically offer economic and political incentives, engage in democratization, and establish human rights programs to stabilize the situation. Throughout this spectrum, the United States would also employ public information and social programs (e.g., information operations) to communicate with various publics.

As Figures 3 and 4 demonstrate, it is unlikely that multinational organizations like NATO or their member nations would rely solely on symmetrical communication strategies in threat or conflict situations. Although NATO's charter was founded on the notion of collaboration and collective action, the charter also allows NATO to respond asymmetrically to threats or aggression. These responses could involve dialogue and negotiation or coercive application of economic, political, and military power – including military information operations. Each of these responses represents a form of communication that could have significant consequences on strategic publics. Given the potential effect of communication activities on key publics – regardless of the political, economic, or military nature of a particular communication act – such threat or conflict situations become public relations situations that require excellent public relations solutions.

As previously defined, public relations involves “the *management of communication between an organization and its publics*” (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 6). Thus, in theory, public relations must become and remain involved with management of

all forms of communication that could have an effect on an organization's publics – even forms of persuasive or coercive communication that might be carried out through political or economic sanctions, military demonstrations of force, and deception, propaganda, or psychological operations activities that are associated with information operations.

It is therefore essential that public relations scholars and practitioners identify ways that the public relations function can remain an integral part of communication management. This management process must continue from peace to conflict, through a spectrum of engagement strategies and tactics that might be planned and applied by organizations like NATO. To limit the role of public relations is to marginalize public relations, allowing leaders who face certain types of asymmetrical threats to bypass public relations in favor of other communication functions.

Significance

The last two decades of the 20th century were marked by a growth in theoretical research and development in public relations. The proposal of a general theory of public relations in the 1990s sparked acclaim, criticism, debate, and replication of public relations studies around the world. Despite the growing interest and progress in public relations research, gaps still exist in several areas of theoretical and practical knowledge: global public relations, ethics in public relations, and strategic management of communication in multinational organizations confronted by post-Cold War turbulence (see L. Grunig et al., 2002, pp. 538-562). This study has helped narrow these gaps in several ways. Using Marshall and Rossman's (1999) framework for contributory value in research, this study adds to the following domains.

Significance for Theory

The intellectual contributions of this scholarship are perhaps most significant. This study responded to the need for increased theoretical understanding of global and ethical perspectives of public relations. Findings also enlightened understanding of the role of public relations and communication in organizations undergoing changes – just as NATO is transforming to meet security needs of the post-Cold War period. The use of qualitative methods in this study deepened theoretical understanding of mixed-motive communication and illustrated how public relations is situated in theoretical concepts of conflict and change management.

This study's focus on public relations in an international setting and within a multinational organization also revealed generic principles that add to a global theory in public relations. Previous excellence theory research has focused largely on four types of organizations: "corporations, not-for-profit organizations, government agencies, and professional trade associations" (Dozier, 1995, p. 242). L. Grunig (1992a) noted difficulties associated with defining and studying coalitions in their actual settings. Therefore, my examination of the NATO alliance and IFOR coalition helped to remedy the "dearth of scholarly research" (L. Grunig, p. 486) in this area.

This study also extended the excellence theory by demonstrating how it could be more inclusive of communication principles and concepts related to persuasion and coercion – drawing on concepts from alternative approaches to public relations that explain how situational variables and contingencies influence choice of communication strategies. This contribution will hopefully answer questions and blunt some criticism about the excellence theory's applied weaknesses.

Finally, this study has cultivated development of ethical theory in public relations. Bowen (2000) found that a coherent approach to public relations ethics is an essential part of issues management in organizations, yet few studies have applied theories of ethics to the study of public relations. By examining concepts from established moral theories, I have explored and illuminated how these concepts might contribute to construction of an ethical framework for decision-making in public relations and communication management.

Significance for Practice

Exploration of how theories of excellence, morality, and globalization might apply to management of public relations programs in multinational organizations also added to the significance of this study. Qualitative interviews with NATO and IFOR officials revealed characteristics of public relations programs that were planned and implemented by these multinational organizations in an operational setting. Analysis of data from these interviews enhanced understanding of how NATO managed its public relations programs – including the organization’s strategic and ethical rationale for decisions about communication. This analysis identified principles that support both the excellence theory and a developing theory of global public relations. Furthermore, examination of NATO’s application of public relations in an international conflict generated ideas that apply to ethical practice of public relations and communication management in a variety of global settings.

Significance for Social Issues

This research also took on important social significance. Excellence theory research has demonstrated that public relations can add value to an organization by

reducing conflict and building healthy relationships that conserve capital and other resources. This study of NATO has shown how ethical management of diplomatic and public communication between nations could help preserve and protect the sovereignty of nations and their citizens. More precisely, political-military experts who are familiar with public relations management identified how public relations outcomes – especially in military operations – also can mean saving lives (e.g., Lopez, personal communication, July 10, 2000; Smith, 1996). Thus, public relations studies like this that contribute to conflict management could have immeasurable social value.

Furthermore, this research program was enriched by a proposal for practical applications or actions (e.g., adhering to an ethical framework that could save lives) that in strategic decision-making and public relations management. I recognized that such calls for action could lead to construal of this study as *action research*. Scholars such as Stuckey (personal communication, November 20, 2003) warned of political risks associated with mixing scholarly research with calls for action. Therefore, to avoid confusion over terminology or purpose, my primary purpose in conducting this research was to contribute to the scholarly body of knowledge in public relations theory and practice. Marshall and Rossman (1999) placed action research within research genres that “stipulate taking action as central to their work” (p. 37). Thus, since advocacy of action taking is *not* my central purpose, it would not be accurate to categorize this research as action research. However, I would welcome – as a consequence of this research – the adoption of any actions resulting from this study that might benefit society.

Methodological Considerations

The choice of approach and methods was part of this study's research design. First, I compared normative aspects of the excellence theory in public relations with application of this theory by a multinational organization operating in a turbulent, global setting. I elected to pursue an instrumental case study approach to this research. I adopted Stake's (1995, 1998, 2000) notion of case study as a researcher's choice of a topic to be studied rather than a research strategy (as suggested by Yin, 2003a, 2003b). My professional and scholarly interests in NATO and public relations theory were central to the purposes of this study; however, as Stake (2000) explained, "The case ... plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else" (p. 437). Thus, my focus on NATO was secondary to my primary interest in public relations theory. I scrutinized NATO's organizational boundaries, its patterns of communication behavior, and the complexities of NATO's deployment of IFOR to Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1995 and 1996. However, I used the case as an instrument to illuminate how NATO applied principles of the excellence theory in public relations to its operations.

Second, I consider myself a constructivist (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Stake, 1995). I favor a holistic approach to research and strive to understand co-creation of multiple meanings during interactions between researcher and participants in naturalistic settings. I prefer qualitative research methods to quantitative methods as a means to produce deep understanding of phenomena under study. Therefore, I used three qualitative interview methods in this study: long, elite and focus group (McCracken, 1988; H. Rubin & I. Rubin, 1995). These interviews allowed NATO executives and

public relations practitioners to explain how they selected and managed public relations and communication strategies in peaceful and in conflict situations.

Third, I was constrained by temporal factors associated with my case study of the NATO-led peace implementation force in Bosnia-Herzegovina. For example, IFOR's public relations activities began and ended six to seven years prior to the beginning of this research project. Therefore, I was no longer able to enter the field in a traditional anthropological sense and perform direct observations of IFOR in action. As an alternative to field study, I chose to interview public relations managers and senior leaders with direct experience in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Analysis of data from these interviews provided a deeper understanding of IFOR's operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina by allowing me to trace how NATO communication managers and leaders used a strategic public relations program to construct and re-construct their operations in a rhetorical sense (e.g., Cheney, 1991, 1992).

Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman (2000) observed that selection of methods within a research strategy is best determined by research purpose and questions. Hence, my selection of qualitative methods to answer questions about how NATO managed public relations operations seemed most appropriate. In the qualitative tradition, my interviews focused on how researcher and participants made meaning of theoretical principles as they applied to multinational public relations operations in a natural setting. My use of multiple interview methods also represented an advantage of qualitative study. By viewing NATO through the lenses of multiple, lived experiences, I achieved a more holistic perspective. Subsequently, this perspective yielded deeper understanding of how interaction between various communication, cultural, and contextual variables influenced

multinational public relations programs. My approach also was consistent with the current movement in qualitative research toward more interdisciplinary methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I had hoped to achieve triangulation in method by using three different interview methods, which McCracken (1988) and Stake (1995) described as a means to strengthen the credibility of research results. However, similarities between long and elite interviews made it difficult to claim achievement of triangulation in a formal sense.

After collecting data, I followed Wolcott's (1994) formula for description, analysis, and interpretation of results. Analysis included Stake's (1995) pattern-matching approach, which employs rigorous and systematic reasoning to identify key factors, patterns, and themes among data from interviews and textual analysis that help construct meaning. I expand on discussion of methods in Chapter III.

Reflexivity

I am a qualitative researcher. As such, in a reflexive sense, I am an instrument of this research. I have rejected the notion of complete objectivity in this study and accepted the existence of multiple meanings. I recognize that my rejection of the traditional notion of objectivity did not absolve me of my responsibility to conduct this research in accordance with rigorous scientific standards. However, I have adapted my approach to this study and research methods to my personal, professional, and artistic nature.

Of special importance to this case study, I revealed and differentiated between my contemporary role as researcher and my former role as a public relations practitioner in the U.S. Navy and NATO. Therefore, I identified and placed myself in the NATO case.

In the methods section of this report, I have discussed how I interacted with research settings that were new to me and with settings that I was once part of as a NATO officer. I also anticipated how I might influence my participants – some of whom are former colleagues, senior officers, or subordinates of mine. In summary, I have throughout this study recognized and explained how intersections between my previous and former roles created a potential for internal and external biases. I have also disclosed how I created critical distance between my dual roles and took other steps to manage the effects of potential biases.

As I explained in the methods section, to manage potential biases related to interviews, I wrote reflexive memos before and after meeting with participants, recorded comments about my feelings and observations during interviews, and transcribed interviews and comments as soon after meeting with participants as possible. Writing memoranda and observer comments allowed me to identify biases that I was aware of and disclose steps I that I took to mitigate the effect of those biases. Furthermore, these reflexive activities helped me to reveal the truth as I “know it” (Locke et al., 2000, p. 25), explain how I arrived at this truth, and permit others to come to their own conclusions about my research. Thus, reflexive thinking and writing helped make my work credible.

Finally, I offer another note on my dual roles as researcher and practitioner. Crane (2000) described studies like this one as moving “into the realms of subjectivity, historical passions, and emotional relationships” (p. xi). So, this study was for me a process of passion and emotion as well as scholarly research and scientific analysis. Studies of this nature generally benefit from critical distance between the observer and the observed (Crane, 2000; McCracken, 1988). However, Geertz (1973) reported that

access to evidence is one of the keys to successful research. Thus, my deep access and unique perspective as a participant-observer in IFOR was of great benefit to this study. As Crane (2000) concluded: “Our interest in history is inextricably part of our relationship to it. Applying imagination to the past does not ‘invent’ or ‘revise’ it but rather allows us to express an emotional connection to history” (p. xi). Therefore, I have embraced my emotional connection to the history of this case and I have used it, together with critical distance achieved through interview methods, to enrich this study.

Ethical Issues in Research

I followed strict procedures to guide my research and complied with the high standards required of scientific research, including adherence to a rigid institutional review board (IRB) process required for research projects that involve human subjects. These procedures helped to protect my participants from potential harm. I disclosed my intent, identity, self-interests, and potential biases as a researcher. I also used honest means to approach and gain access to participants. Participants were debriefed and informed of any potential risks and benefits associated with this research. Participants in this study were also volunteers. I avoided coercing participants, obtained informed consent before each interview, and received permission to record interviews. I allowed mutual control between the researcher and participants with respect to publication of results. I also kept participants’ identities confidential and kept interview data under my direct control.

I complied with ethical standards in writing and publishing. It is often difficult to capture the *truth*, especially in qualitative research that involves interpretation of multiple meanings that are co-constructed through personal interaction. Therefore, I have

attempted to present and discuss relevant literature, data, and results in a way that establishes credibility, allows for access and interpretation, and permits replication of the study. I have also taken all reasonable means to avoid plagiarism. Finally, I have tried to be diligent in writing accurately and adhering to a scientific style (APA) in reporting my work.

Delimiting

I made several research design decisions that helped me achieve a reasonable scope of study and accomplish the goals of this research in a timely manner. First, I delimited my conceptualization of public relations by choosing one definition and perspective of public relations: strategic public relations and inter-organizational communication management. Second, I focused on a single international political-military alliance and coalition. I collected data and conducted pre-tests with officials from other multinational organizations, which could contribute to a *collective* case study (Stake, 2000); however, I focused my research in this study only on the NATO alliance and its subordinate coalition, IFOR. I hope my *instrumental* case study design will conserve time but also provide a deeper understanding of a single organization, as recommended by Wolcott (1994). With my understanding of this single case, I can attempt to reach broader understanding of a collection of cases in future research. Third, I studied NATO and IFOR in the context of a specific conflict situation, bounded by a limited time period in history. Fourth, I explored specific issues associated with communication ethics in an asymmetrical, conflict setting rather than address broader communication issues in a general organizational setting.

Furthermore, I considered factors such as cost, time, and logistics that could interfere with completion of any research project. My research design incorporated allowances for problems that could arise during the course of this study. I minimized costs by limiting travel and focusing my recruiting efforts on a purposive sample of participants located in the Washington, DC, area of the U.S. East Coast. For the first four years of my study, I lived in close proximity to Washington, DC, which provided me with convenient access to military leaders and public relations managers who possessed the knowledge needed to answer my research questions. However, during my last year of this study, I moved to the Hudson Valley region of New York State before completing my final focus group discussion. Fortunately, my new home was near the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. This facility employs numerous experts in military public affairs, communication, leadership, and ethics. Therefore, I altered plans to conduct a final focus group discussion at a military facility in Maryland or Virginia and instead held the focus group at West Point. Finally, I overcame geographic separation between me and some participants by allowing for telephone interviews, which I conducted with participants who lived great distances from the Washington, DC, or New York areas.

CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUALIZATION

Overview and Framework

In this study I set out to answer questions about the ethical practice of public relations and communication management within a multinational organization that faces conflict. As Marshall and Rossman (1999) elucidated, such inquiry requires a framework that explains the logic of my work, places it within a tradition of scholarly research, and establishes contextual relationships with other studies of this kind. In this section, I use a literature review to locate my assumptions, questions, and values as a researcher within theoretical perspectives. Second, I demonstrate my knowledge of this research and the scholarly traditions that bound this study. Third, I identify gaps in this body of knowledge, show how these gaps relate to needs of public relations practitioners, and demonstrate how this study will contribute to these theoretical gaps and practical needs. Finally, against the backdrop of theoretical perspectives, research traditions, and body of knowledge I refine and make clear my research questions and propositions.

Following this logical framework, I use the first section of this chapter to contextualize the research problem within a specific case. In the second section, I conceptualize the problem by locating it within theories of strategic public relations management, organizational management, conflict, and ethics. This section provides a framework for research in this study, which endeavors to extend the excellence theory in public relations. In the third section, I discuss previous research that has offered a critique of positive aspects of the excellence theory. Specifically, this critique explains how the excellence theory has been applied to the study of organizations and reveals

research questions that still linger. These questions focus on three areas: 1) application of excellence theory principles by multinational organizations; 2) comparison of these principles with generic principles of global public relations; and 3) possible inconsistencies between public relations practices in multinational organizations and principles of excellence and global theory. By examining conceptual questions related to these three areas, I establish the significance of this study and initiate discussion in subsequent chapters of how the excellence theory might be reconceptualized or extended. In the final section of this chapter, I conclude with a summary of research questions and propositions that motivated this study.

Case and Context: NATO and Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1995-1996

Yin (2003a) wrote that a case study such as this one “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (p. 13). Stake (2000) emphasized the importance of identify the phenomenon, or case, which is to be studied:

A case may be simple or complex.... It may be a child, or a classroom of children, or an incident such as mobilization of professionals to study a childhood condition. It is one among others. In any given study, we will concentrate on the one. (p. 436)

This *instrumental* case study was designed to advance understanding of public relations theory – in particular, how this theory operates in conflict situations and in a global setting. Therefore, my interest in the operational case was secondary to my interest in the theoretical dimensions that this case illuminates. Still, the case itself is important. Therefore, I identify the case (NATO) under study and place it in the proper context (Bosnia-Herzegovina) before I conceptualize the theoretical framework for this study.

The NATO Alliance

Alliances and coalitions are unique organizations that often arise out of a need for collective security and cooperative action. Alliances are generally broad, sustained organizations. Coalitions are often formed by alliances for specific purposes and short durations. This study focuses on one alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and on one coalition, the NATO-led peace Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Established in 1949 under the Atlantic Charter, which was signed shortly after the end of World War II, NATO has grown from a partnership of 12 countries to become a powerful alliance of 26 free nations. A collective security agreement between member nations provides stable relations with other countries and helps to ensure “a just and lasting peaceful order ... based on common values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law” (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1998, p. 23). However, the alliance faces the kinds of turbulence and change that provide rich material for the study and practice of public relations management. For instance, Chalmer and Pierce (1998) observed,

Dramatic changes since 1989 have required the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to rethink its force structure as well as to reconsider how to maintain the peace and security of Europe. In the strategic vacuum created by the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, NATO sought to establish cooperative relations with the nations of Central and Eastern Europe. (p. ix)

Recent developments have realized the establishment of relations with these central and eastern European nations and symbolized the dramatic changes experienced

by NATO since the end of the Cold War. In 1995, when NATO deployed IFOR to Bosnia-Herzegovina, the alliance consisted of 16 nations: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Subsequent accession of new nations has increased the number of alliance members to 26: the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland in 1997; Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia in 2004. NATO plans to continue expanding its membership to meet the changing security needs of the alliance and its member nations.

The NATO alliance adheres to principles of international cooperation and respect for sovereign rights of nations; however, instability in financial, political, military, and social systems can thrust NATO into costly international conflicts – as in the case of IFOR’s deployment to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Thus, NATO requires excellent public relations to establish and maintain cooperative relationships that sustain the alliance and reduce costs to the NATO headquarters and member nations.

NATO’s Deployment to Bosnia-Herzegovina

On December 14, 1995, a peace agreement signed in Paris, France, ended nearly four years of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the central region of the former Yugoslavia. Two days later, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization began deploying to this region a heavily armed military force that would eventually include 60,000 troops from more than 30 nations to implement military provisions of the peace agreement. This historic, yearlong operation, Joint Endeavour, represented NATO’s first deployment of combat troops outside its geographic area (Allied Forces Southern Europe, 2001). Joint Endeavour also exemplified a

new era of Post-Cold War political-military missions: using powerful military forces to wage peace instead of war and diplomacy instead of combat. NATO's peace implementation force (IFOR) deployed to an uncertain setting, a virtual Balkan powder keg. Combatants had agreed to cease hostilities, yet still-simmering ethnic hatred and political strife prevented peace. IFOR's first military commander, U.S. Navy Admiral Leighton W. Smith, described the setting in Bosnia-Herzegovina simply as "an absence of war" (Smith, 1996, ¶ 15). Caught somewhere between converging concepts of war and peace, NATO faced its first challenge long before it deployed IFOR: to rhetorically construct a public identity of IFOR that would clarify the context, end war, and establish peace in the Balkans. (Van Dyke, 2003a, p. 2)

Conceptualization of Strategic Management and Excellence in Public Relations

Public Relations Theory

Antecedents of Public Relations

Several scholars have traced the antecedents of modern public relations to ancient eras: the use of stone tablets by Babylonians and the practice of rhetoric by ancient Greeks and Romans (Marsh, 2001; Seitel, 2000), an 1800 B.C. agricultural bulletin in present-day Iraq (Cutlip et al., 2000), and edicts from an Indian emperor to his subjects in 300 B.C. (Sriramesh, 1996). J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) credited the spread of Christianity from the first century A.D. as an engine for public relations in the second millennium. Advances in printing technology, journalism, legal reforms, and socio-political change such as the Revolutionary War in Britain's American colonies promoted

further growth of public relations practice (Cutlip et al., 2000; J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Seitel, 2000).

Public relations practice continued to grow in various regions around the world (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002); however, modern concepts and models of public relations did not emerge in the United States until the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Here, developments in publicity, government and political communication, and big business cultivated growing respect for the importance of maintaining good relations with publics. Early practitioners such as Ivy Lee proposed new approaches to public relations practice based on frank and open communication with publics; separate public relations, advertising, and marketing functions; and prompt, accurate dissemination of public information (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Seitel, 2000).

Edward L. Bernays, who was among the first to publish scholarly books and articles on public relations, advanced the intellectual study of public relations as a science. He also taught the first undergraduate college course in public relations at New York University in 1923. Moreover, Bernays was among the first scholars to promote the role of women in public relations and – although his early writings viewed public relations as a form of persuasion (e.g., Bernays, 1928/2000) – he eventually disassociated public relations from publicity and press agency (Seitel, 2000).

Professionalization of Public Relations

The growth of public relations *practice* dominated the first few decades of the 20th century but professionalization of the public relations field distinguished the latter decades. According to J. Grunig and Hunt (1984), professionalism can be demonstrated by five characteristics: professional values, strong professional organizations, adherence

to an enforceable set of norms or ethical code, an intellectual body of knowledge, and skills developed through professional training (p. 66). The profession is still developing; however, the field now demonstrates many of these professional characteristics. The research design for this study and requirements to delimit lead me to examine values and ethical codes in more depth than the other professional characteristics.

Since the early 1900s, there has been increasing awareness and appreciation for the role of public relations in protecting values such as social and public responsibility (e.g., Verčič & Grunig, 2000). J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1996) distinguished between the latter concepts by explaining that social responsibility refers to an organization's duty to respect the welfare of "society at large" (p. 8) as well as the organization's own interests. On the other hand, public responsibility refers to an organization's duty to protect the welfare of specific stakeholders in that organization. Carroll (1991) compared the concept of social responsibility in organizational management with "reconciling the firm's economic orientation with its social orientation" (p. 40). Since this study dealt principally with consequences of NATO operations on society at large rather than specific publics, I referred to this concept as social rather than public responsibility. Furthermore, I elaborated on this concept by referring to J. Grunig and Hunt's (1994) categorization of social responsibilities, which "has no boundary" (p. 55) and cannot be delineated by where an organization's responsibilities begin or end:

1. The performance of the organization's basic tasks.
2. The organization's concern with the consequences of those activities on other groups outside the organization.

3. The organization's concern with helping to solve general and social problems not connected to the organization. (p. 55)

Ivy Lee is credited with being among the first practitioners to recognize the importance of an organization's social responsibility to publics. According to J. Grunig and Hunt (1984), Lee counseled organizational leaders in the early 1900s to adopt a policy of informing rather than damning publics within society. This strategy led to new thinking about corporate social responsibility. Modern practitioners such as Paluszek (1994) predicted, "The 'new age' company will be judged not only on profitability, return to shareholders and payment of taxes to support the government, but also on its 'corporate citizenship' in relation to all of its constituencies" (p. 30). Ten years later, Paluszek (2004) reflected on the ways in which organizational responsibility to emerging global societies has helped public relations evolve from a simple message-delivery function to its present role as a strategic management function:

For as Harold Burson, APR, Fellow PRSA, has so wisely observed, public relations has evolved over the decades from, essentially, delivering messages to counseling on policy, performance and communications. More and more, we are being asked, "What should the organization do?" (p. 7)

To help support the role played by public relations in formulating responsible social policies, professional organizations like the Public Relations Society of America have established codes of ethics and professional interest sections (Paluszek, 2004). Such actions have increased attention to social responsibility; still, scholars and practitioners have criticized current codes of ethics as being "unduly vague" (Bivins, 1993) and

lacking in universal application (Hunt & Tirpok, 1993). I will expand on ethical concepts and criticism of ethical codes in the next section of this chapter.

Professional development in public relations also is evidenced by growth in the number and kinds of national and international professional public relations organizations. For instance, the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management was established in 2000. Within four years of its establishment, the Global Alliance expanded to include 28 participating public relations associations representing more than 75,000 individual members from around the world. Organizations such as the Global Alliance and its member organizations have provided valuable skills training and opportunity for professional growth on a global scale. More importantly, the Global Alliance has provided a framework for developing codes of ethics. In 2003, the alliance adopted unanimously a standard protocol designed to establish an international code of ethics for the public relations profession by the end of 2005 (Global Alliance, 2003).

Finally, the emerging profession has been populated by increasing numbers of public relations scholars, products of an expanding network of undergraduate and graduate public relations degree programs. Near the end of the 20th century, 70 schools offered master's degrees and 4 offered doctoral degrees in public relations (Seitel, 2000). Graduates of these programs have contributed to the healthy growth of a research tradition in public relations. According to Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru, and Jones (2003), 20% of the articles published in leading public relations journals through 2000 contributed to theory-building – an increase from 4% in 1984. This research has not only contributed to professionalization of the field, it has led to new theories and perspectives of public relations.

Emergence of a Strategic Management Perspective in Public Relations

Management theory. Emergence of a *management* perspective in public relations has contributed to professionalization of the field. Following World War II, Cutlip and Center (1952) published their first text describing the concept of public relations management. The evolution of this management approach represented a scientific and ethical advance over previous public relations approaches that had been associated with “muckraking journalists ... [and] ... one-way persuasive communication” (Cutlip et al., 2000, pp. 2-3). As J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) pointed out, public relations managers become concerned with more than simple message dissemination, or “what public relations managers *do*” (p. 8). In *doing* public relations, J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) advised senior public relations managers to follow a management by objective (MBO) approach described by Duncan (1978). The MBO approach defines the management process in terms of results that are planned, implemented, and measured through action-oriented ends. J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) described the essential nature of these ends in terms of goals and objectives:

Goals are generalized ends – ends that provide a framework for decision-making and behavior but are too broad to help much in making day-to-day decisions.

Objectives, on the other hand, are ends in view – expected solutions to day-to-day problems that we can use to deal with that problem and evaluate whether we have solved it. (p. 116)

I added terms to J. Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) conceptualization of MBO. *Tactics* have been written about and discussed extensively in public relations literature and are often assigned as responsibilities for public relations *technicians* to carry out. Wilcox, et

al. (2000) described public relations tactics as “the ‘nuts and bolts’ part of the plan that describes, in sequence, the specific activities that put the strategies into operation and help to achieve the stated objectives” (p. 151). Also, a public relations *strategy* is “a well-coordinated approach to reaching an overall goal” (Wilson, 2000, p. 2), or a framework of guidelines that describes “how in concept, an objective is to be achieved” (Wilcox, et al., 2000, p. 150). Such strategic plans in public relations often identify strategic publics, preferred communication channels, potential obstacles, and even specific themes and messages that should be communicated.

Public relations managers also become concerned with the *effect* of their strategic plans and actions. Since not all outcomes of public relations actions are desired, responsible, or effective, public relations activities must be managed to ensure optimal outcomes for organizations and their publics. Second, *managing* public relations becomes more ethical than simply *doing* public relations. According to J. Grunig and Hunt (1984), public relations activities are part of a broader program of managing communication between organizations and their publics. Hence, public relations requires dialogue or two-way communication designed to achieve mutual understanding rather than less ethical, one-way persuasive communication that attempts to satisfy only the interests of an organization.

Systems theory. The emergence of a management perspective in public relations also was influenced by development of *systems theory* – specifically, a theory of open systems – in organizational management. Many social scientists have adopted an open systems perspective for the study of complex organizations that can be traced to the study of physics and biology (e.g., von Bertalanffy, 1950). According to open systems theory,

organizations are linked with resources contained in their external environment – and the external environment linked to products supplied by the organization. As von Bertalanffy observed, “A system is ... open if there is import and export and, therefore, change of the components” (p. 23). Thus, organizations have no impermeable boundaries; rather organizations and their external environment are interdependent and open to each other. Katz and Kahn (1966), for instance, used open systems theory to trace patterns of activities between an organization and its external environment; and then determine how output was associated with management of resources required to sustain the organization. Open systems studies of this kind have led to interorganizational theories, which explain linkages and patterns of interaction between organizational systems and subsystems (e.g., J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Negandhi, 1980).

From a public relations perspective, then, interdependence creates a need for communication and public relations; and an organization uses public relations to manage interdependent relationships, which are “the substance of public relations” (L. Grunig et al., 1992, p. 69). However, J. Grunig (1992) and L. Grunig et al. (2002) realized that systems theory alone cannot explain how public relations management contributes to organizational effectiveness in practice. For example, literature from the study of the excellence theory suggested that managers often construct narrow or inaccurate assessments of their organization’s external environment. Moreover, certain types of organizations often do not choose to engage in symmetrical communication with their external publics. In some cases, “an authoritarian dominant coalition sees the [two-way symmetrical] approach as a threat to its power” (p. 320). Furthermore, “even in cases where a dynamic or hostile environment existed, organizations often exhibited a closed

system mind-set that failed, then, to value the kind of strategic public relations that would help them cope with that turbulence” (p. 94).

Thus, other measures are required to explain how public relations could be managed most effectively within the organizational sphere. Research from the excellence theory has drawn upon the work of other scholars (e.g., Robbins, 1990; Hall, 1991) to identify four possible approaches to organizational effectiveness: goal attainment, systems, strategic constituencies, and competing values (J. Grunig, 2003; L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Ehling, 1992). I conceptualize one of these measures, the strategic constituencies approach, next and address others in the subsequent section on organizational effectiveness.

Strategic management and situational theory. J. Grunig (1968, 1978, 1989a; 1992a, 1997, 2003; J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984) refined the management approach to public relations by offering a *strategic* perspective of public relations management. This perspective is consistent with the concept of *strategic constituencies*, which L. Grunig et al. (1992) and L. Grunig et al. (2002) identified in their studies of the excellence theory in public relations as one of four ways to evaluate organizational effectiveness. According to J. Grunig (2003),

The strategic constituencies approach ... puts meaning into the term environment by specifying parts that are crucial for organizational survival and success.

Strategic constituencies are the elements of the environment whose opposition or support can threaten the organization’s goals or help them attain them. (p. 100).

The situational theory of publics first emerged as a monograph by J. Grunig (1968) that described the role of information in economic and decision-making theory.

Situational theory rejected the popular notion of a *general public* and provided a means to identify and manage strategically the relationships between an organization and its *strategic publics*. I borrow from J. Grunig (2003) to define a public as “a group of people who face a problem, are divided on its solution, and organize to discuss it” (p. 95); and from L. Grunig et al. (2002) to define strategic publics as “groups most able to constrain or to help the organization” (p. 95). J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) relied on situational theory to categorize publics according to their relationship and response to a problem:

People who are not involved with the problem are a nonpublic. Those who experience a consequence of organizational behavior but have not yet recognized it as a problem, are a latent public. Those who recognize the problem are an aware public. Those who discuss solutions are an active public. (J. Grunig, 2003, p. 95)

Situational theory also explains “that publics begin as disconnected systems of individuals experiencing common problems but that these disconnected systems can organize into powerful activist groups” (J. Grunig, 2003, p. 94). Studies of situational theory have identified four kinds of publics that can arise from problematic situations:

1. All-issue publics: Publics active on all problems.
2. Apathetic publics: Publics inattentive to all of the problems.
3. Single-issue publics: Publics active on one or a small subset of the problems that concerns only a small part of the population....
4. Hot-issue publics: Publics active only on a single problem that involves nearly everyone in the population and that has received extensive media coverage. (J. Grunig, 2003, p. 97)

L. Grunig (1992b) also defined a fifth type of public: activist. An activist public is composed of “a group of two or more individuals who organize in order to influence another public or publics through action that may include education, compromise, persuasion, pressure tactics, or force” (p. 504). Activist publics are distinguished from other publics by the notion that they can become “initiators of (rather than targets for) public relations programs” (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1997, p. 35). These groups also merit special attention because they can organize into influential groups, even coalitions, which can “create issues and threaten organizational autonomy” (J. Grunig, 2003, p. 94). The diverse nature of these publics and potential threats imposed by active and activist publics then create the need for public relations:

Public relations contributes to strategic management by building relationships with publics with which it has relations.... Organizations plan public relations programs strategically, therefore, when they identify publics that are most likely to limit or enhance their ability to pursue the mission of the organization and design communication programs that help the organization manage its interdependence with these strategic publics. (J. Grunig, 2003, p. 103)

Beyond classification of publics, situational theory consists of two dependent and three independent variables that explain how information behavior and decision-making becomes situational (J. Grunig, 2003).⁴ According to the theory, dependent variables relate to active and passive information behavior or, respectively, information seeking and information processing. Information seeking consists of scanning the external environment for messages about a topic of interest. Information processing involves the

⁴ According to J. Grunig (2003), research and theory building subsequent to development of situational theory has added “cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral effects” to dependent variables. This addition is explained in more detail in J. Grunig (1997).

cognitive process of thinking about a topic once messages about it are discovered. Independent variables consist of problem recognition, or the extent to which people recognize a problem that affects them; level of involvement, which determines how personally and emotionally relevant people find a problem to be; and constraint recognition, or the extent to which people assume their behavior is limited by factors they cannot control. Research has supported the theory's premise that a combination of high problem recognition and low constraint recognition increase active and passive information behavior. Succinctly, "Decision makers are most likely to seek out or use information from public relations sources when it is relevant to them" (J. Grunig, p. 93). However, people will randomly process information about problems to which they assign low involvement. Furthermore, people who demonstrate more active information behavior are more likely to join active or activist publics.

Strategic management of public relations is guided by what J. Grunig (2003) referred to as a "behavioral molecule" (p. 98) that describes functions required to manage strategically. The structure of this molecule was first described by J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) and elaborated on by J. Grunig (2003):

Detect: Recognition of a problem requiring different behavior.

Construct: Thinking about a problem; identifying and weighing alternative solutions.

Define: Specifying how to put alternatives into operation.

Select: Choosing one alternative to implement as a behavior.

Confirm: Making sure the alternative chosen is the best choice.

Behave: Moving, doing something.

Detect: Stopping behavior because of a new problematic situation. (pp. 99-100)

Developing a model for strategic management of public relations, J. Grunig and Repper (1992) extended the behavioral molecule to a process described by stages and steps that contribute to effective organizational management. This process aligns internal activities of an organization with external factors that influence that organization. The model is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

The Strategic Management of Public Relations

1. *Stakeholder stage.* An organization has a relationship with stakeholders when the behavior of the organization or of a stakeholder has consequences on the other. Public relations should do formative research to scan the environment and the behavior of the organization to identify these consequences. Ongoing communication with these stakeholders helps to build a stable, long-term relationship that manages conflict that may occur in the relationship.
2. *Public stage.* Publics form when stakeholders recognize one or more of the consequences as a problem and organize to do something about it or them. Public relations should do research to identify and segment these publics. At this stage focus groups are particularly helpful. Communication to involve publics in the decision process of the organization helps to manage conflict before communication campaigns become necessary.
3. *Issue stage.* Publics organize and create “issues” out of the problems they perceive. Public relations should anticipate these issues and manage the organization’s response to them. This is known as “issues management.” The media play a major role in the creation and expansion of issues. In particular, their coverage of issues may produce publics other than activist ones—especially “hot-issue” publics. At this stage, research should segment publics. Communication programs should use the mass media as well as interpersonal communication with activists to try to resolve the issue through negotiation.

Public relations should plan communication programs with different stakeholders or publics at each of the above three stages. In doing so, it should follow Steps 4-7.

4. Public relations should develop formal objectives, such as communication, accuracy, understanding, agreement, and complementary behavior for its communication programs.

5. Public relations should plan formal programs and campaigns to accomplish the objectives.
6. Public relations, especially the technicians, should implement the programs and campaigns.
7. Public relations should evaluate the effectiveness of programs in meeting their objectives and in reducing the conflict produced by the problems and issues that brought about the programs.

Note. From *Excellence in Communication and Public Relations Management* (p. 124) by J. E. Grunig (Ed.), 1992, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum. Copyright 1992 by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. Adapted with permission.

The Excellence Theory in Public Relations

Development of strategic management approaches in public relations led to a theory of excellence in public relations, which many scholars regard as the most comprehensive study of public relations in history (J. Grunig, 1992a). Results of the study provide strong, empirical support for the normative and positive value of this theory. Therefore, the excellence theory suggests how public relations should be practiced in an ideal sense and describes how public relations is actually practiced in society.

Launched in 1985 by a team of researchers funded by a \$400,000 grant from the International Association of Business Communicators, this study became known as the excellence study. Committed to identifying characteristics of successful public relations programs and their value to organizations, the study – conducted in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada – produced the *excellence theory* in public relations, which has been described as “the first general theory of public relations” (J. Grunig, 1992b, p. 2). Results of this 17-year study were published in three parts: a first-stage literature

review (J. Grunig, 1992a); a summary of research results for public relations managers (Dozier, 1995); and an extended statistical analyses of study results, including the latest literature and data collected from case studies in several additional nations (L. Grunig et al., 2002).

In their preface to the final book in the study, the authors summarized the key findings of their research project (L. Grunig et al., 2002, pp. xi-xii). Public relations contributes value to an organization by developing and maintaining healthy relationships between organizations and their publics. Relationships produce reputation; and the quality of relationships and reputation is influenced more by organizational behavior than by mere dissemination of messages about an organization. Public relations managers who are empowered by organizational leaders and included among senior leaders can add value to an organization by bringing information into the organization that enhances strategic decision-making. Internal information programs for employees and other stakeholders can be strategically planned, managed, and evaluated to determine effectiveness. Symmetrical communication is more effective in developing and maintaining internal and external relationships than asymmetrical communication.

Participative organizational cultures, which are part of an organizational structure chosen by senior leadership, also contribute to employee satisfaction. Diversity contributes to organizational effectiveness; however, barriers to women's ability to assume top communication manager roles often inhibit effectiveness. The most excellent public relations departments are integrated with other organizational functions through a senior communication manager who has background in and formal knowledge of public relations; however, public relations and marketing functions are kept separate. Finally,

activism or external pressure on an organization creates the need for excellent public relations; and organizations with excellent public relations are able to reduce costly conflicts and external controls.

These findings are displayed in Table 2 as characteristics of excellent public relations programs that were identified in the first phase of the excellence study (J. Grunig, 1992b, p. 28). In subsequent phases of the study, quantitative and qualitative analysis of these characteristics isolated an excellence factor and produced a “scale of excellence in public relations” (L. Grunig et al., 2002, p. 74). This scale can be used to rate the level of public relations excellence and compare public relations programs within a variety of organizations, since analysis of excellence study data suggested that “characteristics of excellence are generic for all types of organizations” (p. 87).

Table 2

Characteristics of Excellent Public Relations Programs

- I. Program Level
 1. Managed strategically
- II. Department Level
 2. A single or integrated public relations department
 3. Separate function from marketing
 4. Direct reporting relationship to senior management
 5. Two-way symmetrical model
 6. Senior public relations person in managerial role
 7. Potential for excellent public relations, as indicated by:
 - a. Knowledge of symmetrical model
 - b. Knowledge of managerial role
 - c. Academic training in public relations
 - d. Professionalism
 8. Equal opportunity for men and women in public relations

- III. Organizational Level
 - 9. Worldview for public relations in the organization reflects the two-way symmetrical model
 - 10. Public relations director has power in or with the dominant coalition
 - 11. Participative rather than authoritarian organizational culture
 - 12. Symmetrical system of internal communication
 - 13. Organic rather than mechanical organizational structure
 - 14. Turbulent, complex environment with pressure from activist groups
- IV. Effects of Excellent Public Relations
 - 15. Programs meet communication objectives
 - 16. Reduces cost of regulation, pressure, and litigation
 - 17. Job satisfaction is high among employees

Note. From *Excellence in Communication and Public Relations Management* (p. 28) by J. E. Grunig (Ed.), 1992, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum. Copyright 1992 by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. Adapted with permission.

The normative and positive aspects of the excellence theory provide a useful framework for the study of multinational public relations. The NATO alliance, indeed, faces the type of internal and external turmoil that produces the need for excellence in public relations. Comparing the excellence theory with NATO's communication and public relations programs might identify how excellence theory principles could operate in a multinational organization. Furthermore, this comparison might suggest the level of excellence achieved in NATO public relations programs. This produced the first research question.

RQ1: Which principles of the excellence theory in public relations did NATO apply to its public relations programs in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1995 to 1996?

Organizational culture, worldview, and structure. L. Grunig et al. (2002) opened Chapter 8 of their third book in the excellence study with this description of the

excellence theory's key components: "If we were to choose a few keywords to describe the Excellence theory ... we would list five: Excellent public relations is *managerial, strategic, symmetrical, diverse, and ethical*" (p. 306). Having already addressed concepts of strategic management in public relations, I will turn to symmetry; but first, I will introduce several other key concepts that contribute to understanding of symmetry: worldview, culture, structure, diversity, and ethics.

According to the excellence theory, organizational culture, worldview, structure, and communication are closely associated. *Organizational culture* was defined by Dozier (1995) as "the sum total of shared values, symbols, meanings, beliefs, assumptions, and expectations that organize and integrate a group of people who work together" (p. 135). According to J. Grunig, (1992b), "Organizational culture affects public relations in the long term by molding the worldview for public relations. In the short term, it influences the choice of a model of public relations" (p. 25). Furthermore, culture and communication are interdependent, since "public relations is primarily a communication activity" and communication is culture-specific (Sriramesh & White, 1992, p. 609). Organizational culture arises from the broader concept of societal culture, which G. Hofstede (1980, 1991, 2001) and G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede (2005) related to a value system that distinguishes between social groups.

I address culture and its relationship with public relations in the section of this conceptualization dedicated to global theory; however, in the context of an organization, culture also influences worldview, which in turn affects organizational leaders' choice of communication strategies. This relationship has been described more precisely by Sriramesh, J. Grunig, & Buffington (1992):

Corporate culture thus influences public relations by providing a broad base of worldview, meanings, and values that affect all decisions in the organization – including the choice of a model of public relations and development of a schema that defines public relations and its purpose. (p. 579)

Organizational worldview has been defined by various scholars as sets of assumptions (Kearney, 1984) or “large abstract structures of knowledge that people use to organize what they know and to make sense of new information that comes to them” (J. Grunig & White, 1992, p. 33). Worldview is similar to the concept of schema in psychology (Weick, 1988, 1995; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Moussavi & Evans, 1993), which Schneider (aka L. Grunig, 1985); J. Grunig, Ramsey, and Schneider (1985); and Schmidt and Hitchon (1999) applied to public relations. Schneider (aka L. Grunig, 1985) noted that these structures determine what information people attend to, how people interpret information, and how people remember messages (pp. 38-39).

Schema theory shows how worldview influences the nature of public relations and communication within organizations and society. Schneider (aka L. Grunig, 1985) observed that messages directed from the top of a hierarchical organization often influence the entire organization, filtering down through levels of the hierarchy over time (p. 43). Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) found that “the chief executive officer can be seen as the architect, assimilator, and facilitator of strategic change” and that the initiation of change “involves a set of top management activities that are key to the effectiveness of the overall change process” (p. 433). Furthermore, Moussavi and Evans (1993) found that “individual-level interpretations of top strategic managers can be expected to converge into an organizational interpretation because managers use identical cognitive

schemata when making their personal interpretations” (p. 79). Finally, Leichty and Warner (2001) suggested that people adhere to worldview as a means to legitimize a “*way of life* [that] consists of a preferred pattern of *social relations* and a *cultural bias* or set of shared beliefs about human society and the natural world” (p. 63). Thus, worldviews influence the way public relations is defined and practiced in organizations and society.

Culture, worldview, and communication are also linked to *organizational structure*. This structure can be related to the degree of centralization in an organization, or “the hierarchy of authority that determines the extent to which decision-making is concentrated at the top of the organization” (L. Grunig et al., 2002, p. 484). Hence, centralized organizational structures often restrict the flow of information throughout an organization, inhibit internal communication, and lead to low job satisfaction among employees. Less centralized structures encourage free flow of information, value open internal communication, and promote higher job satisfaction. L. Grunig et al. offered the following definitions of organizational structure:

Traditional or *craft* organizations are small in scale and low in complexity.

Mechanical organizations are large-scale, low-complexity operations. *Organic*

organizations are small in scale but high in complexity. *Mixed*

mechanical/organic organizations are both large in scale in high in complexity.

(p. 485)

Distinguishing between types of organizational culture, the excellence study found that participative organizational cultures were more likely to contribute to excellence in public relations than authoritarian cultures (Sriramesh, J. Grunig, and

Buffington, 1992). Moreover, participative cultures correlated with organic organizational structure, symmetrical forms of internal communication, and high employee morale; while authoritarian cultures correlated with mechanical structures, asymmetrical internal communication, and low morale (L. Grunig et al., 2002, p. 62).

The multinational, political-military nature of NATO presents a unique opportunity to study the organization's culture and worldview. Knowledge of NATO's culture and worldview should also reveal how acculturation within this diverse, complex, and hierarchical organization might affect the alliance's management of communication and public relations programs. This produced a second research question.

RQ2: How did organizational culture influence NATO's management of IFOR public relations and communication programs in Bosnia-Herzegovina?

Diversity and ethics. L. Grunig et al. (2002) identified the need for *diversity* in public relations and associated diversity with *requisite variety*, a term defined by Weick (1979). L. Grunig et al. explained, "The principle of requisite variety states that there must be as much diversity inside the organization as in its environment for the organization to be able to build good relationships with all critical stakeholder publics" (p. 11). L. Grunig et al. also elaborated on requisite variety in the excellence theory:

Requisite variety means that practitioners from both genders ... and from different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds are needed in an excellent public relations department – not just for the benefit of these diverse practitioners but because they make the organization more effective. (p. 12)

Thus, organizations that maintain diversity in terms of gender, race and ethnicity, and other socioeconomic factors are better able to scan, detect, report, and manage issues emerging from the external environment.

Ethics in public relations is studied and practiced at various levels of conceptualization. For instance, ethics in public relations could be treated as a personal concept, as in telling the truth or lying (e.g., Sharpe, 2000), or as a professional business concept, as in complying with a code of ethics (Hunt & Tirpok, 1993). However, in the context of this study ethics takes on much deeper meaning as an organizational and a social concept. Here, ethics equates to a combination of corporate and individual conscience that guides entire organizations and their membership as they try “to decide the right course in a situation that is fraught with danger” (Goodpaster & Matthews, 1982, p. 132). L. Grunig et al. (2002) suggested that public relations can become the conscience of an organization by serving as “the management function primarily responsible for introducing moral values and social responsibility into organizational decisions” (p. 554). I will elaborate later on ethics and moral reasoning in the section devoted to philosophy, ethics, social responsibility, and moral theory.

Symmetry or the *symmetrical approach* to communication is a critical component in the excellence theory. In fact, J. Grunig (1992b) found that “choice of the symmetrical model of communication is the *key* [italics added] choice made by effective organizations” (p. 24). Furthermore, excellence study scholars reported that a symmetrical worldview and approach to public relations is the most ethical of communication models (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992, p. 320; L. Grunig et al., 2002, pp. 349-350), the most likely to produce effective relationships (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, p.

26; L. Grunig et al., xi), and the most likely to build collaborative structures that can help prevent costly conflicts between organizations and their publics (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, pp. 312-320; L. Grunig et al., xi), thereby contributing both social and monetary value to an organization's bottom line economic performance (Ehling, 1992; L. Grunig et al., xi).

The concept of communication symmetry in public relations was first addressed by J. Grunig (1984). He influenced new ways to conceptualize and operationalize public relations when he identified public relations as a "dependent variable to be explained" (L. Grunig et al., 2002, p. 308) and described public relations practices in terms of four conceptual models that could be measured empirically. J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) then defined, traced the historic origins of, and elaborated on these models in their seminal textbook on public relations management. According to J. Grunig and Hunt (p. 22), these models include:

1. Press Agency/Publicity: A form of propaganda, based on one-way communication from source to receiver, in which complete truth is not essential. This model incorporates little research outside measuring profits, is associated with a P. T. Barnum style of product promotion, and is often practiced by sports, theatre, and other entertainment organizations.
2. Public Information: Dissemination of information, based on one-way communication from source to receiver, in which truth is important. This model incorporates little research other than readability or readership surveys, is associated with the Ivy Lee approach to public relations, and is often practiced in government, non-profit associations, and non-competitive businesses.

3. Two-way Asymmetric: Described as “scientific persuasion” (p. 22), based on two-way communication between source and receiver, in which communication effects favor the source of communication. This model incorporates formative research designed to evaluate effects on audiences and their attitudes, is associated with Edward L. Bernays, and is often practiced in competitive businesses and agencies.
4. Two-way Symmetric: Designed to achieve mutual understanding, based on two-way communication between groups, in which communication effects are balanced between sources and receivers. This model incorporates formative research designed to evaluate understanding; also is associated with Bernays, educators, and other professional leaders; and is often practiced in regulated businesses and agencies.

Two-way symmetric communication exhibits characteristics that make it a more effective public relations strategy than other communication models (Dozier, 1995; J. Grunig, 1992a, 2001; J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984; L. Grunig et al., 2002). First, the two-way symmetric approach promotes dialogue rather than monologue. Second, it incorporates research designed to better understand the issues and interaction between organizations and publics that define their relationship, in contrast to other strategies that conduct research only to track communication effects and gain advantage over publics. Third, public relations managers who practice two-way symmetric communication and are included in the strategic decision-making process of an organization are able to influence changes within the organization *and* among publics, according to the strategic needs of each. Thus, in practice and in theory, public relations managers who use two-way

symmetric communication act more ethically and are more likely to build and maintain the types of healthy relationships that determine excellent public relations results.

Mixed-motive communication. Dozier (1995) remarked, “Excellent communication departments know how to practice both symmetrical and asymmetrical communication” (p. 51). This observation led the team of excellence study scholars to conclude that two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical communication strategies actually construct a single, mixed-motive communication model that the excellence theory describes as a *mixed-motive continuum* of communication. According to Dozier, “This mixed-motive model involves the short-term use of asymmetrical practices within the context of a broad symmetrical philosophy” (p. 51). Dozier went on to provide a useful elaboration of this notion that contextualized symmetry more precisely and underscored the overriding importance of ethical, symmetrical purpose:

Advanced practices combine two-way communication with negotiation and persuasion. Short-term asymmetrical tactics can be used to stake out more advantageous positions within the larger context of mutually beneficial relationships. Ethical communicators always subordinate asymmetrical methods to broad principles of symmetrical purpose. (p. 104)

Commenting on the development of a mixed-motive communication continuum, however, J. Grunig (2001) warned, “We need to know much more about strategies that practitioners can and do use at different points on this continuum” (p. 27).

A new dialogic model of public relations. The four models of public relations described above have been the focus of much public relations research since their introduction in the 1980s. The notion of symmetry in public relations, in particular, has

been a topic of widespread and sometimes heated discussion, debate, and criticism. Drawing upon research, particularly from studies of the excellence theory, J. Grunig (2001) provided a strong defense of the descriptive and explanatory power contained within these models. However, he also acknowledged that criticism of the symmetrical public relations model has prompted new thinking about this concept. This new thinking still places value on the requirement to balance interests of an organization with interests of publics but now accepts certain types of advocacy and antagonism as acceptable communication, in certain situations:

Symmetry might not have been the best choice of name for the model of public relations I had in mind, but unfortunately, it probably is too late to change the name. Mixed motives, collaborative advocacy, and cooperative antagonism all have the same meaning as does symmetry. (p. 28)

J. Grunig (2001) also disclosed that research in the area of relationship management has influenced him to reconceptualized public relations strategies. Instead of confining public relations in a typology of four separate models, he and L. Grunig et al. (2002) more recently conceived of public relations as part of a more comprehensive theory constructed from “dimensions or strategies that underlie the models” (p. 28). This developing theory incorporates a new two-way model of public relations excellence that replaces the concept of two-way symmetrical communication with *dialogic communication*, or dialogue, as a means to establish and maintain effective relationships. This model is supported by four dimensions or sets of variables (see J. Grunig, pp. 29-30; L. Grunig et al., pp. 306-382):

1. Symmetry or asymmetry, or the degree to which communication tends to move toward or away from collaboration and advocacy.
2. One-way or two-way communication, similar to the conceptualization of communication in the original public relations models.
3. Mediated or interpersonal communication, as in communicating through news media (e.g., press agency and public information) or through personal relationships (e.g., lobbying).
4. Ethical, which extends the concept of ethical communication to strategies other than symmetrical, as long as rules are applied to ensure ethical practice.

J. Grunig (2001) and L. Grunig et al. (2002) also reported that quantitative results of the excellence study provided empirical support for development of a new contingency model for communication in public relations. Unlike a previous model proposed by J. Grunig (1992a), which placed asymmetrical communication at one end of the continuum and symmetric communication at the other end, the revised model (Dozier, 1995; L. Grunig et al.) allows both symmetrical and asymmetrical forms of communication to operate anywhere along the continuum. Thus, symmetrical and asymmetrical forms of communication can be used together, as part of a broader mixed-motive strategy that has as its goal finding mutual agreement between parties in conflict.

This goal is represented by a “win-win zone” (Dozier, 1995, p. 48; L. Grunig et al., 2002, p. 357) in the middle, or equilibrium, of the mixed-motive continuum. On one side of the win-win zone lie dominant, exploitive positions and asymmetrical forms of communication that favor an organization. On the other side of the win-win zone exist dominant, exploitive positions and asymmetrical forms of communication that favor an

organization's publics. Along this continuum, organizations and publics may use purely cooperative, purely asymmetrical, or two-way dialogic communication to advocate for a position, accept a position, or reach compromise. Furthermore, excellence theory scholars who helped construct this model agreed that persuasion is permissible in certain situations when guided by ethical rules.

Although we found that pure asymmetry does not characterize excellent public relations ... persuasive tactics sometimes may be used to gain the best position for organizations within the win-win zone. Because such practices are bounded by a symmetrical worldview that respects the integrity of long-term relationships, the two-way model assumes that professional public relations is based on symmetrical, collaborative values. (L. Grunig et al., p. 358)

Hence, models have been updated and perhaps superseded by theoretical development in recent years. Introduction of these models and the scholarly debate that surrounded them were useful in building early public relations theory. However, as J. Grunig (2001) concluded, it is time to "move beyond typologies to theories composed of continuous rather than discrete variables" (p. 29).

Global Theory in Public Relations

Scholars have acknowledged the excellence study's significant contributions to a rapidly growing public relations body of knowledge. However, some scholars have questioned or criticized the positive aspects of such theory, suggesting that it is not representative of how public relations is *actually* practiced in non-Western nations (e.g., J. Grunig & Jaatinen, 1998; L. Grunig et al., 1998; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2001, 2003a; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002; Van Ruler, Verčič, Bütschi, & Flodin, 2004; Wakefield,

1996, 1997). For example, contemporary communication management theories and practices are based largely on U.S. and western-hemispheric concepts of organizations and public relations; hence, these programs may be ill suited to many nations and regions outside the western geographic sphere (Culbertson & Chen, 1996; Kruckeberg, 1996a, 1996b; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002).

Aligning with scholars, practitioners also have taken action to adapt practical U.S. public relations concepts to the demands created by globalization. For instance, Paluszek (2004) addressed the rhetorical question “How do we fit into the world?” by elaborating on efforts of professional public relations practitioners to keep up with rapid evolution of global markets. These efforts include:

1. Establishment of an international Public Relations Coalition, a partnership of 19 large, U.S.-based organizations that represent a variety of public relations, investment, and corporate communication concerns.
2. Efforts by the Public Relations Society of America to focus the attention of public relations practitioners on important international issues.
3. Organization of the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, an association of professional public relations societies linking practitioners in 60 countries throughout the Americas, Asia, Australia, Africa, and Europe.

Within the last decade, scholars have tried to extend the excellence theory by replicating excellence research or conducting cross-cultural public relations studies in a variety of Western and non-Western cultures, including Slovenia (L. Grunig et al., 1998; Verčič, L. Grunig, & J. Grunig, 1996), Norway (J. Grunig & Jaatinen, 1998), India

(Singh, 2000; Sriramesh, 1991), France (Sha, 1997); Greece (Lyra, 1991), China (Wu, 2002), and Arab nations (Kanso & Nelson, 2002). Culbertson and Chen (1996) published one of the first texts comparing public relations from an international perspective.

Collectively, these studies have inspired preliminary conceptualization of a global theory of public relations. Working toward development of this theory, several scholars (e.g., J. Grunig, L. Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang, & Lyra, 1995; L. Grunig et al., 1998; Verčič et al., 1996; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2001, 2003a; Wakefield, 1996, 1997) have collaborated on research that contributes to a theory of global public relations (L. Grunig, et al., 1998, 2002). This theory would operate between a cultural relativism and ethnocentric approach to public relations. Cultural relativism theories maintain that public relations concepts must differ according to region or country in order to accommodate the prevailing culture. An ethnocentric approach would hold that a single public relations theory, which reflects the culture of societies that contribute to the theory, could apply to all societies.

Like cultural relativism and ethnocentric approaches, international and global perspectives are often used to describe public relations activities that cross national and cultural borders. The terms international and global are often used interchangeably but application of these terms to public relations differs significantly. Few scholars have attempted to define international public relations in a formal sense (Wakefield, 1996). However, there is a growing body of literature that relates the international perspective to the practice of organizational public relations across borders and in many countries. According to Culbertson (1996), international public relations “focuses on the practice of public relations in an international or cross-cultural context” (p. 2). Anderson (1989)

recognized that international public relations practitioners often develop individual programs to meet the needs of multiple markets; however, global practitioners develop programs based on interrelated or similar concepts and then adapt these programs to different settings.

According to a theory of global public relations, similarities in public relations concepts are described by generic principles (L. Grunig et al., 1998, 2002). L. Grunig et al. (2002) offered one of the best summaries of these principles and located them in the context of cultural relativism and ethnocentrism, or international and global theory. The principles consist of broad, generic principles with specific applications. In a normative sense, the principles are abstract public relations concepts that are understood in the same way around the world and could operate effectively in most nations. In practice, however, the principles would have to be adapted to nation-specific variations in cultural, political, and other socio-economic systems. J. Grunig and Jaatinen (1999) found that the principles also are generic to most kinds of organizations (e.g., government, corporate, agency, non-profit) but must be adapted to specific organizations.

The excellence study produced 14 characteristics of public relations excellence, described previously in this paper. Extending these principles to the practice of public relations in Slovenia, Verčič et al. (1996) identified nine generic principles that could be applied to public relations programs in most countries. These principles include:

1. Involvement of public relations in an organization's strategic management.
2. A direct reporting relationship between the senior public relations manager and senior organizational management.
3. An integrated public relations function.

4. Public relations as a management function separate from other functions.
5. The role of the public relations practitioner (e.g., a knowledgeable, senior communication manager who directs and technicians who carry out tasks).
6. Two-way symmetrical model of public relations.
7. Symmetrical system of internal communication.
8. Knowledge potential for managerial role and symmetrical public relations.
9. Diversity embodied in all roles.

In addition to identifying generic principles, Verčič et al. (1996) described five external, environmental variables at a national or social level that could influence application of public relations principles: political system, economic system, level of activism, culture, and media systems. These systems are derived from the cultural values that identify nations and, as explained previously, influence communication and public relations. Sriramesh and Verčič (2001) collapsed these variables into three categories: national infrastructure, media system, and social culture. Furthermore, Sriramesh and Verčič elaborated on these variables and operationalized them to create a research framework that supports the study of generic or global public relations practices in various countries.

Finally, Sriramesh and Verčič (2003a) used the framework developed in their 2001 study as a blueprint for an edited collection of comparative, country-specific studies of public relations on every continent (Sriramesh & Verčič). These comparative studies have contributed to development of a global theory of public relations in two important ways. First, the studies described, by nation, specific public relations practices, levels of knowledge and professionalism among practitioners, effect of professional organizations

on social responsibility and ethical communication, status of public relations education, challenges faced by public relations, and prevalence of strategic public relations processes such as measurement and evaluation. Second, the studies linked empirical findings to the sociocultural factors developed from previous studies of global public relations theory. This has resulted in a conceptual framework of environmental variables and sub-elements that could be used to explore the normative and positive dimensions of a global theory in public relations. This framework is summarized, below, from Sriramesh and Verčič (2003b):

1. *Country Infrastructure*

- a. *Political system.* The political ideology of a nation (e.g., Western democratic, Communist, developing nation).
- b. *Level of economic development.* Extent of economic freedom as indicated by market economy, availability of goods and supplies, etc.
- c. *Level of activism.* Existence of external pressure from organized labor unions, special interest groups, and other activist organizations.
- d. *Legal system.* Laws and regulations that control behavior of citizens.

2. *Societal Culture*

- a. *Determinants of societal culture.* Ways in which nations adopt one or more cultures (e.g., economic, social structure, ideology, personality traits).
- b. *Dimensions of societal culture.* These include dimensions from G. Hofstede (1980, 2001) and G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede (2005),

which I describe in a subsequent section on communication and culture.

- c. *Corporate culture*. The influence of societal culture on organizational culture (see Culbertson & Chen, 1996; J. Grunig & White, 1992; Sriramesh, J. Grunig, and Buffington, 1992; Sriramesh and White, 1992; Wakefield, 1996, 1997).

3. *Media and Public Relations*

- a. *Mass media and national image*. How mass media and mediated messages influence perceptions of nations and their citizens.
- b. *Media control*. Span of control over a nation's media or extent to which media are free to collect and report news.
- c. *Media outreach*. Extent to which citizens, including public relations professionals, are able to diffuse information and reach mass audiences through the media.
- d. *Media access*. Extent to which citizens are able to gain access to media for purposes of disseminating messages.

Finally, European scholars (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002; Van Ruler, Verčič, Bütschi, & Flodin, 2004) also produced a Delphi study of 25 European and former Soviet bloc nations that offered a comparative analysis of public relations in Europe and the United States. Reporting results of these studies, the authors identified four parameters that could characterize European public relations practice and study: managerial, operational, reflective, and educational. These latter studies have been exploratory in nature. They also reflect current trends in efforts to study generic principles of global

public relations; determine how cultural, political, and societal variables influence public relations in practice and theory; and describe how public relations must adapt to unique national and cultural identities.

Since NATO consists of 26 nations located across three continents, I make the assumption that the alliance's communication and public relations programs are influenced by a variety of global variables and systems described above. If so, qualitative study of NATO's communication behavior should reveal generic public relations principles agreed to and adapted by these 26 nations to the alliance's global operations. This produced the third research question.

RQ3: Which, if any, excellence theory principles applied by NATO to IFOR communication programs were associated with generic principles of a global theory in public relations?

Public Relations and Public Diplomacy

Public relations and public diplomacy are both important behavioral aspects in multinational, political-military alliances like NATO. Although both behaviors are derived from communication concepts and are often coordinated in communication planning, public relations and public diplomacy are distinctly different concepts. Since this is a public relations study, I will distinguish between the two. As I have previously defined it, public relations refers to how an organization manages communication with its publics. These publics usually constitute important audiences comprised of strategic groups or individuals, often in a domestic sense. In the context of this study, public diplomacy generally refers to how nations like the United States or an alliance of nations

like NATO manage *diplomatic* communication with other nations and with *international* audiences for the purposes of enacting foreign policy.

Public relations and public diplomacy both rely on communication processes but differ in the aim of communication. Belay (1997) described “actors” (p. 229) or what I refer to as strategic audiences as a key difference between public relations and public diplomacy:

It is important to note that not individuals or groups, but countries constitute the primary interactional actors in diplomacy.... It is therefore useful to conceptualize first the specific constructions of diplomacy as a process as well as context of interaction between nation-states. (p. 229)

Public diplomacy is often conducted in concert with other communication activities that many governments refer to as *public information* or *public affairs*. J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) explained that most U.S. government agencies practice public information rather than public relations due to legislation (e.g., Gillett Amendment) that restricts government agencies from hiring publicity specialists. Many other nations and NATO also refer to public relations activities as public information, which suggests a government’s constitutional obligation to provide information to their citizens or constituents. Public affairs, on the other hand, describes “a specialized public policy and government relations program that is managed by the organization’s public relations subsystem” (p. 285). The U.S. Department of State combines both public affairs and public diplomacy into a single department. A mission statement on the U.S. Department of State’s public Web site describes the difference – and the common communication relationship – between both:

U.S. engagement in the world and the Department of State's engagement of the American public are indispensable to the conduct of foreign policy. The Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs helps ensure that public diplomacy (engaging, informing, and influencing key international audiences) is practiced in harmony with public affairs (outreach to Americans) and traditional diplomacy to advance U.S. interests and security and to provide the moral basis for U.S. leadership in the world. (U.S. Department of State, 2005, p. 1)

The Glossary of Terms in this report defines public relations, public affairs, and other terms that are used by the United States and NATO to describe information-related activities.

In summary, building on J. Grunig and Hunt's (1984) definitions of public relations and public affairs, public relations is a broad term that refers to communication management between organizations and publics, in general. Public diplomacy is a more specialized function than public relations. Sometimes carried out by public relations experts or integrated with public relations, public diplomacy refers to management of foreign policy communication between nations and publics.

During the 1995-1996 period of this study, the NATO headquarters organization maintained an office of information and press – equivalent to an office of public relations – that was separate but coordinated with public diplomacy functions. NATO headquarters subsequently combined public relations and public diplomacy in a single, public diplomacy division. IFOR, while deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina, maintained separate offices for public information (public relations) and public diplomacy. IFOR's chief of public information was a senior, U.S. military public affairs officer. IFOR's

political advisor (public diplomacy and public affairs) was a senior NATO diplomat. The IFOR chief of public information and political advisor worked together closely to coordinate, integrate and manage IFOR's public communication efforts.

Organizational Management

Theories of organizations and management are too expansive to address here in detail. The literature addresses power from an interpersonal perspective (e.g., Berger, 1985), an interorganizational perspective (e.g., Mintzberg, 1983), and even a broader international perspective that addresses negotiation between coalitions, cultural groups, and even nations (e.g., Friedland, 1976; Lewicki, Saunders, & Minton, 1999). Scholars have addressed external dimensions of power, such as a person's ability to alter his or her environment – including relationships; and internal dimensions, such as the psychological changes within people that power can bring about – including attitudes toward other people or things (Willer & Lovaglia, 1997). Descriptions often refer to bases, means, strengths, costs, amount, scope, control, causality, and domains of power. The power literature also spans a number of theoretical boundaries: field theory, exchange theory, and conflict theory to name a few (see Zelditch, 2000).

Given the complexity of this literature, I locate my research within the areas of theory that best conceptualize the role of strategic public relations management in organizations. These areas include concepts of *power* in and around organizations, public relations management and *strategic decision-making* in organizations, and *organizational effectiveness*.

Power in Organizations

Mintzberg (1983) made light of the many, confusing definitions of power and the difficulties scholars encounter in studies of power: “Everyone seems to know what it is except the experts.... Yet ordinary people seem to have no trouble with the concept. They know what it means to have power and they can sense who has it” (p. 1).

I limit my conceptualization of power as an “exchange of ‘resources’” (Zelditch, 2000, p. 1458) commonly associated with organizations and the external and internal influences that drive organizational decisions. In terms of resources, I generally refer to exchange of information in a public relations sense. In fairness to Mintzberg, he has done much as an expert and scholar to clarify the meaning of power. Hence, I begin with his definition of power in organizations, which is “the capacity to effect (or affect) organizational outcomes” (p. 4). My conceptualization also includes public relations as an important element in determining these organizational outcomes.

Mintzberg (1983) is among a group of scholars that views power and influence as equivalent concepts (also see Dahl, 1957; French & Raven, 1959). Other scholars have viewed power and influence as related but different concepts. For instance, Willer and Lovaglia (1997) conceived of power as a form of control over goods and resources, and influence as a means derived from power to change beliefs or persuade. Other scholars focus conceptualization of power on the notion of control over the behavior or outcomes of other people (Berger, 1985; Dahl, 1957; De Dreu, 1995; Rodrigues-Bailon, Moya, & Yzerbyt, 2000). Mintzberg explained that actors can gain or exercise power through “*means or systems of influence*” (p. 3). Borrowing from Dahl, Mintzberg also acknowledged that there is no “convenient verb form” (p. 5) of power; hence, “We are

forced to talk of influencing or controlling instead, and all kinds of semantic problems arise as a result” (p. 5). To clarify these problems, I conceive of power as an ability to do something (noun) and influence as something that can be done (verb).

This notion can be elaborated further and related to organizations and public relations management by explaining how influence derives from power. First, Rubin and Brown (1975) described five types of power: referent (from feelings of solidarity), expert (from superior knowledge or abilities), legitimate (from rightful claims), informational (from availability of information), and reward or coercive (from ability to impose reward or punishment). Thus, senior leaders derive expert power from the role they play in the dominant coalition of an organization. They and public relations managers derive power from their control over information. This power can then be exercised and managed inside and outside an organization through mixed-motive, symmetrical, and asymmetrical communication strategies already described in this study. To be more precise, an organization can share this power with publics through purely collaborative strategies designed to achieve mutual understanding and cooperation; or an organization can exercise power through asymmetrical strategies designed to influence or persuade publics to adopt an organization’s point of view.

Mintzberg (1983) explained in more precise detail how power in and around organizations affects organization-public relationships. First, he identified control over resources, skills, and knowledge (e.g. information) as the bases of power. This control takes several forms: external and internal, indirect and direct. External coalitions can consist of regulatory agencies, shareholders, boards of directors, and activist groups. Internal coalitions include an organization’s executives, managers, operators, and staff.

Indirect controls include social norms, formal constraints, and pressure campaigns that delineate boundaries between organizations and their environment. Direct controls consist of means of direct access and influence: membership on boards, involvement in or control over decision-making, control over resources, etc.

Second, Mintzberg (1983) demonstrated how power can be exercised. An organization can be controlled by a dependency upon its environment, or concentration of power in hands of one individual, group, or coalition. It also can be influenced in a number of ways by internal and external publics. According to Mintzberg, organizations can be:

1. Nationalized: controlled or owned by government.
2. Democratized: influenced by broad controls, participative decision-making.
3. Regulated: influenced, not controlled, by government regulation or oversight.
4. Pressured: subjected to activist campaigns, lobbying.
5. Trusted: relied upon to act morally.
6. Ignored: assumed to balance economic and social good.
7. Induced: influenced by economic incentives to behave responsibly.
8. Restored: given back to shareholders.

Finally, Mintzberg (1983) explained how organizations respond to control. When they encounter an issue or situation that challenges organizational control, leadership collects information, takes advice, decides on a course of action, obtains authorization for the action, issues instructions to execute or implement the action, and then carries out the action.

Other scholars have linked power to the concepts of culture and communication described in previous sections of this study. For instance, Mumby (1987) provided an explanation for how power is linked to organizational culture, ideology, and communication. First, Mumby described organizational communication or narrative as “one of the principal symbolic forms through which organizational ideology and power structures are both expressed and constituted” (p. 113). He added,

Ideology is materially grounded in the organized practices of social actors. . . .

Ideology and power are inextricably tied together insofar as ideology articulates social reality in terms of interests expressed by the dominant social group(s). In the context of organizations, power is most successfully exercised by those who can structure their interests into the organizations framework itself. (p. 119)

This conceptualization of power reveals how public relations can contribute to strategic management and decision-making in organizations. Using Mintzberg’s (1983) model of organizational decision-making, public relations contributes to scanning of the environment to detect emerging issues, the flow of information into the organization, advice and counsel to leadership, strategic decision-making in the organization, and dissemination of information about decisions. Moreover, public relations activities can become an important part of the actions carried out by an organization in response to issues and control situations. From Mumby’s (1987) perspective, public relations managers contribute to and may even have primary responsibility for managing the organizational communication, or narrative, through which organizational ideology and power are expressed. As Cheney (1992) reported in a rhetorical sense, “public relations

experts necessarily [present and] re-present their organizations through symbols of their own creation” (p. 179).

Postmodern, critical scholars, however, have questioned the role of public relations managers in the power structure of an organization. For instance, Holtzhausen and Voto (2002) argued that control of power by an organization’s senior leadership marginalizes the organization’s employees. From this critical perspective, public relations managers should serve as organizational activists, working as intermediaries between leaders and employees within the organization to ensure equitable distribution of power. So, questions remain that require conceptualization of power in public relations.

Strategic Decision-Making

Each organization is led by a dominant coalition, which L. Grunig et al. (2002) defined as “the group of individuals in the organization that have the power to determine its mission and goals” (p. 141). In their literature review for the excellence study, J. Grunig and his colleagues (1992a) described the need for including public relations managers in the dominant coalition and involving public relations in the strategic decision-making process of organizations. L. Grunig (1992a) observed that public relations is often conceptualized in structural terms, with regard to the place and role public relations assumes within the hierarchy of an organization. She also noted that most public relations practitioners “remain ‘outside the door’ when ... top-level decisions are being made” (p. 483) by senior organizational leaders, which implied that most public relations practitioners are powerless in terms of organizational responsibility. Public relations practitioners who are left outside the realm of strategic decision-making often are relegated to merely disseminating information and carrying out basic publicity

functions. Therefore, L. Grunig suggested including public relations managers in the dominant coalition and involving them in strategic decision-making.

Empowering public relations managers benefits the field of public relations and organizations. First, entrusting power to public relations in terms of decision-making responsibility advances public relations from a technical function to a managerial function and professional status (L. Grunig, 1992a; J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Second, including public relations in the dominant coalition allows the organization to benefit from the expertise of a public relations manager, who contributes to strategic decision-making by improving the flow of information between an organization and its internal and external publics. Third, elevating public relations to the decision-making level contributes to society. Allowing public relations to contribute to organizational communication and ideology helps an organization meet its commitments to society. Conversely, reflexive public relations can introduce into an organization social norms and values from the external environment that could improve organizational effectiveness.

In the preceding section, I used Mintzberg's (1983) conceptualization of power in and around organizations to illustrate how public relations might become involved with organizational decision-making. However, Mintzberg's concept of power is based on the notion of control over resources. The excellence theory moves beyond conceptualization of power as a means to *control*. Such power control schemes can result in one party benefiting to the detriment of another party. Instead, the excellence theory addresses *empowerment* of both organizations and their publics for mutual benefit, rather than control of power by one over another (L. Grunig et al., 2002, pp. 140-142).

This concept is sound in both a normative and positive sense. The symmetry implied by sharing power to achieve mutually beneficial goals constitutes a normative ideal. Furthermore, empowerment has been found to work in practice as well. Establishing a goal of mutual benefit, or a win-win zone, does not mean that an organization always has to relinquish its power. Rather, an organization negotiates power in an attempt to reach agreement – sometimes winning, sometimes compromising, sometimes losing – but always striving to establish and maintain healthy, long-term relationships that reduce organizational costs. Results of the excellence study have shown that participative organizational cultures, which rely on symmetrical internal communication, empower employees and promote high job satisfaction. Entrusting public relations professionals to manage symmetrical communication systems between organizations and their publics also empowers members of external audiences, which has been shown to produce more effective relationships.

The concept of empowering public relations adopted in the later stages of excellence theory development has led to a refinement of strategic public relations management model created by J. Grunig and Repper (1992) shown in Table 1 and explained in the section of this chapter dedicated to strategic management and situational theory. As explained by L. Grunig et al. (2002), empowerment allows a public relations manager to contribute to strategic decision-making in several ways. First, public relations managers scan the environment and identify publics that might be affected by an organization's decisions. The public relations manager then discusses any issues that arise as a consequence of an organization's decisions and negotiates – between the organization and publics – a solution that will improve relationships.

Programs designed to build and maintain long-term relationships are at the heart of the strategic decision-making process for public relations. These programs build relations with publics, maintain those relations, and prevent publics from arising around issues or crises that could generate pressure or control over an organization's operations. Several scholars have associated long-term relationships with outcomes and measures that indicate organizational effectiveness and public relations excellence (J. Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Hung, 2002). Other scholars have developed theories of public relations that focus on management of relationships rather than management of communication (e.g., Ledingham, 2003; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). This perspective moves concepts of public relations value away from evaluation of short-term technical processes (e.g., counting news clippings that result from a press conference) and toward evaluation that relies on more strategic, long-range indicators of excellent public relations (J. Grunig & Huang).

These programs also require public relations to manage itself strategically by using research, establishing goals and objectives, budgeting resources, implementing strategies, and conducting evaluation of public relations activities. Refinement of this model introduces a final element of strategic management: production of a "reputational relationship ... based on limited involvement with an 'audience' (but not a 'public') with an organization" (L. Grunig et al., 2002, p. 147). Audiences here are distinguished from publics, in that audiences are not affected by organizational decisions and do not organize into publics to discuss consequences of those decisions.

Organizational Effectiveness and Value of Public Relations

I explained in the preceding section on strategic management and situational theory the ways that organizational effectiveness can be viewed from a public relations perspective. In that section, I explained one of those approaches: the strategic constituencies approach. Here, I explain the remaining three: systems, goal-attainment, and competing values. Finally, I elaborate the concept of public relations value to organizations. This conceptualization locates organizational effectiveness in studies of relationship management (J. Grunig & Huang, 2000), situational theory (J. Grunig, 2003), and the theory of excellence in public relations (J. Grunig, 1992a; Dozier, 1995; L. Grunig et al., 2002).

Systems perspective. The systems approach to organizational effectiveness relies on the theory of systems already explained in this conceptualization. This theory explains how public relations contributes to organizational effectiveness by managing communication and relationships that operationalize the interdependence between organizational and public systems. In this context, public relations managers serve as *boundary spanners* that scan the environment, bring information from that environment into the organization, and communicate information about the organization to publics. Public relations managers do more than simply convey information, however. They also contribute to organizational effectiveness by recognizing emerging issues, examining their potential effects on the organization, reflecting on potential consequences of organizational decisions on publics, and providing counsel to senior leaders that enriches strategic decision-making.

Public relations also contributes to organizational effectiveness by creating and managing internal communication systems, preferably systems that are based on a symmetrical worldview. In this way, public relations is able to connect organizational leaders with employees and organizational systems with subsystems. L. Grunig et al. (2002) concluded, however, that a systems approach to organizational effectiveness has limits. First, systems approaches to evaluating organizational effectiveness emphasize means used to obtain resources from the external environment. Second, research from the excellence study has shown that organizational leaders often base decisions on inaccurate perceptions of their external environment. Third, even when perceptions are accurate, some organizations (e.g., authoritarian dominant) elect to maintain a closed-system mindset. The latter conditions inhibit public relations from contributing to organizational effectiveness.

Goal-attainment perspective. The goal attainment approach to organizational effectiveness emphasizes ends, or accomplishment of goals, over means of achieving those ends; thus, organizations that meet their goals are considered effective. This perspective also provides a very clear, empirical means to measure effectiveness, as long as organizations start out with goals that are, as Ehling (n.d.) suggested, “legitimate, attainable, measurable, and cost-effective” (as quoted in Van Dyke, 1989, p. 26). Ehling and Dozier (1992), drawing upon an operations research perspective, added:

The determination of what constitutes efficiency or effectiveness requires several basic ingredients: well-defined means (concrete, measurable courses of action or

strategies), attainable and verifiable ends (valuated, measurable outcomes), and an appropriate and meaningful standard or norm that can be used to determine which means is the most efficient or effective or both. (pp. 262-263)

Again, however, self-interests of organizational leaders often undermine the ability of a goal-attainment approach to accurately determine organizational effectiveness. As Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) observed, “Most measures of efficiency are open to contest” (p. 34). Hence, the degree to which organizations achieve their goals is often subject to interpretation by organizational leaders that might rearticulate goals as a way of justifying an organization’s actions in retrospect (L. Grunig et al., 1992). Furthermore, goal-attainment is an internal standard set by organizational leaders; however, “The acceptability of an organization and its activities is ultimately judged by those outside the organization” (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, p. 11).

Competing values perspective. Unlike goal-attainment measures that emphasize ends and systems measures that emphasized means, the competing values approach to organizational effectiveness balances ends and means in the evaluation process. This approach has grown from typologies that compare measures of effectiveness with measures of efficiency. In other words, effectiveness from a competing values perspective views the cost of means required to achieve ends and makes a relative assessment of priorities, costs, quality, and efficiency of performance (L. Grunig et al., 2002). Efficiency, like effectiveness, is an internal standard and can be measured, for instance, by the cost (e.g., worker hours, material, legal fees) required to produce a certain amount, number, or quality in terms of output. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), borrowing from Katz and Kahn (1966), explained efficiency in terms of a steam engine.

The steam engine converts fuel into energy. As a result of friction between parts, energy is lost during the energy-production process; therefore, energy production is less than 100 percent of the energy required to fuel the engine. The ratio of energy to output becomes a measure of the engine's efficiency.

Organizational effectiveness, on the other hand, is "an assessment of the organization's output and activities" (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, p. 37). Thus, the steam engine's effectiveness would be assessed by how much energy it produced; and efficiency measures how well the engine produces this amount of energy. The steam engine's operators, or in the context of this study the organizational leaders, would have to assign priorities to the values placed on efficiency, quantity, quality, cost, and other performance factors. A competing values approach to effectiveness then determines how effective the organization has been in meeting its goals in relation to these priorities.

Theoretical Implications of Power in Organizations and Public Relations

Conceptualization of power in organizations and public relations has important implications to public relations managers, especially those who find themselves in activist environments. This is even more cogent in settings that involve international conflict and political-military organizations that wrestle with matters of mortal consequence. In particular, public relations managers must be aware of and able to distinguish between concepts of power control and empowerment. Studies of public relations ethics (e.g., Bowen, 2000; J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1996) have identified dilemmas associated with a public relations practitioner's division of loyalties between self, employer, publics, and society. J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1996) warned of pragmatism, which can lead "people or organizations to do what is necessary to further

their own interests” (p. 15). This pragmatism, or pursuit of self interests, could encourage practitioners or organizations to rely on an asymmetrical worldview of public relations and communication strategies that are not in the best interest of publics. J. Grunig and White (1992) cautioned, “Asymmetric worldview steers public relations practitioners toward actions that are unethical, socially irresponsible, and ineffective” (p. 40).

In some cases, especially within political-military scenarios that involve diplomacy and military forces, these asymmetrical actions could include communication activities such as coercion, which might incorporate threatening messages. This fits within Rosenbaum’s (1986) concept of coercion, which can be enacted through physical *and* nonphysical means of force. These activities, from a theoretical perspective, could be considered as acceptable forms of persuasion or negotiation; however, from a public relations excellence perspective they are generally viewed as unethical and, at best, a questionable invasion of freedom and human rights.

Yet, a review of literature indicated that many political-military organizations – including NATO – rely on non-physical as well as physical coercion when managing international communication and public relations. When the collective security of the NATO alliance is threatened, for instance, NATO is authorized by Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty to respond with application of military force:

The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognized [*sic*] by Article 51 of the

Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, *including the use of armed force* [italics added], to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area. (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1998, p. 396)

In fact, NATO used Article 5 and a U.N. mandate to authorize deployment of IFOR peacekeepers to Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1995, as instability in the Balkans was perceived by NATO as a threat to European member nations. IFOR then used military forces to implement the military provisions of the peace accords as a means to restore stability in the region. Combelles-Siegel (1998) described how NATO used integrated public information activities, at times, as a “non-lethal weapon” (p. 146) to compel compliance with the peace accords. According to Jentleson (2000), the U.S. government utilizes *coercive diplomacy* (e.g., threat of political, economic, or military sanctions) to deter foreign nations or groups from taking specified actions, compel these nations or groups to cease actions, reassure them that taking certain actions is not necessary, or induce them to take other actions. Jentleson characterized coercive diplomacy as a normative and positive concept, and characterized “threat or use of military force as frequently necessary parts of overall preventive strategies” (p. 5). Citing findings from recent political-military studies, he concluded, “One of the key lessons of the first decade of the post-Cold War era, based on my own work and that of others, is that while coercion is rarely sufficient for prevention, it often is necessary” (p. 5).

Coercion. Rosenbaum (1986) defined coercion philosophically as “certain forms of social control that are a subset of some types of exercises of power (between

participants in a power relationship) ... an act and form of power” (p. 3). Also addressing coercion from a power control perspective and drawing from the *Dictionary of Social Sciences*, Pennock (1972) stated, “Coercion signifies, in general, the imposition of external regulation and control upon persons, by threat or use of force and power” (p. 1). Finally, coercion has been defined from a negotiation perspective as “the exercise of power through the use of particular tactics that aim to reward and punish the opponent.

Analysis of threats and promises in this tradition indicates that the use of coercive tactics is a measure of last resort” (Gibbons, Bradac, & Busch, 1992, p. 160). I also differentiate between coercion and broader concepts of persuasion but consider the acts of coercion and persuasion to often be linked. Here, I use Miller’s (2002) comparison to distinguish between these two concepts and show how they might be related:

Persuasive attempts fall short of blatant coercion; persuasion, as typically conceived of, is not directly coercive. Coercion takes the form of guns or economic sanctions, while persuasion relies on the power of verbal and nonverbal symbols. Frequently of course, coercive acts are preceded by persuasive messages; seldom is ... an armed attack launched on a neighboring state without a period of [persuasive] message exchanges. (p. 4)

Coercive threats and promises. As scholars have explained, coercion is often expressed in the form of persuasive actions (Dixit & Nalebuff, 1991; Gibbons et al., 1992; Jentleson, 2000; Pennock, 1972; Roloff, Paulson, & Vollbrecht, 1998; Rosenbaum, 1986; Rubin & Brown, 1975; Schelling, 1980). Furthermore, Gibbons et al. (1992) described persuasion as a means of conducting *negotiation* – a term often used in public relations theory and practice as well as in interpersonal, intergroup, interorganizational,

and international conflict resolution. Negotiation, according to Gibbons et al., “is defined as a method of social decision making” (p. 156).

Among the family of persuasive actions and negotiation tactics used to coerce are *threats* and *promises*. According to Roloff, Paulson, and Vollbrecht (1998), a *threat* “expresses a speaker’s intention to punish the receiver by employing coercive resources that are controlled by the speaker” (p. 142). Schelling (1980) elaborated, “The distinctive character of a threat is that one asserts that he will do, in a contingency, what he would manifestly prefer not to do if the contingency occurred” (p. 123). On the other hand, a promise “is an offer to reward someone who cooperates with you” (Dixit & Nalebuff, 1991, p. 125). Again, Schelling elaborated, “The promise is a commitment to the second party in the bargain” (p. 43); and a promise is required whenever one of the members in a bargain is outside the other’s control.

Gibbons et al. (1992) described threats and promises as persuasive *message tactics* in negotiation theory. Rosenbaum (1986) viewed tactics such as threats and promises as the equivalent of force or power. In this regard, they are similar concepts. Both convey information about preferences, intentions, and perceptions in a bargaining relationship and they are often employed as a last resort (Rubin & Brown, 1975). However, threats and promises are vastly different in their application and effect. For instance, Rubin and Brown reported that threats generally promote feelings of hostility while promises promote liking. Over the course of a negotiation, promises increase the chance of reaching a mutually favorable agreement and threats more than promises “tend to increase the likelihood of immediate compliance and concession making” (p. 283).

This conceptualization raises legal and ethical issues. For instance, Rosenbaum (1986) pointed out that a person who threatens could be guilty of criminal coercion if he or she unlawfully denied or restricted another person's ability to act freely. Citing Kantian ethics, Rosenbaum also stated that freedom is a basic human right that implies independence from "arbitrary coercion" (p. 19). Pennock (1972) also expressed society's general distaste for coercive actions by stating, "'Coercion' has no patron saint" (p. 2). Both Rosenbaum and Pennock, however, expressed reluctance to completely reject coercive communication strategies. Rosenbaum considered this "not an unconditional rejection of coercion ... but rather a *prima facie* or relative rejection. The possession of a basic right also gives the title holder a 'title to compel' respect for the right in question" (pp. 19-20). Pennock added:

Even Rousseau, when he spoke of being forced to be free, would probably have admitted that any forcing, any coercion, entailed some limitation of freedom or limitation of some freedom, even though freedom *in the large* might be increased ... which clearly involves coercion and the limitation of someone's liberty in behalf of a greater or more important liberty. (p. 7)

Finally, the variety of other theoretical and practical issues related to threats and promises is too broad to explore here. For instance, the relationship between sources and targets of threats can have a strong mediating effect on perceptions and outcomes of communication tactics. As Fink, Cai, Kaplowitz, Chung, Van Dyke, and Kim (2003) reported:

Punishment, rewards, moral appeals, altruism, and a variety of other tactics ... may affect perceptions of power and outcomes of influence by interacting with

the judgment of the agent and target. Understanding how social influence tactics differ in meaning and incorporating them into this model [of social influence] are fruitful areas for further study. (p. 313)

The implication here is clear: Questions remain about the theoretical, legal, and ethical nature of coercive threats in public relations theory and practice – especially in international conflict settings. Does an organization have the freedom to compel a public if freedom in the large is protected? Would limiting a single person’s liberty in favor of a greater or more important liberty constitute legal and ethical action? What if these coercive actions contributed to more effective and efficient organizational behavior or otherwise added value to the organization by establishing long-term symmetrical relationships? Finally, how does the relationship between actors in a coercive situation affect message tactics and outcomes? These questions must be addressed.

Threats and promises have important implications for public relations, yet little has been done to study these persuasive concepts and develop a specific understanding of how they operate in public relations theory and practice. J. Grunig (1989b) described the role of negotiation in public relations theory. In 2001, he lamented that symmetry may not have been the right term for what he envisioned as the most excellent model of public relations. He then posited that public relations managers must engage in both listening and arguing in an attempt to balance the interests of an organization and the organization’s publics. However, “This does not mean ... that they do not argue or attempt to persuade” (J. Grunig, 2001, p. 28). As L. Grunig et al. (2002) stated, “Multiparty conflicts do not call the efficacy of the symmetrical model into question; instead, they require more sophisticated means of symmetrical communication and

conflict resolution, methods that research is only beginning to identify” (p. 316). The ethics section of this literature review and the subsequent inquiry into the behavior of multinational organizations like NATO will attempt to address these and other questions.

Communication, Conflict, and Cooperation

Theories of communication, conflict, and cooperation provide an important conceptual foundation for the study and practice of public relations; and, as I have explained, conflict and cooperation are central notions in the excellence theory of public relations. The strength of this foundation and centrality of these notions, however, belie the complex relationship between conflict, cooperation, and public relations. Concepts of conflict and cooperation are not only defined differently but studied in diverse ways.

Schelling (1980), for instance, explained that some scholars “treat conflict as a pathological state and seek its causes and treatments” (p. 3) and others “take conflict for granted and study the behavior associated with it” (p. 3). Furthermore, Schelling identified distinctions within the latter approach, divisions that articulate those that study rational and irrational behavior of participants in conflict and those that “focus on the more rational, conscious, artful, kind of behavior” (p. 3).

Schelling’s (1980) descriptions of the first two categories seem to fit the psychological and social-psychological fields commonly associated with intra- and inter-personal conflict. His delineation of the second category seems to distinguish between, first, typical approaches to the study of conflict and communication in organizational settings (e.g., situational public theory, which incorporates rational and irrational dimensions of thought and behavior) and, second, a field of study that Schelling termed

“the *strategy* of conflict” (p. 3).⁵ This approach treats conflict as a “game” that participants in conflict try to “win” and studies choice of decisions and the alternating actions of players as interdependent variables. Hence, the conceptual relationship between communication, conflict, cooperation, and public relations deserves careful explanation.

Public Relations Perspective

As the excellence theory in public relations has explained, conflict, or turbulence, in an organizational environment creates the need for public relations. Public relations adds value to an organization by establishing and maintaining long-term, cooperative relationships. These relationships reduce operational costs by eliminating or mitigating expensive regulation, litigation, and other pressures from the external environment. Scholars like Ehling (1984, 1985, 1992) have also equated public relations management with conflict resolution. From this perspective, Ehling (1992) identified public relations situations, or manifestations of “actual or potential conflict” (p. 624), that public relations managers are required to resolve. Given the close relationship of public relations to conflict and cooperation, this study then requires an understanding of concepts from these theories.

Social-Psychological Perspective

Deutsch (1973), who wrote from a social-psychological perspective, defined conflict as the existence of “incompatible activities” (p. 10). Thus, he explained that conflict can originate from a variety of social interactions within individuals, groups, or

⁵ Schelling (1980) associated the concept of strategy with a theory of games, which makes distinctions between games of skill, chance, and strategy. In game theory, strategic actions are calculated according to what one player expects another player to do. Thus, players’ decisions and expectations of each other’s actions are interdependent.

nations, generating intrapersonal, intragroup, and intranational conflict. By extension, conflict can assume interpersonal, intergroup, and international dimensions. Deutsch also identified several types of issues – including issues pertaining to relationships – around which conflict can arise:

1. Control over resources.
2. Preferences and nuisances.
3. Values.
4. Beliefs.
5. The nature of relationships between parties. (pp. 15-16)

Roloff (1987) added to Deutsch's (1973) typology of conflict two other settings in which conflict could occur: organizations and mass media systems. He also defined communication as "the production, transmission, and interpretation of symbols" (p. 485) and linked communication with conflict:

With these two definitions in mind, we argue that communication and conflict are interdependent. Both processes can have important influences on each other. Communication can cause conflict, be symptomatic of conflict, and may be an effective mode of conflict resolution. (p. 485)

Deutsch (1973) and Roloff (1987) offered two other important observations about communication and conflict: Communication and conflict are inherent parts of human nature; and communication and conflict, managed properly, can improve as well as harm the human condition. First, Roloff posited that conflict is "both pervasive and inevitable" (p. 484). Second, Roloff observed, "Conflict is not abnormal and, if managed properly, may actually improve the human condition" (p. 484). By the latter observation, Roloff

meant that people experience inconsistency and uncertainty when they confront the incompatible activities that Deutsch defined as conflict. As a result, people attempt to reduce uncertainty by seeking information that might provide a reasonable explanation for the conflict. This activity also is explained by situational theory in public relations. The search for information and the interactions with others that result from this search often increase understanding and improve interpersonal relationships. On the contrary, suppressing conflict often leads to “misunderstanding, lack of innovativeness, resentment, and long-term conflict escalation” (Roloff, p. 515). Deutsch added, “Conflict is not confined to competitive processes: controversy over the means to achieve a mutually desired objective is a common part of cooperation ... [and] competition is not inevitably destructive to both sides” (p. 31).

Thus, conflict and cooperation are interdependent; they should be managed rather than eliminated; and both can improve relationships. As I reported in the introduction of this study, this interdependency among conflict and communication “produces relationships and the need for public relations” (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992, p. 313). Much of the research in conflict theory focuses on the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels. The interaction of communication and conflict also can be operationalized at the organizational level and within mass publics (Roloff, 1987).

Other Perspectives

This communication approach leads naturally to other perspectives on relationship management, such as dispute resolution, negotiation, mediation, and conflict management (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992). From this perspective, certain forms of communication (e.g., conversation) can be viewed as “an emergent, improvised, and

negotiated activity” (Newell & Stutman, 1989, p. 139) or as a cooperative activity that can be identified and measured by approaches described in the excellence theory of public relations.

According to the excellence theory, two-way symmetrical forms of communication are most effective in resolving conflicts and establishing lasting, effective relationships. J. Grunig and Huang (2000) built on this earlier notion by identifying two broad categories of negotiation strategies:

These negotiation strategies can be defined broadly as integrative strategies, which are symmetrical in nature, and distributive strategies, which are asymmetrical. In general, we propose that integrative, symmetrical strategies will be more effective in developing organization-public relationships than will distributive, asymmetrical strategies. (p. 38)

This notion is supported by studies of conflict theory that found integrative, argumentative, and collaborative strategies to be positively associated with communication competence (Canary and Spitzberg, 1989) and more likely to produce stable relationships (Canary, Cunningham, & Cody, 1988; Infante, Chandler, & Rudd, 1989; Sillars, 1980). However, in practice, even excellent organizations employ both distributive (asymmetrical) and collaborative (symmetrical) communication tactics (J. Grunig, 1992; Dozier, 1995; L. Grunig et al., 2002).

For situations that require argumentation, Gilbert (1997) offered an approach that fits well with symmetrical models of communication. Gilbert warned of traditional forms of argument “that are primarily designed to alter a dispute partner’s point of view rather than uncover deeper and more meaningful issues” (p. xv). In place of this

conceptualization of argument, Gilbert suggested one that is designed to “bring together or coalesce ... diverse positions so that the goal satisfaction of both participants can be maximized” (p. xv). Gilbert described three basic aspects of this approach:

1. Acceptance that people do not necessarily argue in a logical fashion.
2. Values strategic goals of all parties as diverse and important.
3. Bases argumentation on mutual agreement rather than individual criticism.

Gilbert also explained that this approach is informed by concepts from feminist and other theories that support the excellence theory in public relations. For instance, Gilbert identified as coalescent argumentation’s most important aspect a “focus on agreement, on consensus, on attachment, on inclusion” (p. 63).

Gilbert (1997) acknowledged that his conceptualization departs from a classical notion of Aristotelian argumentation designed to convince and persuade (see Aristotle, 2000). Yet, Gilbert’s conceptualization of argument is very much in line with rhetorical approaches to public relations. For instance, Marsh (2001) identified the rhetoric of Isocrates, which promoted “unification and consensus” (p. 88), as most representative of two-way symmetrical communication in public relations. Toth and Heath (1992) referred to rhetoric as “a one-way flow of information, argument, and influence whereby one entity persuades and dominates another” (p. xi). However, they also advanced a rhetorical and critical perspective of public relations based on dialogue:

By featuring dialogue, we opt to emphasize the dynamics of rhetorical exchange by which interested parties seek to induce agreement and action.... Each party in this exchange may agree or disagree. Through rhetorical dialogue, parties form

opinions and negotiate limits and obligations that are basic to their relationships – and mutual interests. (p. xii)

These conceptualizations are very useful to the excellence theory in public relations, which shows even from a rhetorical and argumentation perspective that symmetrical approaches to communication and conflict resolution could be effective means to preserve long-term relationships.

Some communication scholars also have approached conflict and cooperation from a systems, social exchange, or power perspective (e.g. Drake, 1993; Huston, 1983). These approaches may help explain the applications of power and influence in the previous section of this review; or even dominance that Jentleson (2000) conceptualized in coercive prevention, especially as the concept relates to implied use of military power. J. Grunig and Huang (2000) noted that many studies of interorganizational relationships are dominated by two theories related to conflict and cooperation. Resource dependency theory explains how relationships form in response to an organization's need for resources, and exchange theory describes how relationships form around transactions of resources. According to J. Grunig and Huang, however, these two theories do not address all pressures on an organization (p. 35), such as those imposed by an activist group or hostile adversary. These types of situations require an understanding of other theoretical approaches to conflict management.

Dual-concern model. The mixed-motive model of communication in public relations described by Dozier (1995) and L. Grunig et al. (2002) explains how organizations might choose from a range of asymmetrical and symmetrical communication activities. Pruitt and Carnevale (1993) offered a similar model of dual

concern in communication that is particularly useful for understanding a range of problem-solving communications, from coercion to collaboration. The dual-concern model relies on a conceptual grid to predict the convergence of problem solving strategies based on levels of concern for self and others. The model describes at least sixteen strategies that range from avoidance or acceptance to physical force, mutual discussion, and compromise. Pruitt and Carnevale's model describes the dynamic way in which participants in conflict relationships may change communication strategies, searching for successful resolution. Participants may change strategies by substituting another similar strategy, or they may initiate a wholesale replacement of strategy by jumping from one section of the conflict grid to an entirely different area.

The dual-concern model is among those that J. Grunig and Huang (2000) associated with the mixed-motive model in public relations. This behavior is not unlike that of public relations practitioners who may change communication strategies. The areas of mutual concern on the dual-concern grid describe contending activities that could be related to two-way asymmetrical approaches to communication, which describe attempts by one party to exploit the other. The problem solving and compromising areas of the grid could be related to two-way symmetric approaches that strive for a win-win solution. Other approaches located in various areas of the dual-concern grid also may relate closely to activities along Dozier's (1995) mixed-motive continuum between an organization's position and the position of its publics.

Contingency theory. Some scholars have proposed a *contingency theory* of public relations as an alternative to the symmetrical model of communication (Cancel et al., 1997, 1999). Contingency theorists presume that dozens of situational variables affect

choice of communication strategies by public relations managers and the degree to which accommodation can be achieved. Furthermore, Leichty and Springston (1993) distinguished between integrative approaches to conflict management such as symmetrical communication that are “*most desirable*” and other approaches that might be “*most appropriate under the circumstances*” (p. 334). Cancel et al. (1997, 1999) have used the situational nature of communication to justify adoption of a contingency approach in public relations. Other scholars, however, have argued that contingency approaches make public relations susceptible to *ethical relativism* (e.g., J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1996; Pearson, 1989a), which might enable organizations to justify any means of communication to achieve desired end states. Thus, a relativist approach could lead public relations practitioners down a slippery slope, which ultimately ends in the adoption of *distributive* win-lose strategies that could be unethical (L. Grunig et al., 2002, pp. 551-552).

Game theory. The dual-concern model leads naturally to an explanation of game theory. Schelling (1980) described studies of strategy in game theory:

Crudely speaking, the latter treat conflict as a kind of contest, in which the participants are trying to “win.” A study of conscious, intelligent, sophisticated conflict behavior – of successful behavior – is like the search for rules of “correct” behavior in a contest-winning sense. (p. 3)

Murphy (1989) was among the first public relations scholars to propose a game theory approach to the study of public relations. She suggested that the emergence of mathematical models used to analyze negotiating strategies and Ehling’s (1984, 1985) development of a decision theory model for public relations showed great promise in

moving the field beyond a “seat of the pants” (Murphy, p. 173) approach to public relations described by Dozier (1984). However, Murphy also distinguished between decision theory, which “involves choosing a strategy in isolation, without considering the possible strategies of others” (p. 174), and game theory, which she considered particularly useful in managing “public relations situations in which the practitioner frames strategy *relative to the desires of various publics*” (p.175).

Schelling (1980) also clarified that *winning* in conflict or game theory does not necessarily equate to competition – even in international conflict. As Schelling explained:

It is not winning relative to one’s adversary. It means gaining relative to one’s own value system; and this may be done by bargaining, by mutual accommodation, and by the avoidance of mutually damaging behavior....

Concepts like deterrence, limited war, and disarmament, as well as negotiation, are concerned with the common interest and mutual dependence that can exist between participants in a conflict. (pp. 4-5)

I believe this conceptualization of conflict and cooperation in public relations extends opportunities for the study and application of strategic management in public relations excellence. First, game theory contributes to the study and management of conflict situations. The concepts of winning and games in these situations do involve in a crude sense winning and losing, but in a sense that empowers all parties to achieve a mutually-beneficial outcome rather than a sense of unfair competition or power control. More specifically, concepts from game theory support models like the mixed-motive communication continuum in public relations that identify “win-win” zones as an ideal

solution to organization-public conflict. Second, as Schelling (1980) and Murphy (1989) observed, game theory expands analysis to *strategies* of conflict, not just causes and effects of conflict and how they can be *managed* strategically. It seems apparent that public relations practitioners – even those who manage strategically – must have a sense of the communication and conflict behaviors *and strategies* employed by external publics (e.g., activist groups) as well as organizations to properly manage relationships.

The excellence theory has been useful in explaining normatively and positively how symmetrical communication helps establish and maintain healthy relationships. However, not all parties in conflict may want to establish a symmetrical relationship; rather, they could be interested in disrupting relationships through asymmetrical strategies that create conflict and anxiety. For instance, Aldoory and Van Dyke (2004) discussed asymmetrical strategies used by bioterrorist groups that might launch attacks against U.S. food supplies. They acknowledged that the strategic goals of such groups – which are designed to create crises, disrupt relationships, confuse communication, intimidate, and spread fear – pose unique challenges for public relations managers who rely on symmetrical approaches to communication. Third, game theory, models based on dual concern, and contingency theory could provide the kinds of rules, called for by J. Grunig (2001), J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1996, 1997), and L. Grunig et al. (2002) that could provide ethical guidelines for asymmetrical communication strategies.

J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1997) have contributed to early development of such communication guidelines by describing a communication model that activist groups might use to communicate ethically with an organization, even when resorting to coalition building, media advocacy, pressure campaigns, government lobbying, litigation

and other asymmetrical tactics. Based on activist theory, this approach suggested how activist publics should practice public relations ethically when communicating with organizations whose decisions have created an issue or problem for that group (see pp. 39-41):

1. Use knowledge of situational theory in public relations to identify and organize other potential publics that share the same problem.
2. Use strategic public relations planning to build a coalition powerful enough to deal with the problem organization.
3. Once organized, the coalition should approach the organization and attempt to communicate symmetrically. If the organization responds symmetrically, continue using symmetrical approaches to resolve the problem.
4. If the organization does not respond symmetrically, use asymmetrical communication “to force” (p. 40) the organization into recognizing the activist group and considering its problem.
5. Once pressure succeeds in gaining the organization’s attention and establishing cooperative relations, return to symmetrical communication, search for a mutually-agreeable solution, and work toward building a long-term relationship.

J. Grunig and L. Grunig added that two other actions within this model are essential to making this approach more ethical: Always begin with symmetrical communication attempts and, if symmetrical communication fails, always disclose the intent of persuasive communication.

Of note, J. Grunig (1989b), presupposed, “Conflict should be resolved through negotiation, communication, and compromise and not through force, manipulation, coercion, or violence” (p. 39). He also acknowledged he had been tempted to include non-manipulative persuasion in the list of actions that should not be considered for conflict resolution, given difficulties associated with using persuasion to affect long-term changes in attitude and behavior. He allowed that persuasion could be acceptable if used as part of a reasoned argument supporting one’s position, but people must be ready to abandon persuasive tactics and switch to negotiation or compromise. Ideas expressed in J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1997) seems to indicate maturation in J. Grunig’s notion of persuasive, even forceful communications – perhaps because of his and L. Grunig’s efforts to develop a theory of activism in public relations. However, he has retained the caveat that, to remain ethical, such pressure tactics should be preceded by attempts to establish collaborative communication strategies and a return to symmetrical strategies once pressure tactics succeed in gaining attention of all parties. In sum, he seems to believe that symmetrical strategies are still more ethical and effective in producing long-term, collaborative relationships than asymmetrical strategies.

In studies of conflict and cooperation, several scholars (e.g., Axelrod, 1984; Fisher & Brown, 1989; Schelling, 1980) have provided strategies and terms from game theory that help conceptualize symmetry and asymmetry. In prisoner’s dilemma situations from game theory (see Rubin & Brown, 1989, pp. 197-198), computer-simulated game play suggested that a “cooperative tit-for-tat” (p. 199) strategy might be the best approach for substantive problem-solving. In tit-for-tat strategy, players cooperate at first and “thereafter do whatever the other side did on the previous

exchange” (p. 199). Axelrod proposed tit-for-tat strategies as a useful tool in building cooperative relationships, even on an international scale, since the reciprocal nature of this approach appeals to a sense of fairness. Similarities between Axelrod’s tit-for-tat strategy and J. Grunig and L. Grunig’s (1997) model for dialogue between activist groups and organizations indicates a tit-for-tat strategy may be compatible with communication schemes for relationship management.

Schelling (1980) clarified terms such as *threats* and *promises* in game theory and illustrated where they might appear along an ethical or symmetrical-asymmetrical continuum. From a game theory perspective, Schelling (1980) stated, “The distinctive character of a threat is that one asserts that he will do, in a contingency, what he would manifestly prefer not to do if the contingency occurred, the contingency being governed by the second party’s behavior” (p. 123). Rubin and Brown (1975) defined threat as “an expressed intention to behave in a way that appears detrimental to the interest of another” (p. 278) and compared threats to the stick in a tradeoff between a stick and a carrot type of exchange. Threats do “convey information about a bargainer’s preferences” (p. 279), but they also “tend to elicit greater hostility” (De Dreu, 1995, p. 652). Still, coercive tactics such as threats can increase the chances of *quickly* achieving compliance and concession by others (De Dreu, p. 653; Rubin & Brown, p. 283). On the other hand, early use of cooperative communication strategies tends to “promote the development of trust and a mutually beneficial, cooperative relationship” (Rubin & Brown, p. 263) and use of promises “tends to elicit general liking for the transmitter” (De Dreu, p. 652).

Like Rosenbaum (1986) and Pennock (1972), Schelling (1980) associated coercive threats with denial of control or freedom of choice. However, from Schelling’s

point of view, conditional threats not only attempt to exert control over the target of a threat, they also deny the freedom of a source to choose. For instance, if a source issues a threat and the target fails to comply, what alternatives does the source have if the threat is conditioned on some action the source prefers not to carry out? *Commitments*, according to Schelling, are similar to threats in that both result in a “surrender of choice, a renunciation of alternatives, that makes one worse off than he need be in the event the tactic fails” (p. 123). A threat, however, is conditional, which bases a threat source’s course of action on what the other player in a game of strategy does. Schelling (1980) elaborated on this notion as follows:

While the commitment fixes one’s course of action, the threat fixes a course of reaction, of response to the other player. The commitment is a means of gaining *first move* in a game in which first move carries an advantage; the threat is a commitment of a strategy for a *second move*. (p. 124)

Schelling (1980) responded to this coercive dilemma over threats by suggesting the concept of *warning*, in place of threat. Schelling (1980) explained that warning might be a better term than threat in some conflict situations, in that a warning is issued without condition. Hence, a warning becomes more useful than a conditional threat for a case “in which one merely points out to an adversary, or reminds him, that one would take action painful to the adversary if the latter fails to comply, it being clear that one would have an incentive to do so” (p. 123).

Expanding on Schelling’s (1980) notion of warning, Dixit and Nalebuff (1991) explained that a warning is issued “when it is in your interest to carry out a ‘threat’” (p. 126). However, a threat is a strategic move in game theory, which “is designed to alter

the beliefs and actions of others in a direction favorable to yourself” (p. 120). A warning is *not* considered a strategic move; rather, a warning plays “an informational role” by merely conveying factual information or indicating intent without condition (p. 126). This concept can be illustrated by the following example: “A warning is used to inform others of the effect of their actions. A parent who warns a child that a stove-top is hot makes a statement of fact, not a strategy” (p. 126). Furthermore, warnings convey information about possible adverse actions that are beyond the control of the warning’s source, and threats communicate possible consequences that are controlled by the source of the threat (Roloff et al., 1998). It would seem from this conceptualization that threats rely on power control and conditions to exert influence, and warnings empower both sources and targets by virtue of their unconditional nature and efforts to share information as a means to reach mutual understanding.

Thus, concepts such as warning from game theory provide a logical and ethical alternative to threats but, clearly, more must be known about specific conditions and situations before one can legally or ethically judge these types of coercive communication strategies. Moreover, great care must be taken before they can be assigned a place along the mixed-motive continuum of symmetrical and asymmetrical communications in public relations.

NATO’s post-World War II origins and IFOR’s birth as an instrument to end war in Bosnia-Herzegovina have conflict and peace as common ancestors. This review of literature suggests that situational variance between conflict and peace could influence organizational motives, which could subsequently affect NATO’s choice of

communication and public relations strategies. This produced the fourth research question.

RQ4: How did conflict situations facing IFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina influence choice of communication strategies by senior NATO leaders?

Communication and Culture

I have addressed the concept of organizational culture and briefly referred to the linkage between culture and communication. I now elaborate on societal culture, distinguish it from organizational culture and explain the importance of interplay between communication and culture in this study. There are many conceptualizations of culture. Here, I rely on concepts described by G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede (2005), Sriramesh and Verčič (2001, 2003a), Sriramesh and White (1992), Verčič et al. (1996) and Wakefield (1996, 1997).

G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede (2005) defined culture from a social-psychological perspective as a system of rules that guide “thinking, feeling, and acting” (p. 3). “It is,” according to the Hofstedes, “*the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others*” (p. 4). They added that cultural traits are learned rather genetic or hereditary and that characteristics of a person’s membership in social groups (e.g., gender, religion, regional ethnicity, employment, education and social class) constitute culture. Thus, nationality becomes an important variable in cultural development. The Hofstedes distinguished between nations and societies, however. Common cultures may apply to societies but rarely to entire nations. Nations may have dominant systems for language, media, politics, economies and other systems but nations are usually heterogeneous in terms of culture, consisting of

populations that represent many societies. Still, despite the diverse nature of nations, G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede identified the following common determinants of national culture:

- *Power distance and social mobility.* Social stratification, how citizens are assigned status, and ease with which they can move through levels of social strata.
- *Collectivism.* Tendency of citizens to value the social collective.
- *Masculinity-Femininity.* How gender influences assignment to roles in social structures (e.g., family, government, public relations, organizations).
- *Uncertainty avoidance.* People's ability to manage uncertainty or ambiguity.
- *Confucian dynamism or long-term orientation.* Extent to which citizens value long-term commitment to social relationships.

G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede (2005) also described *organizational culture*, which they differentiated from social culture because most members of an organization “did not grow up in it [the organizational culture]” (p. 35). Moreover, people can freely choose to join or leave an organizational culture – which is not the same as being borne into and growing up within a societal culture. Thus, G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede concluded that societal and organizational cultures are “two types of culture of a different nature” (p. 284). Like societal culture, though, organizational cultures are acquired, not from birth, but from the point at which an employee joins an organization. This intersection between societal and organizational culture was of special interest to my study, given the unique social structure and organizational culture of NATO. Since multinational organizations employ people from many societies, the acculturation

produced by combining many national cultures could influence communication and public relations management.

Many public relations scholars focus on organizational or corporate culture, since organizations and their publics are often units of study in public relations research. For instance, Wakefield (1996) described the potential products of interacting cultures: *convergence* and *divergence*. According to Wakefield, “Convergence theorists contend that as the world integrates, its societies become increasingly similar” (p. 21). Divergence theorists adopt an opposing position. Wakefield explained, “Divergence is a reaction to convergence. When external values invade a culture, they create tension between the forces for change and for maintaining the status quo” (p. 21). Given either theoretical position, interaction between cultures in an organization results in turbulence, which creates the need for excellence in communication and public relations management (e.g., J. Grunig, 1992a).

As studies in the excellence theory of public relations have shown, communication, public relations and culture are closely linked. I identified the interdependence between culture and communication in my introduction. I also observed that public relations and communication are culture-specific (Sriramesh & White, 1992). Sriramesh and Verčič (2001, 2003a) and Verčič et al. (1996) identified generic principles of global public relations and environmental variables that influence the operation of these principles. Some of these variables, which I described in the global theory and public relations section of this report, relate to social and national culture. As I explained, a nation’s political system, economic system, level of activism, culture, and media system can influence development and application of public relations programs

(Sriramesh & Verčič, 2001; Verčič et al., 1996) – just as these characteristics influence development of social culture (G. Hofstede & G. J. Hofstede, 2005). In subsequent studies, Sriramesh and Verčič (2003a) collapsed these variables into more general cultural categories: national infrastructure, media system, and social culture.

This literature on communication and culture has been important to the development of the excellence theory and a global theory in public relations. These theoretical perspectives will also contribute to an understanding of how interaction between cultures in a multinational organization influence communication and public relations programs in a specific case like NATO.

Philosophy, Ethics, Social Responsibility, and Moral Theory in Public Relations

Ethics has received increasing attention in theoretical studies of public relations since the late 20th century. Until then, a lack of research in this important area prevented ethics from being included in conceptualizations of public relations theory. Pearson (1989b) provided an ethical imperative for a dialogic model of public relations that could play an important role in the ethical conduct of organizations. Seib and Fitzpatrick (1995) published what was arguably the first public relations textbook “devoted exclusively to ethics and ... presenting diverse theories and cases to be presented and discussed” (p. v) to scholars, students, and practitioners of public relations. L. Grunig (1996) articulated a philosophy of public relations that provided a basis for qualitative decisions in organizations. J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1996) began development of principles that could define an ethical theory of public relations based on symmetrical communication. Kruckeberg (1996b) pushed studies of public relations ethics beyond Western nations and investigated global perspectives of public relations ethics in the Middle East region.

Edgett (2002) proposed a systematic framework of 10 ethical criteria that can be used to guide persuasive-advocacy approaches to public relations.

The excellence study has addressed the notion of ethics as a principle of the excellence theory in public relations. J. Grunig (1992a) proposed a normative theory of ethical public relations based on symmetrical communication. He argued that public relations *cannot* be excellent within organizations that have an asymmetrical worldview of public relations or an asymmetrical approach to managing relationships with others. Replication of excellence studies in other countries (e.g., Slovenia) and progress toward a global theory also have identified the importance of ethical codes and suggested the addition of ethics as a principle in public relations theory (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a). However, L. Grunig et al. (2002) concluded in their final report of the excellence study, “If we are to add ethics to our global theory of public relations ... we must acknowledge the need for additional research to develop a theory of ethical decision making in public relations” (p. 554).

Most recently, and perhaps in the most promising way, Bowen (2000, 2004) responded to the call for more research in this area. She developed a theory of ethical issues management in public relations based on Kantian deontology, the categorical imperative, and symmetrical communication. Furthermore, she has proposed this theory as grounds for a tenth generic principle of public relations excellence (see Bowen, 2004). Still, there is much more work to be done in this area. Hopefully, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge related to ethics in public relations. Toward that goal, I locate my study in several scholarly areas: philosophy, ethics, social responsibility, and moral theory.

Philosophy in public relations. L. Grunig (1996) explained the need for a theoretical framework that could be used to study the ethics of public relations, examine applications of ethics to public relations practice, and teach public relations ethics. Without such a framework there could be no understanding of ethics in public relations. Therefore, she proposed a philosophy of public relations that can serve as this framework. I was moved by her call to “examine critically the grounds for our fundamental tenets as we analyze the basic concepts of public relations” (p. 70). I interpreted her reference to *our* as not only a call for society, organizations, and the public relations profession to examine fundamental tenets but also as a call for each of us, individually, to examine our own *personal* ideology and convictions as they relate to a construction of public relations ethics. To reveal my own philosophy of public relations as it relates to this study, I borrow L. Grunig’s six dimensions that are encompassed by a philosophy of public relations: 1) foundations and 2) development of the public relations field, 3) ethics, 4) moral reasoning, 5) public and social responsibility, and 6) ideology and values. I have already explained foundations and historical development of the public relations field and refrain from elaborating further. Therefore, I begin with a conceptualization of ethics.

Ethics. Scholars of ethics and moral theory have identified three branches of philosophy: logic, physics, and ethics (Paton, 1956). Of these, ethics deals “with the laws of free moral action” (p. 13). Seib and Fitzpatrick (1995) defined ethics in a broad sense as a discipline that “involves the study of standards of human conduct and moral judgment” and in more practical terms as “criteria by which decisions are made about what is right and what is wrong” (p. 29). *Teleology* and *deontology* are among the most

common perspectives or theories of evaluating ethics in Western societies (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1996; Lucas et al., 2000; Seib & Fitzpatrick, 1995). British philosopher Jeremy Bentham is credited with leading early teleological or utilitarian thought and German philosopher Immanuel Kant is often associated with deontological ethics (Seib & Fitzpatrick, 1995). Considering the European origins and development of these philosophical approaches, teleology and deontology may not apply to non-Western perspectives of ethical thought (e.g., Taosim). Still, they provide a useful framework for study of the Western-based NATO alliance.

The study of ethics from teleological theory focuses on the outcomes, consequences, or ends of decisions. Teleology, also referred to as utilitarianism because of the utility found in its quantitative power, evaluates the utility of outcomes based on a set of criteria that measure intensity of feeling, duration of feeling, certainty or uncertainty, proximity, potential for productiveness, probability of producing pleasure or pain, and number of people affected (Seib & Fitzpatrick, 1995). Teleological calculations are designed to maximize benefits and reduce harm. According to Mill (1861/2000), one of history's most prominent teleological philosophers, "actions are right ... as they tend to promote happiness" (p. 115). Hence, ends that bring greatest happiness are considered most ethical and can justify whatever means were used to attain those ends.

Teleology is considered by many to have practical value as a measure of ethics, since a utilitarian approach requires decision makers to carefully weigh the risks and benefits of decisions before they act. I align myself with others, however, who find teleology flawed. The focus on happiness measures amount rather than types of happiness or benefits. Utilitarianism can be used to justify any means, even questionable

or unethical behavior, if the ends are good. Utilitarian measures also could be viewed as subjective, relative, or situational (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1996), which could negate the value of ethical calculations that are left open to interpretation. Finally, teleology discriminates between those who are expected to receive the greatest good and those outliers who might be marginalized.

I approach my philosophy of public relations from a deontological perspective, a term that derives from Greek *deontos*, or duty. Deontology is based on the notion that all humans have a duty or obligation to respect the freedoms of others and treat each other with dignity. Instead of judging ethical behavior according to a quantitative set of criteria that measures non-moral outcomes like happiness, deontologists evaluate the goodness of ethical behavior according to actions or means that conform to universal standards or laws that protect human rights. Kant described this principle as a *categorical imperative* that requires people to judge actions according to moral law (see Bowen, 2000; Paton, 1956; Seib & Fitzpatrick, 1995). Kant meant *categorical* to apply to all situations and *imperative* as a requirement that “must be obeyed by all rational people” (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1996, p. 35). This notion implies that actions are ethical if they are made on the basis of universal law and found to be acceptable by everyone. Kant also identified a moral requirement to base ethical actions on *good will*: “A good will is good not because of what it performs or effects [*sic*], nor by its aptness for attaining some proposed end, but simply by virtue of its volition” (Kant, 1785/1949, p. 141).

The virtue of deontology lies in its ability to judge actions according to moral laws that protect universal human rights, rather than calculating outcomes that could be enjoyed by a few. However, deontology also has weaknesses. First, moral laws are

difficult to define and universality difficult to achieve: Behaviors that are socially acceptable in one country or social group may not be acceptable in another. Even within individual societies values and morals change over time, and actions that uphold the human rights for one group may deny rights to others.

J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1996) described deontology and teleology as “competing ethical theories of western philosophers” (p. 31) and suggested that combined approaches to these theories might be necessary in the practice of ethical decision-making in public relations. Furthermore, they located the operation of ethics at several levels: individual, organizational, and societal. Thus, decision-making – and the need for an ethical framework to guide decisions – occurs at each of these levels. Individuals have ethical responsibilities to act morally (e.g., to determine loyalties to self, organizations, clients, society); individuals constitute organizations, which have ethical responsibilities to various internal and external publics; and organizations contribute to the construction of societies, which are identified among other things by their system of moral values and ideals. Furthermore, ethical decision-making within these levels does not occur in isolation; rather, the nature of ethics at each level is interdependent.

Grassey (1861/2000) warned of narrowing one’s conceptualization of ethics: “To focus one’s attention on the individual and on specific cases is to neglect the more consequential and difficult topics of institutional policies and practices, formal and informal codes of conduct, and people’s organizational roles” (pp. 8-9). This observation leads to the next set of dimensions required to understand my conceptualization of ethics and a philosophy in public relations in a broader context: moral reasoning, public and social responsibility, and ideology and values.

Moral reasoning. Most societies assign to their citizens, organizations, and leaders legal and moral responsibility to make decisions. Whether one adopts teleological, deontological, or a combination of theoretical approaches, responsibilities associated with decision-making require a process of intellectual reasoning to determine the ethical value of decisions. The excellence theory provides characteristics of excellence in public relations. Professional public relations organizations such as the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) have adopted codes of ethics that define ethical behavior. Government organizations like the U.S. Department of Defense have also published principles of information that establish a moral duty to inform publics. However, each of these represents principles of behavior; alone, they lack the necessary framework to complete a process of moral reasoning.

Seib and Fitzpatrick (1995) provided one model of moral reasoning that will serve to illustrate this concept. Borrowing from Ralph Potter of the Harvard Divinity School, Seib and Fitzpatrick described the “Potter Box approach to ethical decision making” (p. 35). This model is representative of the type of strategic decision-making process described in public relations management (e.g., J. Grunig & Repper, 1992; L. Grunig et al., 2002). From a public relations perspective, values and priorities could be analyzed and prioritized by four steps in this model: 1) define the situation, 2) identify values, 3) select principles, and 4) choose loyalties (p. 35). Seib and Fitzpatrick also identified an alternative to the Potter Box, attributed to public relations scholar Mark McElreath. This approach to moral reasoning is based on a combination of teleological and deontological theory:

1. Confront an ethical dilemma.

2. Experience motivation to act.
3. Consider alternative actions based on examination of rules, duties, principles, outcome predictions, etc.
4. Decide and act. (p. 36)

Advancing theories of ethics in public relations, Bowen (2000, 2004) and Edgett (2002) provided models that could be useful to moral reasoning in public relations.

Bowen criticized the Potter Box model for failing to address universal norms, allowing decision makers to choose their own principles relative to each situation, and assigning loyalties to some publics (to the exclusion of others). She proposed an alternative, based on Kantian deontology, to existing models of moral reasoning in public relations. This model includes the following elements: consideration of how individual or organizational values influence a decision; identification of public relations issues; discussion, collection of information, research, analysis of the issue, and selection of an ethical approach to the issue (e.g., utilitarianism or deontology); engagement of Kant's Law of Autonomy, which frees decision makers from the influence of special interests; imposition of the categorical imperative; consideration of duty, respect for others, and morally good will; and, finally, choosing the symmetrical model to communicate with publics affected by the situation. Bowen's work represents an important contribution to theories of excellent and global public relations by proposing a model for moral reasoning; however, reliance of this model on symmetrical communication limits consideration of other communication strategies that might be required in asymmetrical situations.

Edgett (2002) addressed ethical communication from the perspective of asymmetrical situations or persuasive-advocacy approaches to public relations. She

proposed 10 criteria for the practice of “ethically desirable public relations advocacy” (p. 22). These criteria consist of evaluation, priority, sensitivity, confidentiality, veracity, reversibility, validity, visibility, respect, and consent. Many scholars and practitioners are steadfast in their view of persuasive public relations as inherently unethical (e.g., L’Etang, 1996). Edgett’s work, although it may not change these views, still represents an important contribution to the dialogue surrounding this ethical issue. However, like other codes or sets of ethical principles, Edgett’s criteria represent a normative list of ethical ideals that lack a broader framework to support logical, moral reasoning.

In summary, progress has been made in developing a framework for moral reasoning in public relations; however, scholars have yet to produce a complete model for ethical decision-making in public relations. Furthermore, L. Grunig (1996) suggested, “The related areas of moral judgment, negotiation, and conflict resolution may contribute to this aspect of the philosophy of public relations” (p. 81).

Public and social responsibility. J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1996) distinguished between social responsibility and public responsibility, or “responsibility to society as large vs. responsibility only to the stakeholders of an organization” (p. 8). I use the term social responsibility in this study for several reasons. First, society is made up of interacting publics; therefore, practitioners have an ethical obligation to publics that are affected by the consequences of an organization’s behavior. Second, this study focuses on global aspects of public relations that cross many cultural and national boundaries; thus, I address broad issues that pertain to a global society. Finally, public relations literature has focused on the concept of *corporate social responsibility* in recent years; hence, there is

an abundance of literature that explains the concept of social responsibility in public relations theory.

According to J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1996), “Social responsibility requires organizations to deal with the consequences they have on publics and society” (p. 47). Furthermore, organizations can best fulfill this responsibility by dealing with consequences in a symmetrical manner. As J. Grunig (1992c) reported, “One of the major purposes of excellent public relations is balancing the private interests of the organization with the interests of publics and of society” (p. 241). Finally, Verčič and J. Grunig (2000) traced the development of corporate social responsibility (CSR) according to the following stages.

1. CSR1 (1900 – 1930s). Corporations have responsibility for improving society, in general, as well as returning a profit to their shareholders.
Weaknesses: The substance of social improvement is not clearly defined. Critics still question whether corporations have responsibility to society.
2. CSR2 (1970s). Corporate responsibility for improving society has now been accepted without question; and this improvement is seen as a function of managed relations between organizations and their publics (e.g., issues management). The term public relations is clarified. CSR becomes more responsive to society. Weaknesses. The substance of CSR is still in question.
3. CSR3 (1980s). Values and ethics are added to concept of CSR and reconceptualized as “corporate social rectitude” (p. 30), which advances

public relations from a responsive activity to a more proactive and interactive way of managing public relations.

4. CSR4 (1980s – 1990s). A call for reconceptualization of CSR as “corporate social reason” (p. 31). Public relations are required to efficiently and effectively manage relations between publics and organizations; but the organization is now seen as part of the social environment.

Ideology and values. According to Sriramesh and White (1992), ideology is “the ‘ideational realm’ of culture ... representative of the values, norms, knowledge, themes, philosophies and religious principles, worldviews, and ethos held by people of a society” (p. 605). Many scholars have considered ideology as a determinant of culture (e.g., Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003b; Sriramesh & White, 1992). Societal culture influences organizational culture (Dozier, 1995). Furthermore, ideology is often determined by the dominant culture (senior leadership) in an organization, is grounded in the practices of an organization, and is expressed through the communication of an organization (Mumby, 1987). Thus, organizational culture influences the worldview and practice of public relations (J. Grunig, 1992b). From structuration and rhetorical perspectives, ideology forms the building blocks and identity of organizations. In this sense, ideology provides “rules and resources that help them proceed” (Cozier & Witmer, 2000, p. 620) and creates an identity that organizations need to meet responsibilities to society (Cheney, 1992).

Ethical, moral, and value systems form a part of ideology. J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1996) provided a useful means to distinguish between these concepts. They

characterized ethics as “rules or principles that can be used to solve problems in which morals and values are in question” (p. 7). The Grunigs considered morals as belief systems that are passed down over years or centuries, which help us judge whether human conduct is right or wrong. The Grunigs added that values are “beliefs about what objects or ideas are important” (p. 7).

Such conceptualizations of ideology within a philosophy of public relations are helpful to this study, but they do not overcome difficulties associated with applying this philosophy to a global theory of public relations. Given the nature of acculturation identified within multinational settings, it is difficult to imagine a single, universal code of ethics that could apply equally well to all individuals, organizations, nations, or societies. However, public relations scholars believe that such a code can be developed. Kruckeberg (1993) expressed confidence in the existence of “a plenitude of shared ethical values” (p. 30). Hunt and Tirpok (1993), debating the existence of a universal code of ethics, argued, “No single [ethical] standard appears to be supported across the entire industry” (p. 1); however, “a universal ethics code has long-term benefits to society and to the communication and information professions” (p. 2). Hunt and Tirpok went on to explain that such a code should provide workable guidelines, symmetry between organizational leaders and members in developing the code, and standards based on ideals of social responsibility. They concluded that a universal code might be difficult to achieve but merely drafting proposals for such a code and presenting them for discussion could promote the kind of ethical dialogue that could lead to such a code.

Moral Theory

L'Etang (1996) explained that moral theories “give an account of what is ‘good’ and ... judge ‘right’ actions” (p. 82). Grassey (1861/2000) defined moral theory as “the foundation on which ethical judgments stand” (p. 10). Grassey also characterized moral theory as “perplexing” (p. 82), since ethics can be used to determine minimal performance at one extreme and the highest ideals of performance at the other extreme. Moreover, even the most expert and knowledgeable ethical scholars use moral theories to disagree and debate over perplexing problems.

Just war theory. Just war theory exemplifies the perplexing yet useful nature of moral theories. Although war seems to be the antithesis of collaboration and symmetry that characterize excellence in public relations, I have chosen just war theory as a moral exemplar in this study for several reasons. First, just war theory falls among the class of moral theories that can be used to judge what is good and help determine just actions. Second, this theory helps to conceptualize the behavior of multinational, political-military alliances like NATO that constantly operate between war and peace. Third, just war theory provides a moral framework and ethical rules that could suggest a normative and practical model for the ethical management of public relations and asymmetrical communication in threat or crisis situations.

Few rational minds would acknowledge that war is a *preferred* course of action at any time or any place. Walzer (1977) described war as crime and considered it a form of aggression. According to Walzer (2000), “Aggression is the name we give to the crime of war. We know the crime because of our knowledge of the peace it interrupts.... Aggression opens the gates of hell” (p. 393). Yet just war theory represents one of

Grassey's (1861/2000) perplexing moral theories that define extremes in ethics. After condemning war as a crime, Walzer (1977) provided a moral argument justifying war. Observing that aggression often forces people to respond with aggression in order to protect law and order in an international society, Walzer acknowledged:

Groups of citizens respond in different ways to that choice [lose rights or fight], sometimes surrendering, sometimes fighting, depending on the moral condition of their state and army. But they are always justified in fighting; and in most cases, given that harsh choice, fighting is the morally preferred response. (p. 51)

Elshtain (2003) explained how just war theory provides a foundation for moral reasoning and ethical decision-making about justification for war and actions related to the conduct of war:

The presupposition of just war thinking is that war can sometimes be an instrument of justice; that, indeed, war can help to put right a massive injustice or restore a right order where there is a disorder." (p. 50)

Elshtain also traced the origins of this just war theory to the fourth-century writings of Roman Catholic Saint Augustine. According to Elshtain, Augustine pondered the dichotomy between notions of force or coercion and the religious teachings of the Catholic Church. This left Augustine to wonder how a Christian could then act with force or coercion in light of the example provided by Jesus, who was heralded as a messenger of peace and resisted taking up arms. The work of St. Augustine, and later Saints Ambrose and Thomas Aquinas, established a *just war tradition* that recognized imperfection in the human world and set moral guidelines to respond to these imperfections:

They knew that in a fallen world, filled with imperfect human beings, we cannot achieve perfection in earthly dominion, in religious life, or in anything else and that – even more important – we all have responsibility to and for one another to serve and to love our neighbors. If our neighbor is being slaughtered, do we stand by and do nothing? (p. 51)

To distinguish between concepts commonly referred to in this theory, just war tradition (*justum bellum*) represents the historical body of knowledge that over time has produced rules or agreements learned from experiences with the conduct of war. Theorists have used this tradition to produce a moral framework for reasoning about the justice of going to war (*jus ad bellum*) and ethical principles that guide the just conduct of a war (*jus in bello*) (Elshtain, 2003; Walzer, 1977; Just War Theory, 2004):

1. Just War (*jus ad bellum*).
 - a. War must be declared openly by a legitimate authority (as opposed to indiscriminate acts of violence carried out by individuals).
 - b. War must be a limited response to an unjust act of aggression or fought for a just cause.
 - c. War must be carried out with just intentions.
 - d. War must be the last resort, exercised only after all other options have failed or been explored.
 - e. Finally, war must not be carried out unless it has a reasonable chance to succeed in protecting or restoring good.
2. Just conduct in war (*jus in bello*).

- a. Violence applied in war must be proportional to injury suffered or, in other words, limit force to a level commensurate to the threat.
- b. Application of force must discriminate between combatants and non-combatants. Innocent non-combatants (e.g., civilian men, women, and children) are never legitimate targets of war.

Finnis (1996) made an important distinction about the *jus ad bellum* and *jus en bello* principles of constraint: “Each of the constraints is a necessary condition of justifiability, and compliance with one or some of them is never a sufficient condition” (p. 26). Still, like other moral theories, just war theory is not accepted universally and is seen as wholly insufficient by many. Many are opposed to war’s denial of human rights and autonomy, under any conditions. Rosenbaum (1986) chided, “Very few people are apostles of coercion whereas many are apostles of freedom and authority” (p. 21). Feminist scholar Tobias (1996) argued that ethics of war are inconsistent with “ethics of care” (p. 239). Still others, like Walzer (1977) warned that the destructive power of modern weapons have called into question the viability of just war principles. Arguing from the *jus en bello* principle of discrimination, Tremblay (2003) concluded that the indiscriminant, destructive power of nuclear weapons renders just war theory irrelevant.

Despite their inadequacies, moral theories like the just war tradition provide a moral framework for ethical decisions and are preferable to the absence of such moral thinking. Like efforts to create a universal code of ethics (Hunt & Tirpok, 1993; Kruckeberg, 1993; Paluszek, 2004), moral theories of this type also provide a starting point for discussion and dialogue that at least encourages ethical behavior. Elaborating on this notion, I borrow from Jerry O’Brien, a former director of international programs for

the Ethics Resource Center, who observed, “Ethics are in the dialogue” (personal communication, September 17, 2002).

NATO’s charter is constructed on a foundation of international law and moral principles that respect and protect the sovereign rights of nations and their citizens. This implies that NATO must depend on some type of framework for making decisions that result in outcomes that are legal and ethical. Given NATO’s requirement for excellence in public relations – especially in the context of international conflict – it follows that this moral reasoning process would encompass decisions about communication and public relations management. This prompted the fifth and sixth research questions.

RQ5: To what extent did NATO rely on moral reasoning to judge the ethical nature of decisions about IFOR communication and public relations management?

RQ6: What perceptions did senior military leaders hold about ethical consequences associated with coercive communication strategies?

Reconceptualization and Synthesis of Theory

A synthesis of theoretical approaches to the study of public relations management and conflict resolution may help answer important questions related to the role of public relations and public relations activities in alliances and coalitions. First, the excellence theory (J. Grunig, 1992a; Dozier, 1995; L. Grunig et al., 2002) explains characteristics of excellent public relations programs. The excellence theory also located an excellence factor that identifies the value to organizations of symmetrical or dialogic, strategically-managed public relations: the production and maintenance of mutually-beneficial, long-term relationships. Second, theories of communication, conflict, and management explain how conflict and communication are interrelated and produce relationships that need to

be managed by public relations. Third, a mixed-motive communication continuum explains how excellent organizations employ a variety of symmetrical and asymmetrical communication strategies.

However, relationships are managed most effectively – and are most likely to produce desirable, long-term results – when dialogue empowers both the organization and its strategic publics. Still, persuasion – even coercion – conceptualized as a *limited* communication *tactic* rather than a communication *strategy* contributes value to public relations. *Short term* application of persuasive communication in asymmetrical settings, *managed ethically*, could help to establish, restore, or continue dialogue, which contributes to building and maintaining long-term relationships.

I acknowledge that this proposal implies limited acceptance of distributive communication tactics and, possibly, inequitable application of power (e.g., aggression), which some public relations scholars and practitioners consider unacceptable or unethical. However, these tactics might contribute temporarily to conflict and harm relationships. If managed ethically, they might also restore dialogue and result in healthier long-term relationships. In conflict situations, restoration of dialogue and long-term maintenance of healthy relationships should be the focus of such communication approaches. This is especially true of the international settings in which NATO operates. As Deetz, Cohen, and Edley (1997) observed of ethical communication in intercultural and international settings:

Given the complexities of intercultural communication and building a world community, we suggest that a dialogic approach to organizational ethics is a more productive direction.... In so doing, conflict, argument and debate would not be

avoided but would be embraced, for it is in conflict that we begin to see a potential ethical path that may be otherwise hidden by our everyday routines and ‘taken-for-granted’ ways of understanding our world. This framework suggests that ethics does not rest in agreement or consensus but in the avoidance of suppression of alternative conceptions and possibilities. (p. 222)

Thus, even coercive communication, guided by an ethical framework based on moral reasoning, could contribute to public relations excellence and support the integrity of a broader, dialogical, public relations strategy and worldview. Finally, moral theories like just war theory and Bowen’s (2000, 2004) ethical theory of public relations provide a logical framework for moral reasoning that contributes to ethical decision-making in public relations. Ethical decision-making promotes efficient and effective organizational behavior by ensuring that organizations balance self interests with the interests of key publics and remain responsible to improving society at large.

The excellence study produced a *general* theory of public relations that is both normative and positive, providing concepts that are useful to study and practice in the public relations field. However, even though scholars devoted 17 years to the construction of the excellence theory (L. Grunig et al., 2003), the theory is relatively young and still underdeveloped in many areas. L. Grunig et al. have already identified four areas that require additional research: “globalization of public relations, strategic management and the nature of relationships, ethics, and the role of public relations in change” (p. 541).

My study attempts to reconceptualize and add to development of the excellence theory in two of these areas; and, in so doing, the study might contribute to the other two

areas. First, I extend concepts of excellence in public relations from Western culture to a global perspective, drawing upon generic principles of an emerging theory of global public relations being developed by several international scholars (J. Grunig et al., 1995; L. Grunig et al., 1998; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2001, 2003a; Verčič et al., 1996; Wakefield, 1996, 1997). Globalizing the conceptualization of public relations will allow me to examine more precisely how excellent public relations principles might be applied by a *multinational* organization like NATO.

Furthermore, I expect the examination of a multicultural alliance like NATO – rather than the types of ethnocentric organizations that have been observed in previous excellence studies – will enhance understanding of how public relations operates across cultures and contributes to development of a global theory. In this regard, I am influenced by Adler (2002), who remarked, “Managing across cultures confronts leaders with profound ethical questions as they attempt to adhere to the highest standards of integrity while making and implementing culturally appropriate decisions” (p. 190). Examining the NATO case in the turbulent context of a Cold War to post-Cold War transition may also contribute to understanding of how organizations rely on strategic public relations management during periods of change.

Second, I reconceptualize the concept of public relations that was once based on the historical models of public relations previously described in this chapter. I also move this conceptualization beyond descriptions of two-way symmetric and two-way asymmetrical communication that were generated by these models. I conceptualize public relations according to the developing, dialogical model of public relations advanced recently by studies of excellence in public relations (see J. Grunig, 2001; L. Grunig et al.,

2002). This model defines public relations according to maintenance strategies used in strategic management of communication and public relations: symmetry and asymmetry, one-way or two-way, mediated and interpersonal, and ethical. Moreover, I add to this conceptualization by incorporating into the dialogical model limited use of certain forms of persuasive communication (e.g., warnings) that are designed to establish or restore symmetrical communication and long-term, collaborative relationships.

Application of Ethical, Global Theory of Public Relations

Weick (1988) described challenges associated with decision-making and choice of communication strategies in conflict situations. He observed, “Sensemaking in crisis conditions is complicated by the fact that a delicate tradeoff exists between dangerous action that produces understanding and safe action that produces confusion” (p. 305). Placed in the context of a coalition like IFOR in crisis, threats or application of military force might be a risky but expeditious means to resolve conflict. However, military force could be counterproductive – and even unethical – if actions result in collateral damage and civilian casualties (Elshtain, 2003; Mueller, 1997; Walzer, 1977). Conversely, other approaches to resolving conflict such as diplomacy, negotiation, and mediation can mire in rhetorical arguments that might last for years, thus prolonging or intensifying bloody rivalries and civil wars (Luttwak, 1999).

This conceptualization can be clarified by offering a practical example of how these concepts and questions might apply to an actual situation involving NATO. I use an actual scenario from NATO’s deployment of IFOR to Bosnia-Herzegovina to demonstrate the need for a more comprehensive, global and ethical approach to strategic communication and public relations management.

Nine months after the NATO-led peace implementation force (IFOR) deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina, a small IFOR military patrol consisting of soldiers from the Czech Republic was threatened by a Bosnian-Serb chief of police from the city of Prijedor. After discovering an automatic weapon in the possession of the chief of police – a violation of the peace accords – the IFOR patrol asked the police chief to hand over the weapon. The police official refused and pointed his weapon in the direction of the patrol. The IFOR patrol fired warning shots into the air and the police chief responded by firing his automatic weapon. The situation quickly escalated as another ten members of the Prijedor police force, also armed with automatic weapons, confronted the IFOR patrol. Rather than provoke more violence, the IFOR patrol disengaged and reported the incident to senior IFOR leaders.

Word of the incident was quickly relayed to the headquarters of the IFOR commander, U.S. Navy Admiral T. Joseph Lopez. Lopez realized that the incident posed a serious physical threat to IFOR soldiers and an even greater political threat to the peace accords. Lopez initiated dialogue with Bosnian-Serb government officials in an attempt to resolve the conflict peacefully. He quickly assembled a small staff of key advisors, including the chief of public information. He directed his staff to prepare a wide range of contingency plans. These plans ranged from a diplomatic and public information approach to, if political dialogue failed, use of lethal military force to recover the automatic weapons used by the Prijedor police force, sanction the policemen who had threatened IFOR troops, and protect the peace accords. An attempt by three IFOR soldiers to peacefully resolve a relatively minor arms violation was now moving rapidly

through a continuum of conflict that had begun with collaborative communication and, absent opportunity for dialogue, might end in application of lethal force.

This example clearly illustrates the dilemmas faced by NATO and IFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Although the mandate for the IFOR mission relied on a dialogic approach to restore peace and build long-term strategic relationships in Bosnia-Herzegovina (see Combelles-Siegel, 1998; Van Dyke, 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2003b), certain conflict situations often inhibited application of symmetrical and even two-way forms of asymmetrical communication. How could public relations and political communication be integrated? If two-way communication fails in a conflict situation, must leaders like Admiral Lopez resort to communication strategies other than public relations (e.g., aggression)? How do the cultural aspects of a multinational organization or operation complicate this matter? Would a western, Anglo-Saxon approach to public relations work equally well in managing conflicts involving North American, Western European, Eastern European, and even Asian cultures, as in this situation? Finally, could ethical management of persuasive or even coercive communication in this instance help resolve the conflict peacefully and restore collaborative relationships? Consequently, would a persuasive approach be more ethical than allowing the situation to escalate if more ethical forms of communication failed?

A Synthesis of Theoretical Approaches to Public Relations

This study will attempt to answer these questions and more. By conceptualizing public relations as a global theory I attempt to identify generic principles of the excellence theory in public relations that could be adapted to most cultures. Furthermore, I draw from other theoretical perspectives of public relations (e.g., game theory,

contingency theory) to help the excellence theory in public relations become more inclusive of special situations and, therefore, more practical. In this attempt, I strive to accommodate a diversity of public relations views; show how strategic public relations management could be integrated with negotiation, diplomacy, and other forms of political-military communication; contribute to development of specific, middle-ground theories in communication that scholars like Berger (1991) have proposed; and identify rules that could contribute to development of models for ethical decision-making (J. Grunig, 2001; J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1996, 1997; L. Grunig et al., 2002).

Conclusion: Research Questions and Proposition

This conceptualization and discussion of how theoretical concepts within this review are related to practical issues provides insight into how principles of the excellence theory in public relations might be applied in multinational organizations like NATO. This insight also generates interest in how this application might contribute to development of a global theory of public relations. Finally, there remain important questions about the ethical nature of asymmetrical communication strategies employed by NATO in international conflict situations.

At the outset of this dissertation I asserted that approaches to public relations based on the excellence theory in public relation were most ethical and most likely to produce favorable outcomes for organizations. I have extensive *practical experience* as a former public information office in NATO. However, this experience did not provide me with a sound *theoretical* understanding of how NATO might apply public relations principles or how application of these principles might explain a global approach to public relations. Therefore, I neither presented nor tested any hypotheses in this study.

This qualitative research program was designed to confirm and explore. Deductively, I sought to confirm or deny the existence of principles from the excellence theory in NATO's public relations programs in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1995 to 1996. I also sought to establish the existence of generic principles of a developing global theory in public relations. Finally, I used inductive research strategies to explore implications of persuasive communication (e.g., coercion) by NATO. I assumed from practical experience and a review of literature that NATO would engage in persuasive communication strategies that some practitioners and scholars deem unethical. After my assumptions were supported through research, I proposed an ethical model for limited use when communicating in conflict situations.

Moving ahead, I summarize five research questions that were designed to evaluate the level of excellence in NATO's public relations programs; determine how culture and conflict affect public relations and communication management; achieve understanding of how NATO might manage these public relations programs from a global perspective; and, finally, given a conflict situation, examine how NATO leaders and public relations managers make ethical decisions regarding choice of communication strategies and tactics. Following these questions, I propose a theoretical framework for a model of ethical communication in conflict situations that I refined during the latter stages of this study.

Research Questions

RQ1: Which principles of the excellence theory in public relations did NATO apply to its public relations programs in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1995 to 1996?

RQ2: How did organizational culture influence NATO's management of IFOR public relations and communication programs in Bosnia-Herzegovina?

RQ3: Which, if any, excellence theory principles applied by NATO to IFOR communication programs were associated with generic principles of a global theory in public relations?

RQ4: How did conflict situations facing IFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina influence choice of communication strategies by senior NATO leaders?

RQ5: To what extent did NATO rely on moral reasoning to judge the ethical nature of decisions about IFOR communication and public relations management?

RQ6: What perceptions did senior military leaders hold about consequences associated with coercive communication?

Framework for a Model of Just Communication

When faced with a conflict situation, an organization (e.g., NATO leaders and communication managers) should select communication strategies and public relations programs based on a logical framework for moral reasoning and strategic management. This framework ought to be simple enough to be of practical use yet of sufficient complexity to describe how decision makers might choose to behave in a variety of organizational settings and situations.

The *behavioral molecule* (J. Grunig, 2003; J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984; J. Grunig & Repper, 1992) provides a basis for such a framework. According to J. Grunig and Hunt, the molecular aspect of this framework "is the simplest structural unit that has the characteristics of the larger units it makes up" (p. 105). Furthermore, the behavioral nature of this framework allows description of "how people make decisions about what to

do – how to behave – and how managers organize larger systems to produce single behaviors for those systems” (p. 105). To extend the behavioral molecule to conflict situations and incorporate ethical dimensions that could guide decisions about coercive communication I incorporated concepts from just war theory (e.g., Elshtain, 2003) and organizational response to activism (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1997). This process resulted in the following proposal for a model of communication in conflict situations.

Detect and Construct. Use the excellence theory and strategic public relations management to *detect* issues or threats and *construct* the situation. Apply situational theory to identify and prioritize strategic publics affected by consequences of this situation. Incorporate formative research to evaluate the nature of relationships between the organization and strategic publics. This research should include a coorientation approach that compares organizational and public perceptions of each other (see J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 2001; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999). Use situational theory to organize or strengthen alliances or coalitions that the organization might be part of, thereby empowering collective action. All communication at this point should be based on a two-way, dialogical strategy defined by the excellence theory.

Define available strategies and tactics that could be used to communicate between the organization, alliance, or coalition and affected publics. Use moral reasoning, based on deontology or teleology, to evaluate the ethical nature of each approach. Use the excellence theory to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of communication options. Applying a public relations management approach, identify goals, objectives, tactics, themes, messages, channels of communication, and other elements of an overall public relations strategy. The current and preferred communication strategy remains two-way,

dialogical. Consider options that are appropriate to the situation, including secondary options that could be employed if two-way, dialogical communication fails. Evaluate communication options according to dimensions of the most advanced model of excellent public relations: symmetry and asymmetry, one-way and two-way, mediated and interpersonal, and ethical (see J. Grunig, 2001, p. 29). Persuasive communication tactics, including coercion, may be considered as part of a short-term objective when dialogic communication fails; however, the overall communication strategy must be framed by a symmetrical worldview of public relations, which is based on collaborative values and respects the importance and integrity of long-term, mutually-beneficial relationships.

Select primary and optional communication strategies and tactics. Use the same moral reasoning approach applied to the definition stage and consider the following principles from just war theory (*jus ad bellum*):

- Limit asymmetrical tactics to situations that justify their use.
- Implement asymmetrical tactics only with just intentions.
- Use persuasive communication tactics such as coercion as a last resort, after all other options have failed or been considered.
- Do not use persuasive communication tactics unless they stand a reasonable chance to succeed in establishing, restoring, or protecting just values (e.g., freedom in large, long-term relationships).

Confirm communication alternatives. Using the tradition of just war theory, obtain legitimate authority (e.g., legal, political) to employ any coercive means of communication (e.g., threats, warnings, promises, psychological) that might be under consideration. This authority could derive from international law or mandate, agreements

or treaties, or rules governing status of military forces operating within the sovereign territory of nations. Avoid indiscriminate use of coercive tactics, even those limited to non-physical acts.

Behave or implement strategy by attempting to communicate with affected public or publics through dialogue. Disclose the strategic intent of communication. Use a “tit-for-tat” approach defined by game theory to continue communication. If a public responds dialogically, continue two-way, symmetrical communication. If a public responds asymmetrically or refuses to communicate, use negotiation and employ persuasive tactics – including coercion – to restore dialogue. While communicating, respect the following constraints from theories of just war (*jus en bello*) and activism:

- To remain ethical, continue to disclose intent of communication.
- Limit persuasion or coercion to a level commensurate to the most severe threat associated with the situation. For instance, use informative tactics such as warnings rather than threats if the less invasive tactic is sufficient to restore dialogue.
- Discriminate between publics when implementing persuasive communication.

Use situational theory to discriminate between activist publics, active publics, aware publics, latent publics, and non publics. Do not use persuasive communication (e.g., psychological operations, coercion) that could have unintended consequences on publics not involved in the situation.

Evaluate the outcomes and effects of the public relations and communication strategy that has been applied. If dialogue and relationships have been restored, continue using two-way, dialogical communication for problem-solving and long-term relationship

management. If conflict remains, reevaluate and reprogram. To contribute to the scholarly and practical body of knowledge in public relations – including a developing set of rules that might define a *tradition of just communication* – incorporate research designed to better understand and report how public relations contributed to conflict resolution and relationship management.

Scan. Once conflict is resolved, continue environmental scanning and relationship management based on a dialogical worldview of public relations until another conflict situation is identified.

This model of communication is summarized in Table 3. The moral framework for guiding ethical decision within this model is depicted in Figure 5.

Table 3

Model for Making Justifiable Communication Choices

1. *Detect and Construct.* Use strategic public relations management to *detect* threats and *construct* the situation. Identify and prioritize key publics. Evaluate relationships and compare perceptions held by the organization and publics of each other. Organize or strengthen coalitions to empower collective action. Base communication on dialogue (two-way, symmetrical).
2. *Define* available communicate strategies and tactics. Evaluate the ethical nature, effectiveness, and efficiency of each communication option. Identify goals, objectives, tactics, themes, messages, and communication media to define a public relations strategy. Continue dialogue. Identify and evaluate secondary communication options. Consider asymmetrical communication tactics such as

coercion only as a short-term objective if dialogic communication fails. Base overall communication strategy on a symmetrical worldview of public relations, which values collaboration and long-term, mutually-beneficial relationships.

3. *Select* primary and optional communication strategies and tactics, guided by the following principles:
 - a. Limit asymmetrical tactics to situations that justify their use.
 - b. Implement asymmetrical tactics only with just intentions.
 - c. Use persuasive communication tactics such as coercion as a last resort, after all other options have failed or been considered.
 - d. Do not use persuasive communication tactics unless they stand a reasonable chance to succeed in establishing, restoring, or protecting just values (e.g., freedom in large, long-term relationships).
4. *Confirm* communication alternatives. Obtain legitimate authority (e.g., legal, political) before employing coercive means of communication. Avoid indiscriminate use of coercive tactics – even those limited to non-physical acts.
5. *Behave* by implementing strategies designed to communicate with affected publics through dialogue. Disclose the strategic intent of communication. Use a “tit-for-tat” approach to continue communication. If a public responds dialogically, continue two-way, symmetrical communication. If a public responds asymmetrically or refuses to communicate, use negotiation and employ persuasive tactics – including coercion, if necessary – to restore dialogue. While communicating, adhere to the following constraints:
 - a. To remain ethical, continue to disclose intent of communication.

- b. Limit persuasion or coercion to a level commensurate to the most severe threat associated with the situation. For instance, use warnings rather than threats if the less invasive tactic is sufficient to restore dialogue.
 - c. Discriminate between publics when implementing persuasive communication. Do not use persuasive communication (e.g., psychological operations, coercion) that could have unintended consequences on publics not involved in the situation.
6. *Evaluate* communication outcomes and effects. If dialogue and relationships have been restored, continue dialogue. If conflict remains, reevaluate and reprogram. Conduct research and report lessons learned that promote better understanding of how strategic communication and public relations contribute to conflict resolution and relationship management.
7. *Scan*. Once conflict is resolved, continue environmental scanning and relationship management based on dialogue until another conflict situation is identified.

Model for Justifying Communication Choices in Conflict Situations

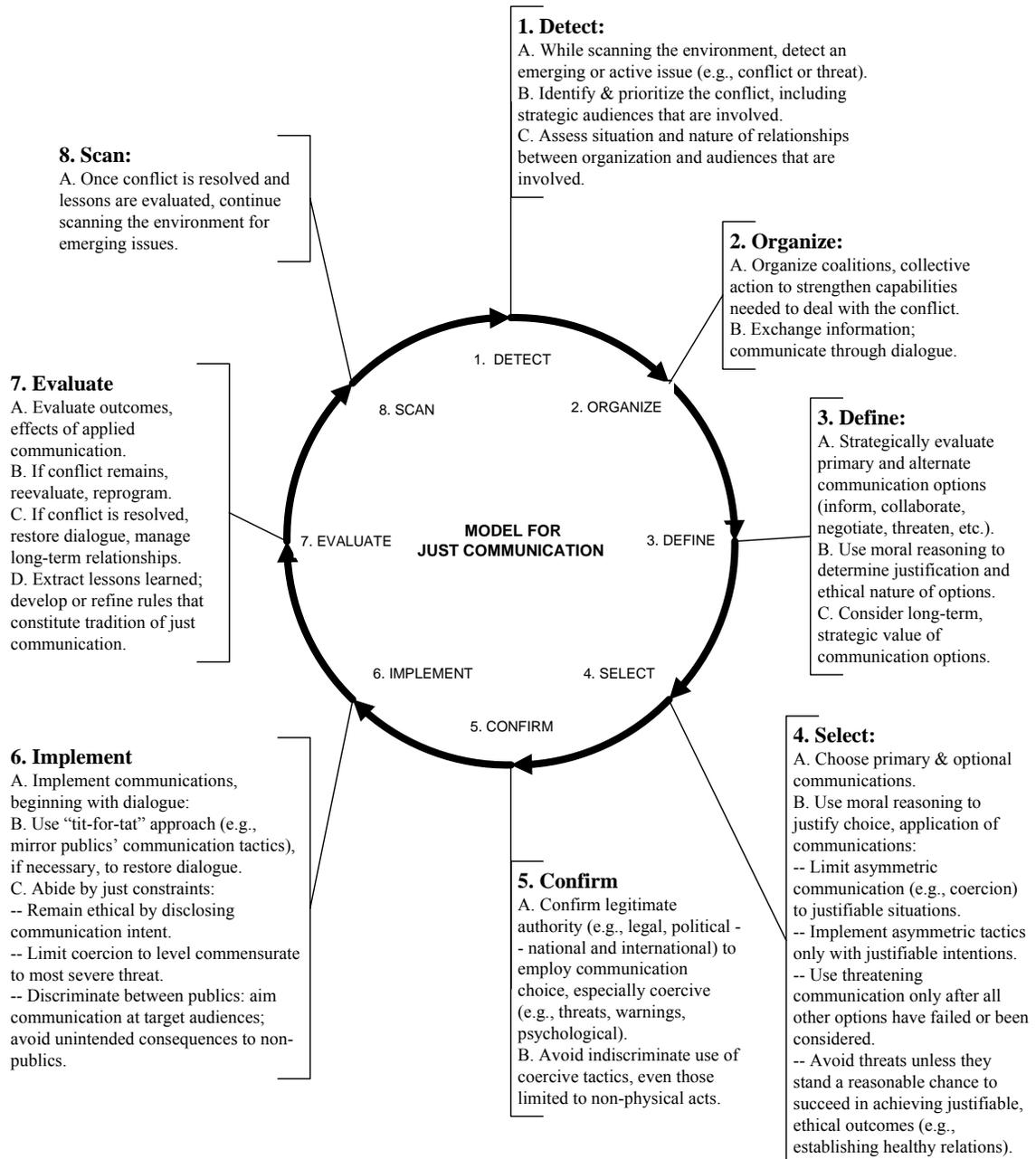


Figure 5. Moral framework for making justifiable communication choices.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

I open this chapter with a reflexive declaration by Thucydides (1874/1934), taken from his historical account, *The Peloponnesian War*, from 431 – 404 B.C. I employ this quote not to belabor the matter of war but, instead, to illustrate the ancient roots and millennia-old debate over qualitative methodology.

With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one's memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said. And with reference to the narrative of events, far from permitting myself to derive it from the first source that came to hand, I did not even trust my own impressions, but it rests partly on what I saw myself, partly on what others saw for me, the accuracy of the report being always tried by the most severe and detailed tests possible. My conclusions have cost me some labour from the want of coincidence between accounts of the same occurrences by different eye-witnesses, arising sometimes from imperfect memory, sometimes from undue partiality for one side or the other.... In fine, I have written my work, not as an essay which is to win the applause of the moment, but as a possession for all time. (pp. 14-15)

Qualitative Choice in Methodology

Scholars have traced the rise in importance of qualitative research to the 1920s and 1930s (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). During this period, the Chicago School introduced new sociological approaches to the study of human groups in natural settings. At the same time, noted anthropologists like Meade (1928/1961) were pioneering the field work method used in ethnographic studies of other cultures and societies. Qualitative research design has since spread to other social-scientific disciplines, including communication. In the 1980s, the strengths of this methodology led to “new interest in qualitative research ... [that] affected research in public relations” (Broom & Dozier, 1990, p. 141-142).

Thucydides seems to have been ignored in this contemporary history of qualitative research; yet, in a single paragraph he captured the characteristics of qualitative methodology. He also speaks for me. Even though our research is separated by the passage of more than 2,000 years, I empathize with his sentiments about observing, documenting, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting the meaning of warriors’ lived experience in conflict settings. I use Thucydides’ account as an instrument to illustrate the characteristics of qualitative research.

First, qualitative methodology is descriptive and exploratory. Qualitative research design represents a “systematic, empirical strategy for answering questions about people in a particular social context” (Locke et al., 2000, p. 96). Locke et al. went on to define empirical as “inquiry based on the data of experience, things that the investigator saw or heard that can then be employed as a warrant for a claim” (p. 117). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) added that qualitative research is a “situated activity that locates the observer in

the world” (p. 3). This world in terms of qualitative research is normally observed in natural settings, rather than the laboratory settings of experimental, quantitative research. Thucydides was a participant as well as an observer of war. He used his study of speeches and oral accounts, often gathered in the natural setting of actual battles, to situate and describe a history of the Peloponnesian War. Thus, in the tradition of qualitative research, Thucydides interpreted qualitatively his material world through a variety of descriptive methods related to field observations, interviews, notes, records, and other representations.

Strengths of Qualitative Research

Variety of method is one of the strengths of qualitative research. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) described the qualitative researcher as a “bricoleur” (p. 4) or quilt maker who relies on a patchwork of methods to make meaning of the world. The patchwork metaphor also extends to the variety of meanings – or social constructions of reality – that are co-created through interactions between the researcher and his or her world. Thucydides (1874/1934) referred to this variety when he spoke of gathering accounts of the Peloponnesian War from many sources, at different times, and “from various quarters” (p. 14). Marshall and Rossman (1999) described other strengths of qualitative research:

The most compelling argument is to stress the unique strengths of the genre for research that is exploratory or descriptive, that assumes the value of context and setting, and that searches for a deeper understanding of the participants’ lived experiences. (p. 61)

Thucydides (1874/1934) rich descriptions of the Peloponnesian War placed great value on context, setting, and the meaning made by his participants of their experiences in war. Context and natural setting provides a direct source of data for qualitative study's inductive search for patterns and themes that help create meaning, which is an essential concern of qualitative researchers (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Thucydides' concern for capturing meaning and his commitment to participants was expressed as an attempt to adhere "as closely as possible to the general sense of what they [participants] really said" (p. 14). This statement also represents the empathic and ethical nature of qualitative research, described by Stake (1995) and conveyed by Thucydides as feelings of sensitivity toward his participants and his desire to represent his participants' accounts in an accurate, credible, and non-hortatory manner. Thucydides wrote, "It was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one's memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by various occasions" (p. 14).

Criticism of Qualitative Research

Hanson (1998), commenting on Thucydides' reflexive declaration, alluded to "the cleft between 'objective' and 'subjective' truth" (p. xvi) as a criticism of Thucydides' work. Thucydides' (1874/1934) thought reflexively about this issue and touched on the unique nature of exploring multiple realities in qualitative research:

My conclusions have cost me some labour from the want of coincidence between accounts of the same occurrences by different eye-witnesses, arising sometimes from imperfect memory, sometimes from undue partiality for one side or the other. (p. 14).

The years that have passed since Thucydides' (1874/1934) writings have not dulled the debate between objective and subjective realities. Some contemporary non-qualitative scholars criticize qualitative researchers as "journalists, or soft scientists" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 7). These critics also describe qualitative methods as unscientific, critical rather than theoretical, prone to bias, politically driven rather than goal driven, and lacking in generalizability, validity, and reliability. Qualitative scholars often acknowledge many of these traits as characteristics of qualitative research, embracing them instead of rejecting them. Stake (1995) added that qualitative studies often contribute slowly to social science, raise more questions than they answer, and incur ethical risks and high costs in terms of time and money.

Stake (1995) also rebutted many of these allegations. For instance, he regarded subjectivity as a potential strength, which is often misunderstood in science. As a qualitative researcher, I adopt a post-positivist approach that rejects the notion of an external reality that can be measured objectively. Even in quantitative studies, a researcher's choice of methods, participants, and variables to be studied could introduce subjectivity into results. Thus, like Stake, I embrace subjectivity as strength in my research, "an essential element of understanding" (p. 45). However, I also must recognize and disclose how human shortcomings, potential biases, personalities, and other subjective traits could influence research.

Subjectivity does not prevent qualitative studies from being conducted in a scientific manner. Qualitative studies meet the criteria of scientific research, which Barzun and Graf (1992) defined as a "search for facts" (pp. 12-13). Furthermore, qualitative studies like this are carried out according to a logical and rigorous research

strategy that incorporates research purpose and questions, operationalization of concepts, methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation, and reporting of results.

Moreover, qualitative research must be strong enough to withstand rigorous and repeated scrutiny by scientific colleagues and other readers of the research. With regard to allegations of bias, Bogdan and Biklen (2003) noted that qualitative researchers “objectively study the subjective states” (p. 33) of participants and how the researcher fits in. To this extent, qualitative researchers use objective research strategies that avoid pure subjectivity by revealing and managing potential biases. However, qualitative researchers generally view a purely objective state as something that is impossible to achieve. For instance, observer effects (e.g., Hawthorne and Heisenberg effects) are often unavoidable but could add insights to scientific studies (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Schwartzman, 1993).

Qualitative studies also can contribute to development of theory. For instance, Stake (2000) described qualitative case research, like the current study, as “exploration leading up to generalization-producing studies, or as an occasional early step in theory building” (p. 439). Bogdan and Biklen (2003) also explained that the concept of theory can be used in different ways. A qualitative researcher might restrict theoretical research to “a systematically stated and testable set of propositions about the empirical world” (p. 22). However, qualitative research is still driven by a theoretical set of “logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research” (p. 22). Hence, qualitative research is the *theoretical* perspective from which I choose to study the socially-constructed world around me.

To some extent, the political nature of society means that politics will permeate most social scientific research (Punch, 1998). However, as Locke et al. (2000) explained, research goals drive choice of research strategy, which includes choice of methods. Therefore, goals drive qualitative research. Recalling Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) description of a *bricoleur*, qualitative researchers could share many goals – some of them even critical, as in the construction of feminist (e.g., L. Grunig, 1988) or rhetorical (Toth & Heath, 1992) theories and approaches to research in public relations. Still, the overall goal of qualitative research is to arrive at deeper understanding of some social phenomenon or phenomena.

Finally, there are many views among qualitative scholars with regard to terms such as generalizability, validity, and reliability. Most qualitative scholars reject generalizability on the grounds that qualitative research is designed to reach thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) and deep understanding of an individual phenomenon rather than to generalize about many phenomena (Wolcott, 1994, 1995; Stake, 1995). However, Stake (2000) suggested that qualitative study could contribute to generalizations or even “redraw a generalization” (p. 437). There is wider disagreement among qualitative scholars surrounding the notions of validity and reliability, however.

Some scholars view validity and reliability as important to achieving credibility and defending results within the scientific community (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Kirk & Miller, 1986; McCracken, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Miles and Huberman suggested incorporating into qualitative research devices such as graphs, linear diagrams, and matrixes that are commonly associated with quantitative research to display data

credibly. McCracken (1988) and Stake (1995) recommended adding triangulation (of data, researchers, analysis, and methods) to strengthen the credibility of qualitative work.

Other scholars have rejected the notions of validity and reliability in qualitative work (Janesick, 2000; Kvale, 1995; Wolcott, 1990, 1994, 1995). In their view, such constructs confine the humanistic, naturalistic, and constructivist nature of qualitative work – reducing data to basic elements instead of examining multiple meanings in the interaction between phenomena and in the context of natural settings. According to Kvale, scholars should focus instead on the importance of communication and construction of meaning instead of focusing on the validity and reliability of our research outcomes. Wolcott (1994, 1995) regarded an individual researcher's sense of accomplishment in achieving deep meaning as more credible than what others think of a researcher's work.

Qualitative research may not achieve the kinds of reliability and validity defined by quantitative research; and many qualitative researchers may not attempt to do so. I believe, however, that scholars must bridge the gap between schools of thought on validity and reliability. In order to achieve *credibility* of results, qualitative researchers must adhere to a rigorous, scientific, and empirical pursuit of both art and science. Scholars have provided useful ideas for balancing description, analysis, and interpretation of qualitative data with rigorous scientific methods to achieve respect and credibility in qualitative research (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Wolcott, 1994). For instance, Hon (1992, 1995) achieved triangulation – at least in method – by combining observation, long interview, and focus group interview methods in her study of a feminist theory of public relations. Also, by paying attention to precise descriptions of her participants' views and

using reporting skill to allow readers to enter her field of observation, Hon achieved credibility and accessibility (or in traditional terms, validity and reliability) in her work. Returning to Thucydides (1874/1934), he too seemed to address concern for at least some of these terms and attempted to achieve some form of validation and triangulation in his work:

And with reference to the narrative of events, far from permitting myself to derive it from the first source that came to hand, I did not even trust my own impressions, but it rests partly on what I saw myself, partly on what others saw for me, the accuracy of the report being always tried by the most severe and detailed tests possible. (p. 14)

Finally, with regard to the costs associated with qualitative research, Punch (1998) acknowledged the ethical risks created by personal, institutional, programmatic, and societal influences on researchers. Indeed, such pressure can often interfere with ethical research and telling the truth – regardless of methodology. However, the empathic nature of qualitative research and elements of research design that protect human participants, which I will describe elsewhere in this chapter, help protect against such ethical failures. Furthermore, Stake (1995) recognized that qualitative studies often are labor and resource intensive but the return of these investments, in terms of social value, are worth the costs. Finally, he explained that phenomena studied by qualitative researchers often evolve over long periods of time and understanding these phenomena may take even longer.

The work of Thucydides (1874/1934) offers a fine example of the relationship among ethics, costs, and benefits in research. Describing his study as a selfless endeavor,

he created over decades a history that has endured and benefited society for more than 2000 years. On this note, Thucydides concluded his declaration by reporting, “In fine, I have written my work, not as an essay which is to win the applause of the moment, but as a possession for all time” (pp. 14-15).

Rationale for Choice of Qualitative Methods

This study examined how a single multinational organization applied principles of the excellence theory in a turbulent, globalized environment. The setting of this study was situated in and bounded by historical context: NATO’s deployment of a peace implementation force (IFOR) to Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1995 to 1996. However, this study was not merely historical or descriptive. Rather, description of communication programs related to NATO’s historic deployment to Bosnia-Herzegovina revealed deeper understanding of how a multinational organization might apply the excellence theory – even while engaged in international conflict. This understanding, in turn, identified generic principles – including ethics – that contribute to development of a global theory of public relations (see L. Grunig et al., 2002, p. 554). Hence, results of this study add to the public relations body of knowledge, inform public relations practice, and promote development of professionalism, ethics, and global perspectives in communication management.

This study was designed to propose an ethical model of communication that includes coercion, elaborates the excellence theory and contributes to a developing theory of global public relations. To achieve this purpose, I sought to understand how a single, multinational organization managed public relations in various operational settings. I observed and attempted to make sense of how communication decisions by NATO’s

senior leaders and public relations managers in Bosnia-Herzegovina were influenced by culture, situational factors, and personal experience or training. I hope findings from this study will stimulate future research in this area, enlarge the scholarly body of knowledge in public relations, and provide practical applications that might be of use to public relations managers who face international conflict.

Research purpose and questions should drive choice of methods (Locke et al., 2000). Hence, I found that qualitative methodology was best suited to reveal the meaning of communication processes, outcomes, and lived experienced related to NATO's management of public relations programs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, qualitative research methods also must be adapted to the personal, artistic nature of the researcher (H. Rubin & I. Rubin, 1995; Wolcott, 1995). Thus, my own lived experience (including service with NATO in Bosnia-Herzegovina), my personal interest in conflict management, and my deontological philosophy of public relations influenced my choice of method. In conclusion, I employed a case study approach that incorporated qualitative interviews to collect data that answered my research questions.

Case Study Approach

My personal and professional experience in NATO was an important factor in this research design. Yin (2003a, 2003b) implied that case study could be an effective qualitative or quantitative research strategy; however, Stake (2000) described case study as neither a methodology nor a method. It is simply "a choice of what is to be studied" (p. 435). The reflexive nature of qualitative study places me within my research; thus, choice of whom I study and what I study is important. Case study provides me with an effective means to inquire about NATO in a historical context and examine it as a unique

organizational system, situated in historical context and bounded by time – features that are strengths of this approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Stake, 1995, 1998, 2000).

I used analysis to deepen my understanding of NATO's public relations program and extend the excellence theory. I also explored NATO's application of ethics in decision-making. Hence, case study added value to my study by providing a useful means "for refining theory and suggesting complexities for further investigation" (Stake, 2000, p. 448). I employed a general research framework and incorporated Stake's *instrumental* approach in this study – using NATO as an instrument to understand how a single multinational organization might apply principles of public relations. I also adopted Wolcott's (1995) general approach to case study, which seeks in-depth knowledge about a single case instead of broad knowledge about several cases. I use Wolcott's retort to respond to those who might challenge the scientific rationale for studying only one of anything: "What can we learn from studying only one of anything? Why, all we can!" (p. 171). Finally, I relied on Meade's (1961) preference for qualitative meaning over objective proof in a single case study:

As the physician and the psychiatrist have found it necessary to describe each case separately and to use their cases as illumination of a thesis rather than as irrefutable proof such as it is possible to adduce in the physical sciences, so the student of the more intangible and psychological aspects of human behaviour [*sic*] is forced to illuminate rather than demonstrate a thesis. (p. 260)

Methods

I selected three types of interviews as primary methods to collect data in this study: long interview, elite interview, and focus group interview. I conducted a total of

14 long interviews, 4 elite interviews, and 3 focus group interviews. The original design of this study called for 12 long interviews, 3 elite interviews, and 3 focus group interviews. Willingness of interview recruits to participate and a lower-than-expected mortality rate in actual interviews contributed to the increase in number of long and elite interviews.

I pre-tested interview protocols during three trials. These trials consisted of three additional interviews: one long, one elite and one focus group. I will explain composition and outcome of the trial interviews in the procedure section, below.

I conducted long interviews in three phases: a pre-test and three interviews in 2000, three interviews in 2001, and eight interviews in 2004. The first phase of long interviews compared excellence theory principles and NATO's management of public relations programs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The second round of long interviews compared the excellence theory with NATO public relations and began to explore emerging themes related to *global* public relations. Finally, third-round long interviews explored principles of the excellence theory and global public relations theory and sought to better understand how changing situations – ranging from peace to conflict – might influence NATO's management of public relations activities. The emergence of the latter theme in the last round of interviews raised questions how NATO incorporated ethics in decisions about using various types of communication strategies and tactics. This development led me to conduct elite and focus group interviews in 2004, which I used to refine data from long interviews and explore a proposed model of communication for use in conflict situations.

These interviews helped relate research findings to my research purpose and questions, forming a methodological connection strong enough to withstand rigorous and repeated scrutiny by my advisory committee, my colleagues, and readers of this study. I will first explain the general characteristics of the interview method. I will then discuss individual characteristics of each interview type, describe interview participants, explain procedures for gaining access to and recruiting participants, and address other issues related to the design of this research.

Interviews

The *interview* is among the most commonly used methods of qualitative research (McCracken, 1988; H. Rubin & I. Rubin, 1995) because it has great value in exploring complicated phenomena that require thick descriptions of meaning (Geertz, 1973; Stake, 1995). An interview also is useful in uncovering a participant's views about research topics and revealing relationships between issues, beliefs, opinions, processes, and other natural phenomena. Properly constructed, interviews can increase the chance of reaching understanding between researcher and participant by strategic use of questions, responses, and probes to verify and validate meaning. Finally, the flexible, iterative and continuous nature of interview research allows observations to evolve and address unforeseen issues as they emerge (H. Rubin & I. Rubin).

Interviews differ in many ways, however. They vary by type, as described above. They also are distinguished by structure (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Structured interviews follow a protocol or guide designed to elicit responses to a variety of questions of particular interest to the researcher, in the time allotted for an interview. Unstructured interviews often use no protocol, which allows the participant freedom to talk about items

of interest to him or her. Semi-structured interviews strike a balance, employing a general interviewer's guide that the interviewer can adapt as the interview and ideas evolve.

I used a semi-structured interview approach in this study, relying on general interview guides exhibited in appendices A through C. This semi-structured approach afforded me the flexibility to adapt wording, number, and sequence of questions to changes in the interview situation and context as my research progressed. I used the guides to facilitate long, elite and focus group interviews in this study. These guides contained several types of interview questions described by Kvale (1996, pp. 133-134). Introductory questions helped open the interviews or begin discussion of themes or directions of interest to this research. Probing questions encouraged elaboration by participants for answers that were not clearly understood by the interviewer. Follow-up questions explored deeper meaning of items that were of interest to participants and the interviewer. The semi-structured nature of the interviews also allowed me to employ techniques not evident in the guide. These techniques included specifying questions that allowed me to obtain more precise descriptions, interpreting questions that allowed me to rephrase a participant's response to confirm meaning, and silence or pauses that often encouraged participants to add significant data and meaning to their answers.

The flexibility of this semi-structured format allowed me to adapt interviews to native and non-native English speakers and overcome technical challenges related to telephone interviews. As Patton (1990) suggested, I found that the semi-structured approach offered the following advantages:

1. Allows best use of limited time.

2. Provides a systematic and comprehensive approach to collecting data without strictly limiting issues to be discussed.
3. Keeps interviews focused but allows individual expression of thoughts and experiences.
4. Allows exploration of other topics that may emerge. (p. 283)

Interviews, however, have weaknesses related to access, time and logistics, setting, and procedures. First, access to participants – especially to busy elites – is often limited by organizational schedules, policy, or desire for privacy. To overcome this problem, I relied on my existing, professional relationships with current and former military officials to identify and approach potential interview participants who were experienced in alliances and coalitions like NATO and IFOR.

Second, time and logistic constraints limit the number of people a researcher can interview. Hence, I conducted only as many interviews as needed to reach data saturation, or redundancy (Patton, 1990). I will explain my rationale for sample size in the access, sampling, and recruiting section, below.

Third, research-related travel time and monetary expenses can often become prohibitive. Therefore, I focused recruiting efforts for face-to-face interviews on prospective participants who lived or worked in the Washington, DC, area, which was near my home and university. I relied on telephone interviews for participants outside this immediate geographic area.

Fourth, less-than-naturalistic settings (e.g., offices, interview rooms, telephone) can constrain interview results and interview protocols may inhibit ability to capture naturally occurring phenomena. Interviews may also create researcher-provoked data

that “would not exist apart from a researcher’s intervention” (Silverman, 2001, p. 159). Therefore, I identified interview settings that helped make my participants as comfortable as possible, thus promoting active dialogue. I empowered participants by using probes and follow-up questions that allowed them to move beyond topics contained in interview protocols. I also used interpreting questions and silence to minimize the effects of my intervention and encourage participants to co-construct meaning during interviews. Finally, participants’ responses and researchers’ understanding of meaning are often prone to internal and external bias. Therefore, I incorporated techniques to manage these biases, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

Long Interview

McCracken (1988) described the long interview as “one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armory ... [it] can take us into the mental world of the individual, to glimpse categories and logic by which he or she sees the world” (p. 9). Yin (2003a) regarded such interviews as “one of the most important sources of case study information” and referred to them as “guided conversations rather than structured queries ... fluid rather than rigid” (p. 89). These informal, conversational qualities contribute to long interview’s value as a “listening technique” (Hon, 1992, p. 116), which is often more useful to qualitative research than social-scientific surveys, telephone interviews and other “eliciting techniques” (Wolcott, 1995, p. 106).

Long interviews differ from other forms of interview in length and structure. Fontana and Frey (2000) illustrated variance in interview length: “An interview can be a one-time, brief event – say 5 minutes over the telephone – or it can take place over multiple, lengthy sessions, at times spanning days, as in life history interviewing” (p.

646). Yin (2003a) suggested that long, case study interviews could last for approximately an hour. Ultimately, length is determined by the open-ended and conversational structure of the interview, which follows “a certain set of questions derived from case study protocol” (p. 90). Thus, I expected each long interview in this study to consist of a single interview session lasting approximately two hours. I estimated two hours to be the maximum amount of time a participant might be available for a single session and the length of time that an interviewer and participant could sustain attention to the topics at hand. If I found that additional time was needed to obtain data from a participant, I allowed room for a long interview to be extended by conducting several interview sessions of approximately two hours over several days or weeks.

Wolcott (1995) also raised two important points regarding fieldwork that relate to long interviews. First, he expressed “doubt that any observer can sustain attention for any length of time” (p. 98). Second, he warned, “Time itself does not guarantee quality fieldwork” (p. 126) and he suggested, “The best answers are not in response to questions of ‘how long’ measure in time, but to questions of purpose” (p. 128). Thus, I rejected the notion that interview duration should be determined by a pre-set notion of time. Instead, I considered optimum duration of an interview to be somewhere between the minimum length of time required to achieve the interview’s purpose (e.g., as guided by an interview protocol) and the maximum time that an interviewer and participant could reasonably sustain attention span. If time required to achieve purpose of an interview exceeds attention span, then one or more follow-on interviews could be required to complete the long interview.

Hence, long interview was well-suited to the purpose of this qualitative, case study research, which sought to gain deep understanding from descriptions of public relations provided by NATO leaders with experience in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Length of these interviews ranged from one to two hours, which was sufficient time for participants to respond to questions and for me to record data needed to achieve the purpose of the interview. No follow-on interviews were required.

Elite Interviews

I disagree with Dexter's (1970) notion that an *elite* is anyone who requires special treatment during an interview. As a qualitative researcher, I value the voices of all interview participants and believe each is entitled to equal rather than special treatment. The unique conditions under which elite interviews are conducted do, however, require careful consideration. For instance, elite interviews often require less time than traditional interviews because elite participants may have little time to devote to interviews and may be unreceptive to or suspicious of the researcher (H. Rubin & I. Rubin, 1995). I considered elites to be those senior NATO officials who possessed the type of specialized knowledge needed to explain how members of NATO's dominant coalition made decisions about public relations management. I allowed approximately one hour for each elite interview and conducted the interview in a setting chosen by the elite. Actual length of each elite interview ranged from a minimum of one hour and five minutes to a maximum of two hours and 10 minutes.

Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interviews, often called group discussions, are yet another method that can be used to uncover thick description and deep meaning about complicated issues.

Like interviews, these methods rely on participants to express their views. However, unlike individual interviews, a researcher focuses attention in focus group interviews on interaction among participants rather than on individual responses (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Morgan, 1997). Focus groups offer several advantages. First, the format reduces researcher-provoked influence by shifting focus from dialogue between an interviewer and a participant to discussion among several group members. Second, the focus on group interaction helps to overcome reductionism, which reduces a process or phenomenon to its individual parts and examines specific parts separately. Third, focus groups produce large amounts of meaningful data, gathered from diverse perspectives, in a relatively short period of time. Three to 5 groups of between 6 and 10 participants are usually enough to reach data saturation within a single discussion lasting for a period of 2 hours (Bogdan & Biklen; Morgan).

Focus groups also have several weaknesses. First, focus groups usually take place in unnatural settings (often in specially-designed settings, while being recorded). Second, the expense and logistic challenges involved with recruiting and setting up a focus group can be daunting. Third, focus group discussions are less structured than individual interviews. This lack of structure can reduce researcher-provoked bias and lead to unexpected discoveries but very often group interaction will energize and move discussions into areas that provide little data of interest to the researcher. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) also observed that group discussions could suppress information, since “individuals may not share important experiences they have had because they are too embarrassed to share them in the group” (p. 101).

I found that a carefully designed moderator guide and use of appropriate moderating techniques, including strategic probes, enabled me to achieve the purpose of my focus group interviews without encountering problems described above. Each focus group lasted approximately two hours.

Participants

Marshall and Rossman (1999) observed that “waves of subsequent sampling decisions” (p. 72) must follow a researcher’s choice of phenomenon, population, or case. These decisions involve questions of purpose, access, and recruiting methods. Finding adequate answers to these questions becomes crucial to establishing the credibility of subsequent data analysis and dependability of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Therefore, having chosen NATO as the focus of my study, I considered the study’s purpose and level of access to NATO before identifying sampling methods, recruiting techniques and participants. My purpose in this study was to propose a model of ethical communication that extends the excellence theory and contributes to development of a global theory in public relations. Achieving this study required understanding of how NATO leaders managed public relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1995 and 1996. This understanding required access to NATO leaders.

Access

Geertz (1973) alluded to the prerequisite importance of access in understanding social phenomena, regardless of the approach taken to observing the phenomena.

One can stay ... within a single, more or less bounded form, and circle steadily within it. One can move between forms in search of broader unities or informing contrasts. One can even compare forms from different cultures.... But whatever

the level at which one operates ... the guiding principle is the same: societies, like lives, contain their own interpretations. One has only to learn how to gain access to them. (p. 453)

Gaining access to social phenomena – especially for prolonged periods of time – can become problematic, raise questions of personal or corporate privacy, require permissions, and involve treading on someone's or some organization's "home grounds" (Stake, 1995, p. 57). Fortunately, NATO once served as my home ground; therefore, I was able to gain immediate and sustained access to current and former NATO leaders. This access was carried out through letters, e-mail messages, telephone conversations, and personal meetings. I was also granted written authorization to obtain internal, unclassified NATO documents that helped to inform my research. Still, I was left with questions of sample size and how many participants to recruit.

Sampling

This study valued depth of understanding over breadth of observation. Given the qualitative nature of this study, I did not attempt to produce representative samples from which I could generalize. Instead, I determined my sample size by estimating the minimum number needed to provide adequate coverage of phenomena related to this topic (Patton, 1990). I estimated that 12 to 15 long interviews, 3 elite interviews and 3 focus group interviews would be sufficient for my research purposes. This estimate allowed for an increase in sample size and numbers of interviews in the event that coverage was later deemed inadequate. I was also prepared to conduct follow-up interviews if required. I used two types of *non-probability sampling* (Babbie, 1991; Broom & Dozier, 1990) procedures to identify potential participants for long, elite, and

focus group interviews: *purposive* (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Broom & Dozier, 1990; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Locke et al., 2000) and *snowball* (Broom & Dozier).

First, I identified a *purposive* sample of military and civilian veterans with NATO, IFOR, or other alliance or coalition experience who might be qualified and willing to participate in individual and group interviews. This sample was drawn primarily from official and personal records listing veterans with public affairs experience in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Having served with many of the interview candidates during my active duty service with the U.S. Navy, I had first-hand knowledge of the professional qualifications of several individuals. From this sample, I screened and selected volunteers who met the “special needs” (Broom & Dozier, 1990, p. 123) of my research program. Since interviews would be conducted in English, I required all interview participants to have good command of the English language. I also established professional experience and knowledge criteria according to needs related to each interview method.

Long interview criteria. The long interview group was designed to represent public relations managers who advised senior leaders about public relations and communication. Long interview participants needed to have at least six months of public relations management experience, knowledge of strategic planning, and at least three months of service in NATO or IFOR operations. These periods equated to lengths of time required for a temporary duty assignment in a military operation and a normal tour of duty in a single public relations position – time that I felt was adequate to acquire essential experience and knowledge.

Elite interview criteria. For the elite group, I sought senior military leaders who had been responsible for making organizational decisions, including decisions about public relations and communication. To select volunteers, I relied on criteria that established executive-level or dominant coalition experience (e.g., chief executive or senior staff), knowledge of public relations management, and service in NATO or IFOR. I considered 20 to 30 years of military experience to be adequate for this criterion, since this time equated to an average length of service for senior, career military officers. I also considered as adequate two years of NATO job-related service or six months of IFOR experience – the equivalent of a normal assignment with those organizations.

Focus group criteria. Focus groups were designed to include candidates who lived in or near the Washington, DC, area, possessed expert knowledge about my research topic; and demonstrated communication skills needed to contribute to group discussions. In order to avoid response bias, I refrained from disclosing to participants my specific research agenda and research questions. I did, however, provide a short overview of the case when screening potential participants and I described the study's general nature during a briefing prior to and after each discussion. I used selection criteria contained in a screening guide (Appendix D) to identify these participants. These criteria included at least three months of experience in a multinational political-military operation, knowledge of public relations and communication management, and experience in military leadership and decision-making. Because I wanted to use focus groups to discuss the ethical nature of my proposed communication model, I also needed focus group members who possessed knowledge of ethics and moral reasoning. All candidates had to have good English-speaking skills; however, because of difficulties

associated with finding single individuals who fulfilled *all* of these criteria, I sought individuals who possessed many of these traits and tried to arrange groups that combined all traits.

Second, I used a *snowball* sampling technique (Broom & Dozier, 1990) to consider other qualified interview candidates. By asking candidates in my sample to help me identify other potential interview participants I was able to expand my sample size. This technique, which was particularly helpful in focus group sampling, allowed me to identify interview candidates that were “seen by others as having influence in the social network on a specific issue” (p. 34).

In terms of sample size, I followed the principle of quality over quantity. Kvale (1996) noted: “Some qualitative interview studies appear to be designed on a quantitative presupposition – the more interviews, the more scientific. In contrast, the present approach emphasizes the quality rather than the quantity of the interviews” (p. 103). Hence, I designed sample sizes to produce a sufficient number of interview participants to “get at the characteristics of settings, events, and processes” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 33) that I needed to understand the NATO case.

I used Kvale’s (1996) criterion for determining adequacy in number of individual interviews in this qualitative study: “Interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know” (p. 101). This number also represents the upper range of what Kvale described as the current trend in interview studies. Based on the results of pre-tests, I determined that 12 to 15 long interviews and three elite interviews would be sufficient to find out what I needed to know. For focus group sampling, I adhered to the criterion established by Morgan (1977), who regarded three focus groups as the minimum number

needed to fulfill goals for a single research project. If I had failed to achieve redundancy of data with the given sample size, I would have continue interviewing until I achieved redundancy, as long as time and resources permitted (Patton, 1990). Fortunately, additional interviews were not required for this study. With this sampling goal in mind, I began to recruit participants for my study.

Recruiting and Participant Profiles

As expected, I was able to recruit a sufficient number of volunteers who were qualified and willing to participate in individual interviews. For each type of interview, I was able to select participants from a large pool of prospects. Recruiting procedures and participant profiles varied by interview method, which I will describe below.

Long interviews. I made initial contact with long interview candidates in my sample in person, by telephone or via e-mail. I provided each candidate with an information briefing about my research project. During this briefing, I clearly identified my role as a doctoral student and research investigator, provided each candidate with a brief summary of my research project and purpose, disclosed minimal risks associated with recording interviews and publishing reports, stressed the voluntary nature of participation, explained the qualifications I was seeking in interview volunteers, and requested an opportunity to interview them about their public affairs experiences with NATO or other multinational alliances. Each of the 14 candidates agreed to an interview. I then followed up by telephone, e-mail, and letter to provide confirmation of interview dates and locations, a statement of my affiliation with the University of Maryland, a briefing on my research project, and an informed consent form for their signature. All

candidates returned signed consent forms to me in person or by mail, verifying their willingness to participate in an interview.

All interview volunteers possessed required language skills, knowledge of public relations management, and experience in NATO or IFOR. As I have explained, this qualitative study did not seek to generalize or obtain a representative sample. Instead, I sought to gain deep understanding of individual perspectives and make meaning of their experiences. Still, given the cultural diversity found within the NATO alliance, I attempted to achieve variety among interview participants. I intended to use this variety to explore possible differences in the way participants expressed public relations worldview or managed communication based on cultural or national identity. Thus, I hoped heterogeneity among interview participants and inclusiveness of various worldviews would yield deeper understanding about how public relations operated in a multinational, political-military organization. This technique is similar to a *quota* or *dimensional* sampling technique described by Broom and Dozier (1990), in that I attempted to produce a sample that reflected distribution of nationality – an important characteristic or strata of the NATO alliance. However, I did not characterize this approach as quota or dimensional sampling in my research design; since I created an approximate rather than a precise distribution of nationality represented in the actual NATO population.

Recruiting produced a group of long interview participants that varied by gender, military and civilian status, and nationality: 1 woman and 13 men; 9 U.S. citizens, 3 Canadians, 1 Italian, and 1 British citizen; 7 active duty military public affairs officers, 3 retired military public affairs officers serving in civilian political-military public affairs

positions, and 4 retired military public affairs officers serving as public relations managers in private firms or corporations. Participants had from 3 years to more than 25 years of public relations management experience. Each had served from between 6 months to 3 years in NATO or IFOR. I conducted the interviews in English, either in person or by phone with participants who were located in Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, and in the U.S. South Atlantic, North Central, and West regions. Geographic regions of the United States described in this study are defined according to U.S. Census Bureau terminology.

Elite interviews. I contacted four elite candidates by telephone to determine their willingness to participate in an interview. There was no reason to screen candidates for elite interviews since their qualifications were already established by historical records and by my first-hand knowledge of their roles in NATO's deployment to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

All four elites agreed to be interviewed. All were U.S. citizens, male, appeared to be Caucasian, and were senior military officers with experience in executive decision-making – including decisions about public relations and choice of communication strategies and tactics for NATO's forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Two of the elites had served for at least five months as senior commanders of NATO's peace forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The third elite had served for three years as an immediate assistant and advisor to a senior NATO staff officer; he spent one of those years with IFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The fourth elite had served for more than two years as a senior public relations advisor to the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe – the senior military officer in charge of NATO's military forces in Europe.

I conducted two of the face-to-face interviews in English with elites at their homes in states within the U.S. South Atlantic region. I conducted two other interviews in English by telephone with elites at their respective homes in a U.S. South Atlantic state.

Focus group interviews. Recruiting qualified participants for focus group interviews proved more difficult than recruiting for individual interviews. Again, I was able to select from a large pool of qualified candidates; however, the coordination and logistics required to schedule a discussion involving up to 12 participants was more difficult than scheduling individual interviews. Therefore, borrowing from Morgan (1997), I adopted procedures to manage this challenge and recruit sufficient numbers of focus group participants – or between 6 and 10 for each group.

First, I recruited from a purposive sample that supported the needs of my research. This allowed me to select participants from concentrated groups of civilian and military public relations managers who worked at military installations in Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, DC. For each of the focus groups, I contacted a senior administrative official in U.S. Defense Information School (DINFOS) at Ft. Meade, MD; the U.S. departments of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force in the Pentagon, Washington, DC; and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, NY, respectively. To establish alternate locations for additional focus groups, should I have needed them, I also contacted military officials at the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD, and NATO's Allied Command Transformation in Norfolk, VA. I provided officials with a brief summary of my research project, which was similar to the briefings provided to long interview and elite interview candidates. I then requested an opportunity to hold a

discussion group at their facility with willing employees who met the criteria for focus group interviews. Officials at each location approved my requests and, based on logistics related to my move from Maryland to New York, I elected to pursue focus groups at DINFOS, the Pentagon, and the U.S. Military Academy – reserving the other locations for future research.

After approving my requests, officials at the DINFOS, the Pentagon, and the U.S. Military Academy announced the focus group opportunity through an internal e-mail message and asked interested volunteers to contact me. When prospective focus group participants contacted me, I used a screening guide (Appendix D) to verify qualifications (including English-speaking capability), confirm willingness to participate, and identify a mutually-convenient time and date for the focus group. Generally, I used the telephone for initial communication with prospective focus group members. Following this initial call, I usually followed up and coordinated details via e-mail. I maintained a data base containing contact, scheduling, and demographic information for all prospects. I used this information to generate follow-up messages, reminders prior to each focus group, and thank you messages immediately after each discussion.

Second, I provided incentives to participate. I scheduled focus groups during the middle of the day or early evening to accommodate the work schedules of participants. I also supplied volunteers with a complimentary meal and soft beverages before discussions. Light food and beverages were made available before discussions to minimize distractions once the focus group began. Preceding focus groups with a meal afforded participants a chance to relax and socialize, which contributed to an atmosphere that became conducive to active and sustained dialogue. Furthermore, the meal allowed

participants to treat the discussion as a “working” lunch or dinner, thus reducing impact on work schedules and inconvenience to volunteers.

Since participants were generally mid-level to senior executives, I elected not to offer monetary incentives to participate. Instead, during the recruiting phase, I appealed to the professionalism of prospective volunteers and identified intangible benefits associated with participation. These benefits included the opportunity for participants to share their public affairs experience and knowledge with colleagues. This proved to be an especially strong incentive for military public affairs officers who had recently returned from deployments to Afghanistan, Iraq, and other Middle East nations. Having just served in NATO or U.S.-led coalition operations in those regions, these participants were eager to discuss lessons they had learned. Following each discussion group, several members commented on the therapeutic sense of enjoyment and reward they felt while engaging their peers in discussions about topics of deep personal and professional interest. Many volunteered on the spot to participate in similar discussions that might be held in the future.

Third, I planned on a reasonable size for each group. I estimated that the goal of 6 to 10 participants in each focus group would be large enough to sustain an active discussion and reveal diverse perspectives yet small enough to allow each group member to contribute. Based on Morgan’s (1997) suggestion, I designed my recruiting strategy to account for no-shows and attempted to recruit 20% more participants than needed for each group. This strategy succeeded in meeting recruiting goals and producing focus groups of ideal size.

Fourth, I used a funnel approach as a compromise between structured and unstructured interview approaches. I rejected a structured approach to discussions in favor of a more open-ended approach. However, restraints on time, logistics and budget for this research limited the number of discussions I could schedule. I would have preferred to schedule additional discussions, which would have been more conducive to a constant comparative approach to data collection and analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). A constant comparative approach would have allowed me to build on data collection and analysis from each discussion with more data collection and analysis from subsequent discussions. Still, I reserve this option for future research. Using a funnel approach, I used increasingly structured approaches to interviewing in each consecutive group. The first group, at DINFOS, discussed broad concepts of decision-making in public relations and communication management. The second group, at the Pentagon, began to focus more on the model of communication proposed in this study. The third group, enriched by the U.S. Military Academy faculty's expertise in law, ethics, leadership, and philosophy – as well as public relations – focused on issues of moral theory and ethics associated with the proposed communication model.

Finally, I attempted to segment rather than randomize participants in my focus groups. This approach is often less difficult than trying to produce a random sample and segmentation helps produce a homogeneity in focus groups that facilitates data-rich discussion. In this study, I segmented three groups of discussion members according to their military unit affiliation: one from the DINFOS, one from the Pentagon, and one from the U.S. Military Academy. All members had good English language skills. Other participant characteristics are described below.

The *DINFOS focus group* consisted of seven male participants, all U.S. citizens. Although qualified female candidates were identified through sampling, none volunteered for the focus group discussion. Six of the participants appeared to be Caucasian and one appeared to be African-American. All of the participants were experienced public relations specialists on active duty or retired from the U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Air Force. Five of the participants held or retired at senior military ranks – positions that indicated executive management responsibility, advance knowledge, and specialization in public relations. The participants had between six months and seven years of professional experience serving in public relations management with NATO or similar multinational alliances and coalitions.

One participant worked at a military command near DINFOS and another worked as a senior public relations executive for a defense contractor based at Ft. Meade. The other five participants worked as faculty or administrative staff at DINFOS. Given the association between faculty and staff members at DINFOS, most participants knew each other. The DINFOS employees also knew the other two participants on a professional basis. The familiar relationship between participants contributed to an active discussion. DINFOS, a U.S. Department of Defense organization, is responsible for educating, training and sustaining “a corps of professional organizational communicators who fulfill the communication needs of military leaders and audiences” (U.S. Defense Information School, 2005). Hence, the shared occupation and knowledge of the DINFOS group, all of whom were well-versed in public relations education and defense public affairs policy, contributed to a sustained discussion of public relations management in multinational alliances.

The *Pentagon focus group* consisted of 12 U.S. military public affairs officers who were all U.S. citizens: 10 on active duty (including one who was completing an internship with a large, international public relations agency) and 2 retired from active duty but still working in private or government public relations practices. Five of the participants were affiliated with special duty public affairs branches of the U.S. Army, 3 with the U.S. Navy, 3 with the U.S. Air Force and 1 with the U.S. Marine Corps. Three participants were female and nine were male. One appeared to be African-American and the others appeared to be Caucasian. All were experienced in military public relations management. Participants reported an average length of public relations experience in multinational alliance or coalition operations of between four months and seven years. Six participants had public relations management experience in NATO's deployment to Bosnia-Herzegovina or nearby Kosovo and three had recently returned from public relations assignments in Afghanistan or Iraq.

To achieve homogeneity in the military service affiliation of participants, I had originally planned to conduct three focus groups in the Pentagon: one for Army officers, one for Navy and Marine Corps officers, and one for Air Force officers. I incorporated this design factor into my planning based on the assumption that military service public affairs branches had their own, unique communication cultures and perspectives. Hence, I attempted to combine participants in groups that shared similar cultures, in order to promote an active discussion.

However, recruiting and scheduling three separate groups became problematic. First, I was unable to recruit sufficient numbers of participants to satisfy the requirements for three discussion groups. Second, I was unable to identify three separate dates that

were convenient for all volunteers. I managed this problem by combining focus group volunteers from all services into a single, Pentagon-based discussion.

Since participants in the Pentagon discussion were recruited from different organizations, familiarity between participants was not as close as the familiarity observed among DINFOS focus group members. Still, many participants knew of each other on a professional basis. Subsequently, with regard to promoting an active discussion, I discovered that homogeneity in terms of military service affiliation was not so important a factor as homogeneity of public relations experience in multinational alliances and coalitions.

Military services in the United States indeed have unique cultures that influence their approach to communication. However, a joint service approach to multinational operations, which combines military services in a single operation, seems to have an acculturating affect on communication worldview. Thus, Pentagon group members communicated actively, regardless of their service affiliation, and seemed to find common ground and many topics for discussion through their mutual, multinational, operational experiences.

The *U.S. Military Academy focus group* consisted of seven, male, U.S. military officers who were all U.S. citizens and appeared to be Caucasian. All participants were serving on active duty with the U.S. Army on the academy staff or faculty – hence, most participants knew each other on a familiar or a professional basis. One participant, who had more than eight years of public relations management experience, served in a military public affairs position. His experience included one year working in an international, private-sector public relations agency. Another participant was a member

of the clergy, performing religious duties at the academy. A third participant was responsible for strategic program planning and evaluation. The remaining four participants were members of the academy's faculty. One of the faculty members was considered an expert in philosophy, and he held a senior position in the academic department that administered the academy's courses in philosophy and ethics. Another faculty member held a law degree, served as an assistant professor of law, and performed duties as an ethics counselor.

All but one participant had experience in multinational, political-military operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, or other Middle Eastern and European countries. Five participants stated that they often engaged in ethical decision-making. Five claimed to have experience in managing or coordinating public affairs – a few times or often. Two others stated that they rarely worked with public affairs. One participant without multinational experience spent more than three years in military command positions that required extensive decision-making knowledge and skill. He also had four years of experience in strategic planning and management.

Procedures

For the data collection stage of this research, I followed procedures described by Kvale (1996) for interview investigation: thematizing, designing, interviewing and transcribing. I have already described the procedures for formulating my research purpose and topic. I have also discussed my research was designed to obtain understanding of the case under study. I will now explain how I framed, pre-tested, and conducted interviews. All interviews were conducted in English.

Interview Framework

I developed three interview guides, which identified topics and a contained a flexible sequence of questions, to provide a framework for interviews. Since interviews were designed to be *semi-structured*, interview guides contained *suggested*, open-ended questions and probes rather than a rigidly-constructed script. These guides were designed to provide a framework that would produce data needed to answer my research questions. However, this framework was flexible enough to promote freedom of interaction between researcher and participant and empower participants to pursue their own interests – as well as interests of the interviewer. Therefore, the interview design allowed some questions not contained in the guide to be posed during interviews, other questions that were contained in the guide to be skipped over or abbreviated, the sequence of questions to be altered in order to preserve the conversational quality of interviews, and the ability to pursue topics that had not been anticipated in research design. Specific design features for each interview are described below.

Long interviews. The guide for long interviews (Appendix A) began with a pre-briefing that identified my role as a researcher, general purpose of the research project, plans for reporting results of the research, the voluntary nature of the interview, and policy of confidentiality for participants. The pre-briefing also requested permission to audio tape the interview. The first question and answer in the interview were intended to verify consent and permission to record the interview, which were recorded on tape as well as in writing. The first three questions in the guide were intended as *grand tour* questions, or general questions designed to put the participant at ease, express my interest

in the participant's background, establish rapport between me and the participant, and reveal the participant's level of public relations experience.

Subsequent questions introduced topics of interest to my research. These topics were generally related to principles comprising the excellence theory in public relations. Questions were designed to elicit practical descriptions of a participant's public relations experience that might be compared with these theoretical principles. I took care to keep questions general, avoid theoretical terms that could be confusing, and eliminate language that might allow participants to perceive the intent of questions and thereby bias responses. Follow-up questions and probes followed each question, and were intended for use in clarifying responses as time permitted.

Questions concluded with an open-ended query that allowed participants to interject topics of interest that had not already been discussed or add to responses that they wanted to amplify. Finally, the guide ended with a debriefing that thanked each participant for his or her participation, restated the purpose of the research project, and provided names and points of contact for the researchers in this project.

Elite interviews. Structure for the elite interview guide (Appendix B) was similar to that of the long interview guide. Each guide began with a pre-briefing that identified the researcher, research purpose, reporting procedures, voluntary nature of the interview, policy of confidentiality, and a request for permission to conduct and audio tape the interview. The guide began with grand tour questions; proceeded through introducing questions, follow-up questions, and probes; and concluded with an open-ended query and debriefing. Since elite interviews were designed to produce understanding about how senior public relations managers and NATO leaders made communication choices, the

elite guide contained questions that related more to factors associated with decision-making than to principles of the excellence theory. Questions in the guide were also designed to promote descriptions of how conflict situations affected these decisions and how elites perceived coercive communication.

Focus group interviews. Structure for the focus group interview guide (Appendix C) was similar to that of the long and elite interview guides. Since I have already explained the general structure of these guides, I will indicate here how the focus group guide differed from the other two guides. First, the guide was designed to produce a discussion between participants rather than a conversation between interviewer and participants. Therefore, I incorporated design features that would quickly shift attention from the interviewer to participants once the interview began, allowing me to withdraw somewhat from discussion and record observations. These features included a much more comprehensive pre-briefing. This pre-briefing elaborated on ground rules that were intended to put participants at ease, encourage turn-taking, explain the moderator's role, and allow participants to comfortably discuss a wide range of topics. Since group interviews involved up to 12 participants, the group discussion guide began with a single grand-tour question instead of several questions in order to make more efficient use of time. Subsequent questions encouraged participants to define and discuss concepts of interest to this research. The guide included probes, which were designed to stimulate group member participation if discussion lagged.

Intended topics of discussion included definitions of public relations, importance of public relations managers in alliances, types of communication strategies employed by alliances, decision-making processes used to select communication strategies, influence

of conflict situations on these decisions, and application of ethics and moral reasoning in the decision-making process. As in long and elite interviews, the group interview guide allowed discussions to take place beyond the scope of these topics of interest. Before concluding, the guide called for participants to review and discuss the communication model proposed by this research program. Following the review and discussion, the guide concluded with a final open-ended question and debriefing.

Interview Pre-tests

To ensure that these guides would operate as designed, I conducted three pre-tests before beginning formal interviews: one for long interviews, one for elite interviews, and one for focus group interviews.

Long interview pre-test. I conducted the long interview pre-test with a single participant at a large university in the South Atlantic region of the United States. This participant was a male graduate student in communication who was serving on active duty in the U.S. military as a public affairs specialist. The participant was well-versed in the practice and theories of public relations, management, and decision-making – concepts that were important to my research. He was also experienced in multinational public relations, having served for several months with a NATO political-military operation in the Balkans region near Bosnia-Herzegovina. The interview guide proved to be effective and efficient in generating valuable data that revealed how NATO managed public relations in an operational setting and allowed comparison of NATO communication management and principles of the excellence theory in public relations. Based on results of this pre-test, I made slight modifications to the phrasing and sequence of questions in the long interview guide.

Elite interview pre-test. I conducted a pre-test of the elite interview guide at a large university in the U.S. South Atlantic region with another male graduate student in communication. This individual, like the long interview pre-test participant, was also an active duty U.S. military public affairs specialist with expert knowledge of public relations, management, and decision-making in practice and theory. He, too, was experienced in NATO political-military operations in the Balkans region. Furthermore, by virtue of his military role as a senior public relations manager, this participant was familiar with moral reasoning and executive decision-making processes. The elite pre-test revealed that my original guide was too long, the questions were too verbose, and the sequence of questions lacked a logical flow. The revised model, which incorporated changes suggested by the pre-test participant, proved to be effective and efficient in producing meaningful data.

Focus group pre-test. I conducted one pre-test of the focus group moderator's guide at my home in Annapolis, MD. The pre-test group consisted of four individuals from the surrounding community: two male undergraduate students from the U.S. Naval Academy and two male businessmen who owned a telecommunication company in a mid-sized Maryland city. The undergraduate students had completed course work in political science and media relations as well as military leadership and ethics courses that introduced them to moral reasoning and decision-making processes. The businessmen had no military service but had experience managing contracts with U.S. military agencies. They were knowledgeable and experienced in professional ethics, negotiation, management, and communication practices related to organization-client relationships. Although pre-test participants lacked intimate knowledge of and direct experience with

multinational political-military alliances, the focus group session produced a dialogue related to moral reasoning and ethics in decision-making. Results of this pre-test led to minor refinement in wording and sequence of questions and a simplification of the proposed communication model that was presented to participants for review and discussion.

Interview Procedures

Once I framed, pre-tested, and scheduled interviews I turned my attention to interview sessions. I again relied on Kvale (1996) for guidance in this regard, using his six quality criteria for interviews which relate to:

- Spontaneity, richness, specificity, and relevance of a participant's answers.
- Brevity of my questions and length of a participant's answers.
- Extent of my follow-up and clarification of a participant's meaning.
- Interpretation of meaning throughout the interview.
- Verification of my interpretations of meaning during the interview.
- Self-communication of the interview, or "a story contained in itself that hardly requires much extra descriptions and explanations" (p. 145).

These criteria provided useful guidelines as I met with participants and conducted each interview. First, I tried to schedule interviews at times and locations that would be convenient for participants, helping to put them at ease. For long interviews (telephone and face-to-face), most participants preferred to be interviewed in the morning or afternoon in their home or office. One participant in Europe preferred to be interviewed at home during the evening to avoid interruptions at work. In all cases, the settings chosen for the interviews seemed to provide a relaxing atmosphere that promoted

spontaneity. All elites preferred to be interviewed during the day: two from their homes and two from their offices. Focus groups were held mid-day or early evening in office settings, to allow participants to combine discussions with a light meal – thus creating a relaxed, working lunch or working dinner environment that made for efficient use of participants' time.

Interviews were usually conducted in comfortable chairs, in a home dining or office conference room, seated around a table that allowed for good interaction and high quality of audio recording. I placed audio-recording equipment close to me and away from participants to avoid a chilling effect on participants. I also used a low-profile, omni-directional microphone in the center of the table to record interviews. The unobtrusive nature of this arrangement seemed to put participants at ease and help them forget about the recording shortly after interviews began.

Second, I began each long, elite, and focus group interview with a brief period of informal conversation, asking participants off-topic questions about their personal or professional lives to establish a rapport before beginning the formal part of the research interview. Since I am a former colleague of many of the participants, this warm-up period also provided an opportunity to reestablish communication with professional acquaintances. During this time, I set up recording equipment as discretely as possible, positioned my protocol and note pads, and eased into the interview pre-briefing. Remaining aware of myself as an instrument of research, I used the pre-briefing as a means to transit from former colleague to current doctoral student and researcher – as well as to provide information about the interview. I identified my formal role as an interviewer, explained the purpose of interviews, obtained informed consent, and adopted

a more formal yet non-threatening tone as I turned on the audio-recording equipment and began to ask questions in the interview guide.

By distinguishing between my roles as colleague and researcher, I was able to benefit from my professional access to participants while at the same time using a formal research protocol to establish the type of critical distance needed for scientific observation (see Crane, 2000; Geertz, 1973; McCracken, 1988). Also, by using short questions followed by pauses to begin the interviews, I was able to further distance myself from conversation, shift focus of the interview to the participant and add length to participants' responses. Thus, the balanced turn-taking associated with the opening social dialogue quickly settled into to an exchange of short questions from the interviewer followed by long answers for individual interviews and sustained discussions between focus group members.

Third, I used pauses, probes, and follow-up questions to encourage participants to elaborate when responses or discussion lagged and to clarify answers when I was unsure of a participant's meaning. The beginning phase of interviews and discussions were often awkward. Beginning interviews with general, grand-tour questions helped to elicit responses from participants but these responses were often brief, colorless and irrelevant to my research topic. I found that I had to participate much more actively in these early stages of interviews and focus groups. As my questions and probes began to introduce topics of interest to the participants, answers and discussions became more active and I was able to retreat from dialogue and engage in observation. Still, answers and discussions often strayed into areas that I had not anticipated. These discursive journeys created opportunities for discovery; however, at times, they also confused or obscured

meaning. Therefore, I occasionally used follow-up questions or probes to encourage participants to clarify their meaning without leading their responses. Simple requests like “Could you explain?” or “Can you give me an example?” were usually enough to improve clarity.

Fourth, I attempted to interpret meaning and verify my interpretation of meaning throughout each interview. Stake (1995) and Kvale (1995) influenced my approach to meaning and interpretation in this regard. Kvale offered a post-modern view of knowledge as a social construction. As a qualitative, constructivist scholar, I considered knowledge gained from interviews as being co-constructed by interviewer and participants. However, Stake observed that the process of social co-construction can produce multiple meanings, which could confuse understanding and lead to misinterpretation. Therefore, to encourage social construction of meaning and strive for accuracy of interpretation I used pauses liberally to allow participants to speak for themselves. To interpret meaning and verify my interpretations of meaning during the interview I used probes, follow-up questions, and interpreting questions (Kvale, 1996) to encourage elaboration from participants. I rephrased certain responses from participants and asked participants to verify that I had accurately interpreted their meaning. Questions that began with “What did you mean by....” often enhanced my interpretation of participants’ responses.

Finally, as I will explain in the following section dedicated to description, analysis, and interpretation, I encouraged participants to speak in terms that would allow verbatim description – rather than paraphrasing – of participants’ words. Again, pauses, probes, and follow-up questions produced long answers that were rich in data and very

quotable. Thus, I empowered participants to use their own voice during interviews. This enabled participants to tell their own story, construct their own meaning, and contribute to description and interpretation in research results.

Interview Recording

I decided to record interviews on audiotape and prepare transcripts of interviews as a way to support subsequent description, analysis, and interpretation of research results. I realized when making this decision that recording and transcribing qualitative interviews become very personal choices that are subject to debate. First, recording interviews can have a chilling effect on participants. As I explained, I tried to manage and reduce this effect by using unobtrusive recording equipment. Second, preserving and storing records of personal dialogue obtained during interviews have important ethical implications. I established and adhered to procedures to protect the confidentiality of participants and personal data collected in this study. These procedures were approved by my university's institutional review board and agreed to by interview participants. Third, knowledge that audiotapes and transcriptions of interviews will be prepared alleviated some of the mechanical tasks associated with note taking during an interview, thereby allowing me to focus on observation, sense making, and interpretation during the interview. In my pre-briefings, I informed participants that audio recordings would allow me to "concentrate on what you have to say in our discussion" and "ensure accuracy" of participants' responses.

The degree to which audio recordings and transcripts contribute to accuracy is debatable. Kvale (1996) reported that transcripts are "artificial constructions from an oral to a written mode of communication. Every transcription from one context to another

involves a series of judgments and decisions” (p. 163). Poor-quality audio recordings and transcription errors (e.g., inaudible words or phrases and phonetic rather than literal spelling of unfamiliar names or other words) can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Furthermore, audio and transcription records often fail to capture contextual clues that are needed to accurately interpret meaning. Relying too much on textual analysis of artificial evidence in transcripts could conceal important, naturally-occurring evidence contained in an interview participant’s voice that might be important to meaning (e.g., tone, pace, volume, pitch, inflection). On the other hand, recordings and transcriptions could serve as redundant forms of memory. I chose not to employ a note taker in my interviews in order to create a more intimate atmosphere and reduce the chilling effect that extra observers might create. Hence, I assumed responsibility for note taking as well as facilitating each interview – tasks which can often distract from observation.

Temporal distance between interviews and analysis influenced my understanding and interpretation of meanings expressed in interviews. Passage of time affected my ability to recall important details and thus threatened credibility of data analysis. I was moved to reflect on memory and remembering by reading about the experience of other authors in this regard. Conroy (2002), after writing an historical account of his 1966-1967 collegiate basketball season, wrote:

I have forced myself to consider the perilous and shifting nature of memory itself.

There was a time in my life when I could replay these games in my head and remember, with astonishing precision.... As I aged, those details have faded almost completely and games float within the constellations that make up

memory, but with a ghostly pallor and the stick-figure movements of disembodied teammates lost in the streams of time. (p. 393)

In terms of research method, Kvale (1996) referred to empathic listening and remembering as a recording technique, which can help uncover essential meaning during an interview. However, Kvale – like Conroy – noted that relying on memory for subsequent interpretation and analysis is limited by “the rapid forgetting of details and the influence of selective memory” (Kvale, p. 161).

Hence, I acknowledged that important responses, behaviors, or facts that occurred during an interview could be lost over time. My decision about documenting interviews was influenced further by M. Gergen and K. Gergen’s (2000) description of this temporal phenomenon – or “vanishing subject matter” (p. 1039) – and their warning that some data might not remain stable over time:

With global proliferation of communication technologies in particular, processes of meaning making are also accelerated. Values, attitudes, and opinions are all subject to rapid fluctuation, and with them patterns of related action. In effect, the temporal relevance of a research study is increasingly circumscribed, and the half-life of cultural analysis increasingly shortened. (p. 1040)

Therefore, I decided to record and create transcriptions of each interview rather than risk losing important subject matter that would be crucial to subsequent analysis. I recognized risks associated with recording and transcribing interviews and chose to manage them instead of avoid them. First, I took great care to achieve a high quality of audio recording. Rather than relying on a small, portable audiocassette recorder with built-in condenser microphone I opted for higher-quality recording equipment. I relied

on a portable recorder as a back-up system but used as my primary means of recording a transcription deck with a remote, boundary microphone designed to pick up sounds throughout an interview room. Second, I employed professional transcribers to produce a print record of most interviews. Third, I reviewed each transcript and used my personal notes or a replay of the audio record to ensure accuracy of transcriptions. Finally, if I had doubts about the accuracy of a transcribed response, I contacted the interview participant associated with that response to verify accuracy of the report. Of the 21 interviews conducted, I had to initiate follow-up contact with participants for clarification purposes fewer than 5 times.

I also recorded field notes of my observations in the form of observer comments as a means to add context to responses and discussions. These notes took the form of memos or short summaries prior to beginning interviews, observer comments during interviews, and summary statements that were written immediately following interviews to avoid problems with recall and vanishing subject matter. Silverman (2001) underscored the importance of context in conversation when he wrote, “A speaker’s action is *context-shaped*” (p. 167). Thus, I acknowledged that the sequence of conversation in my interviews could not be understood apart from the context of the actual conversation. Furthermore, as I have already explained, my notes helped to validate accuracy of audio recordings and transcriptions of interviews. Hence, I relied on field notes and summary memos to record my observations and initial interpretations of aspects of the physical setting in which interviews took place; non-verbal communication, demeanor of participants, my demeanor, and thematic patterns that were

beginning to emerge during interviews; and other contextual clues that would support interpretation of meanings conveyed through these interviews.

Other Research Design Considerations

Description, Analysis, and Interpretation

I used a deductive, code and retrieve process described by Miles and Huberman (1994) to search data from interviews. This process relied on a common coding scheme (Appendix E) to categorize themes identified during interviews and data analysis. This scheme was designed to identify and group themes according to principles of the excellence theory in public relations. This coding scheme helped to uncover NATO communication activities associated with application of the excellence theory to IFOR's public relations programs. Using this scheme, I first categorized data according to four levels of analysis used by J. Grunig (1992a) in studies of public relations excellence: program, department, organization, and results. I then analyzed data to determine how specific characteristics of the excellence theory might relate to the practices described by participants. In addition, I searched for descriptions of processes and emergence of contextual clues that might provide insight and enhance understanding of the data. I also incorporated enough flexibility to allow for development of new categories as themes, patterns, or implications emerged from my analysis that my scheme did not account for.

In the reporting section of this study, I adopted Wolcott's (1994) approach to description, analysis, and interpretation, which he described as a proportion or "D-A-I Formula" (p. 48). I defined these terms according to Wolcott:

Description addresses the question, "What is going on here?" Data consist of observations made by the researcher and/or reported to the researcher by others.

Analysis addresses the identification of essential features and the systematic description of interrelationships among them – in short, how things work. In terms of stated objectives, analysis also may be employed evaluatively to address questions of why a system is not working or how it might be made to work “better.”

Interpretation addresses processual questions of meanings and contexts: “How does it all mean?” “What is to be made of it all?” (p. 12)

From this perspective, I used description to organize and report data as close to its original form as possible (e.g., reporting verbatim responses rather than paraphrasing participants’ words when feasible). I followed description with analysis, transforming data through a logical process that relied on systematic reasoning. Reasoning identified key factors, patterns, and themes among data – and their interrelationships – that helped construct meaning. I then interpreted the results of this description and analysis, attempting to achieve a deeper understanding about what data meant. This interpretation followed a constructivist tradition described by Denzin (1998). In keeping with this tradition, I incorporated three different interview methods to construct criteria for trustworthiness: “credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability” (p. 330). Although these different methods may not have been distinct enough to achieve triangulation, my efforts to employ various strategies to collect data from public relations managers, from elite decision makers, and from subject matter experts with experience in multinational alliances did achieve what Denzin described as the equivalents of validity, reliability, and objectivity in a qualitative study.

To fulfill these criteria and achieve trustworthiness in my study, I provided enough description (e.g., direct quotes) from interviews that readers of my report would be able to view, make sense of, and interpret original data. I organized data into a framework that relates directly to a coding scheme derived from principles of the excellence theory and theories of moral reasoning. Description and analysis became critical means of achieving trustworthiness in this study but neither one can stand alone without interpretation. Since meaning derived from qualitative interviews is often situated in context and influenced by the researcher, interpretation became critically important to results of this study. Hodder (1998) warned that analysis and interpretation of these data could become problematic. Hodder observed that during interviews “‘what people say’ is often very different from ‘what people do.’” (p. 113). Thus, to enhance the accuracy of meaning and interpretation, I attempted to use interview techniques (e.g., probes, follow-up questions, interpreting questions) and ample reporting of speaker’s voices and naturally-occurring phenomena to ensure that the meaning of participants was properly described and contextualized. I also used three different interview methods to support credibility of results, which I will explain next.

Credibility

The interview methods in this study contributed to credibility of results (Flick, 1992; Huberman & Miles, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990; Stake, 1995). Multi-method approaches associated with qualitative research help to achieve a more accurate *fix* on meaning of data. This complementary approach helps manage strengths and weaknesses of each interview method, which in this study subsequently increased

credibility of results by reducing the likelihood of misinterpreting qualitative observations.

Ethical Issues

Locke et al. (2000) constructed three areas of importance to the ethical conduct of research: process, writing, and publication (pp. 27-40). I found this construction to be a useful framework for ethical conduct of my own research, which adhered to the following processes.

First, I made reasonable efforts to protect participants from potential harm. I provided a plan to fulfill ethical requirements of research and gained institutional review board approval to conduct research involving human participants before beginning this study. This plan acknowledged that inadvertent release of sensitive or proprietary information discussed during interviews could negatively affect the personal or professional lives of participants. Therefore, I incorporated procedures to maintain confidentiality of participants' identities.

For long and elite interviews, I referred only to a participant's rank, first name, or nickname when recording interviews and I used initials to identify participants when transcribing interviews. When reporting results (e.g., publishing direct quotes), I did not associate names with direct quotes. Instead, I attributed quotes to a participant's generic title or role in an organization so readers would be unable to narrow the field and accurately identify a participant.

For focus groups, I referred only to a participant's rank, first name, or nickname when recording discussions. In transcripts, I identified by name any remarks made by the focus group moderator. I also identified by first name remarks by participants whose

voices were recognized from the personal introductions that began each discussion. I was also able to identify some participant's remarks from observer comments that I recorded during discussions. For instance, I noted when a focus group participant's identity was important to the context of his or her remark (e.g., when a participant's duties, background, or experience were relevant to a discussion). At times, participants also identified speakers heard on a recording of discussions. Transcriptions of remarks by unidentifiable participants were kept anonymous. When reporting results (e.g., publishing direct quotes) of focus groups, I followed procedures similar to those used for long and elite interviews. I did not associate names with direct quotes. Instead, I attributed quotes to generic titles or roles to protect participants' identities.

I also took care during organization of focus groups to send individual messages to participants in order to prevent someone from using a mass-mailed distribution list to identify members of a group. In accordance with institutional review board guidelines, I protected information collected during interviews by storing data in containers or personal computers that were under my direct control or guarded by passwords required to gain access.

Second, I disclosed my intent, identity, self-interests, and potential biases. Kvale (1996) encouraged scholars to reflect on how a "researcher's role" (p. 120) could affect a study. Kvale reflected specifically on how a researcher could ensure independence in a study, counteract the influence of a research sponsor and lose critical perspective by identifying too closely with participants. I identified closely with Kvale's suggestions, given the close association between my former role as a NATO public relations manager in Bosnia-Herzegovina and my role as a researcher investigating this topic. I explained

to participants that I did not want to rely on my own recollections of NATO public relations activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Rather, I intended to depend on the meaning *their* lived experiences, as described during interviews, to make meaning of NATO public relations in the Balkans. Occasionally, during an interview, a participant who had been a former colleague of mine in Bosnia-Herzegovina found it awkward to explain public relations activities that he or she knew I had knowledge of. At those times, I restated my research purpose, reminded the participant of my role as a researcher, and encouraged the participant to disclose information that he or she thought would be of interest to readers of this research report.

Thus, I acknowledged my dual roles, declared self-interests in this research topic, and disclosed potential biases. However, I managed risks associated with self-interest and bias by incorporating sampling, interviewing, and reflexive writing techniques that helped maintain critical distance between me and my participants. I used snowball sampling to help me “avoid or counteract overidentification” (Kvale, 1996, p. 120) with participants. By relying on others to identify participants in this study, I was able to interview several individuals with whom I had not previously identified. I also recorded field notes during interviews and made comments in memos before or after interviews that disclosed my disposition toward participants or the disposition of participants toward me. Using a reflexive approach to interviewing and writing, I then adjusted methods or acknowledged potential biases when writing reports to preserve critical distance and protect the independence of my observations.

Third, I used honest means to access samples. As I explained in my sampling section, I gained access to purposeful samples by making official telephone calls, writing

letters, or sending e-mail messages that disclosed my purpose and identity. I obtained written permission (e.g., by letter or e-mail as well as consent forms) to conduct interviews and to use official NATO records that might have been shared with me by participants.

Fourth, I took great care to avoid coercing participants or even creating the appearance of coercion and I obtained informed consent from each participant. In each communication, when arranging and beginning interviews, I reminded participants orally and in writing that interviews were voluntary, that they could decline to answer questions, and that they could withdraw from the interviews at any time without penalty. This procedure is documented in protocols used during interviews and in informed consent forms signed by each participant.

Fifth, I allowed reciprocity or mutual control between the researcher and participants. I worked with each participant to find mutually-convenient times and locations for interviews. I used a semi-structured interview guide to allow participants to share control of interviews and address topics that participants felt were important. I allowed participants to have access to my research results – and have invited some to clarify data collected during interviews. I also provided each participant with points of contact for me and the primary investigator of this research, in the event participants have questions about the research or would like copies of the final report.

Finally, through ethical writing in my research report, I made every effort to avoid plagiarism; present all relevant facts known to me; discuss or report credibly the results of my study; and allow readers to gain access to data, interpret results, and replicate my study. In the future, I will also adhere to ethical rules of publishing results from this

study, which prohibit me from submitting articles to more than one publication at a time and require me to conduct a thorough analysis of completed research.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

I begin this chapter with an explanation of two purposes. First, my purpose in embarking upon this research project was to propose a model of ethical communication that extends the excellence theory and contributes to the development of a global theory in public relations. To fulfill this purpose, I studied and collected data that might explain how NATO applied principles of the excellence theory to its peace operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1995 to 1996. Reaching an understanding NATO's public relations behavior in Bosnia-Herzegovina – and the ethical nature of this behavior – was essential to fulfilling my overall research purpose.

Second, my purpose in this chapter is to report and summarize results of data-collection efforts during each stage of the interview process. I will present data collected in chronological order of the methods that were conducted in this study (long, elite, and focus group interview). This strategic order has been found to be an efficient way to present data (Wolcott, 1994). Also, presenting data in this order will help the reader understand how data evolved over time in a systematic, flexible, continuous, and iterative collection process – important characteristics of qualitative research (H. Rubin & I. Rubin, 1995). This chapter begins what Wolcott (1994) referred to as *transforming* qualitative data, which focuses on “*using* data rather than ... *gathering* data” (p. 1). I will transform data through a process of *description*, *analysis*, and *interpretation* that I borrowed from Wolcott and defined in Chapter III.

The description represented in this chapter begins the process of *understanding* data. Description will consist of comments reported to me by interview participants. I

will also begin a descriptive phase of analysis in this chapter. As I report results, I will identify essential features, concepts, and interrelationships among participants' comments that might suggest important themes or patterns – or the “how things work” part of analysis that Wolcott (1994, p. 12) addressed. I will conclude data transformation and attempt to reach understanding in Chapter V. There, I will employ an evaluative form of analysis, which will suggest *why* NATO managed communication and public relations in ways described by participants. Finally, I use discussion, analysis, and interpretation in the final chapter to reach understanding of research results and address how NATO might utilize the proposed model of communication to improve communication programs.

Wolcott (1994) contended that a researcher should adjust the proportion of description, analysis, and interpretation in a study to fit the needs of a research project. As I explained in Chapter III, I have tried to add credibility to this study by empowering interview participants to describe results in their own voice and allowing readers of this study to have deep access to these descriptions.

Furthermore, I have added my own voice to some but not all descriptions by presenting the reader with interviewer questions – and even observer comments – as well as participant responses. I do so not to distract the reader's focus from the participant or draw attention to my role as a researcher. Instead, I intend to give a more active voice to what Hodder (1998) described as the “mute evidence” (p. 110) of texts and other written artifacts. Hodder warned that meaning made from textual sources that lack context could be misunderstood. Thus, context becomes important to the writing, reading, and interpretation of qualitative descriptions:

Somehow it is assumed that words get us closer to minds. But as Derrida [1978] has shown, meaning does not reside in a text but in the writing and reading of it. As the text is reread in different contexts it is given new meanings, often contradictory and always socially embedded. (p. 111)

I posit that it is also important to describe certain portions of qualitative interviews as conversation or dialogue rather than present faceless, isolated quotes that spring from the page like a chain of paper dolls cut from blank paper. In a sense, “conversation is the primary medium through which social action takes place” (Silverman, 2001, p. 160). Qualitative interviews represent social action: an exchange between an interviewer and his or her participants. Therefore, describing some accounts in the conversational form of questions and answers – or turn taking – more accurately reconstructs the lived experience and social nature of an interview than do single voices. This spontaneity also provides additional context to the writing, reading, and interpretation of an interview account. Finally, since “a speaker’s action is *context-shaped*” (p. 167), the sequence of talk cannot be understood apart from the context of the conversation.

Hence, I have designed this chapter and the overall transformation of data to emphasize description over analysis and interpretation. In so doing, I followed Wolcott’s (1994) advice by

- Distancing myself from the research setting in order to communicate directly with readers.
- Using direct quotes to report and describe, allowing interview participants to reveal data in their own words.

- Empowering readers to use the description in this chapter to support their own analyses and interpretations of meaning derived from data collected in this study.

I acknowledge, however, that the conventional form of this report does not permit me to describe *all* data collected from interviews. Therefore, I will rely on my own perceptions and judgment to select and report data that I think contribute most to fulfilling the purpose of this research.

I have attempted to protect this report from the potential effect of my own biases by describing data in sufficient breadth and depth to permit readers to arrive at their own conclusions. I will also become the storyteller described by Wolcott (1994), grounding my description in the “observed experience” related by interview participants (p. 17). Finally, I will fulfill the role of Denzin and Lincoln’s (2000) qualitative researcher as a *bricoleur*, piecing together quilt-like patches of experience described by participants that reveal a pattern of meaning.

Overview of Results

To support my research purpose, I first sought to gain a deep understanding of how NATO managed strategic public relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. To achieve this understanding I used long interviews with NATO officials to produce descriptions of NATO’s public relations activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Data revealed by descriptions suggested that NATO applied principles of the excellence theory to its public relations programs in Bosnia-Herzegovina, with a few exceptions (RQ1). However, NATO’s use of coercive communication was identified as being among exceptions to symmetrical communication represented in the excellence theory.

Interviews also revealed that the multinational nature of NATO's alliance of 26 countries influenced NATO's approach to communication and public relations management (RQ2). Interviews produced data that uncovered how NATO based the alliance's public relations programs on a dominant worldview of public relations yet co-mingled various cultures and public relations worldviews within the alliance. This discovery led to an examination of generic principles of global public relations, which were found to exist within NATO's public relations programs (RQ3).

These results raised important questions about how variables such as culture and environmental settings might influence NATO's management of communication and public relations. I found, just as culture influenced communication in NATO, that existing or potential conflict in NATO's operating environment influenced NATO's choice of communication strategies (RQ4).

Elite and focus group interviews then produced data that suggested NATO leaders used an informal system of moral reasoning to make decisions and to judge the ethical nature of their communication choices. However, they identified no formal framework for incorporating ethics in these decisions (RQ5). Furthermore, senior NATO leaders were cognizant of the consequences associated with coercive communication. Still, they seemed to follow an informal and internal cognitive process based on military training, experience, and intuition rather than a formal process when considering these consequences (RQ6). Participants also responded favorably – with some reservations – when presented with the proposed model of communication as an external, moral framework to guide *formal* incorporation of ethics in communication decisions. In the

following paragraphs, I will describe and elaborate on these results as they relate to each research question.

The Excellence Theory in Public Relations

Long interviews produced data that helped explain how NATO managed communication and public relations programs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Descriptions by interview participants of NATO's public relations activities were consistent with principles from the excellence theory – with few exceptions. This section represents the bulk of reporting on results of this study, given the 21 excellence principles and dimensions of those principles that will be reported on. First, at the program level, NATO public relations programs were *managed strategically*.

Second, at the department level, NATO public relations offices were generally described as *single or integrated departments*, which were *separate from marketing* functions. NATO assigned *senior public relations managers* to head these departments. These managers *reported directly to senior management* and usually practiced a *two-way symmetrical model of communication*. Public relations managers and their staff exhibited *potential for excellent public relations*. This potential was demonstrated by NATO public relations managers who possessed decades of experience in public relations, expert knowledge of leadership and management, and advanced degrees in communication-related fields. Interviews produced scarce evidence of NATO officials who had theoretical knowledge of the symmetrical model in communication; however, managers and technicians did use two-way symmetrical communication in their public relations programs.

NATO public relations personnel also exhibited *professionalism*. All were members of professional military organizations. United States and Canadian citizens who participated in NATO were also members of an elite cadre of military public relations specialists who had acquired advanced communication skills and adhered to an ethical code of conduct. NATO public relations managers and many of their staff also benefited from extensive *training and education in public relations*. Some evidence did emerge to suggest that NATO provided *equal opportunity for men and women in public relations*. A few NATO nations (e.g., the United States) adopted programs to admit women into military specialties like public affairs in greater numbers than had existed in past decades. Also, women who had served in senior NATO public relations management roles were represented along with men in long and focus group interviews, albeit in proportions that were less than representative of the military population. Still, participants engaged in little discussion about this principle; therefore, data were inconclusive with respect to gender equality.

Third, at the organizational level, NATO seemed to have adopted a *two-way symmetrical worldview of public relations*. Responses from interview participants consistently described NATO's efforts to manage communications in ways that would contribute to strong, long-term, collaborative relationships with key publics. However, NATO sometimes departed from the two-symmetrical communication model when using coercive communication to manage external threats. Data also suggested that some nations within the NATO alliance held worldviews of public relations other than two-way symmetrical. Still, data supported the notion that NATO adhered to the two-way symmetrical model as a dominant worldview of public relations. NATO public relations

managers also exercised power in or with the dominant coalition of senior leaders. In addition to having direct access to these leaders, NATO public relations managers provided advice and counsel that influenced NATO's strategic decisions about communication programs, strategies, and tactics.

Data about organizational culture and internal communication systems were inconclusive. In general, interview participants described a NATO alliance that was *authoritarian rather than participative* – perhaps because of the political nature of the organization. *Internal communication systems* seemed to vary from one NATO military command to another, which might reflect the influence of individual leadership in these sub-organizations of NATO. The large-scale, highly complex structure of NATO described by participants most closely resembled the *mixed mechanical/organic organizational model* described by Dozier and L. Grunig (1992). Finally, in terms of organization, NATO clearly operated in a turbulent, complex environment. Participants often described NATO settings that were filled with physical threats – some lethal – and political pressure from external publics.

Fourth, participants often described *public relations programs that met communication objectives* established by NATO. These public relations outcomes clearly contributed to a reduction in costs associated with NATO operations: reduced political pressure, international litigation, and combat fatalities or injuries to personnel. Finally, most participants expressed *high job satisfaction* with their professional role in NATO public relations and described NATO public relations departments that enjoyed high morale among leaders, managers, and employees.

I will now describe these data in more detail and provide descriptive examples that support subsequent analysis and interpretation. I will enrich descriptions provided by participants with my own observations, which provide readers with important contextual details that are essential to sense making. These observations were recorded in memories, documented in field notes, and substantiated by careful review of audiotapes and transcripts. When presenting data related to the first research question, I will follow the framework for public relations program, organization, department, and effects established for the excellence theory principles and illustrated in Table 2, Chapter II.

RQ1: Which principles of the excellence theory in public relations did NATO apply to its public relations programs in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1995 to 1996?

Program level. Accounts of NATO's communication programs from interview participants described a variety of behaviors related to *strategic public relations management*. Many of these accounts were consistent with the definition of strategic public relations management provided by J. Grunig and Repper (1992), which addressed how organizational strategies are developed to align and balance internal activities with external conditions. A U.S. military public affairs officer, who was familiar with the excellence theory in public relations, discussed how IFOR's public relations activities were *aligned* with NATO's overall organizational priorities. This alignment and balancing helped to produce a strategic public relations plan for the peace operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He also referred throughout his description to strategic management functions such as planning, evaluation, and reprogramming:

I think one of the great things that happened ... in Bosnia was that the public information strategy was aligned with the command priorities.... We aligned the public information priorities with the command priorities: priorities to priority, strategy to strategy.

The officer, who I observed trying to recall theoretical terms from his graduate education in public relations, continued:

There was enough time to refine the plan before we went in. I mean there was a lot of ... activity and planning before IFOR went in [to Bosnia-Herzegovina], and that was good ... it gave people time to figure out what they wanted to do and the communications people came along ... they weren't shut out.

A former IFOR commander, during an elite interview, provided a similar account of strategic planning, the central role of public relations in the organization, and the alignment of internal organizational functions with public relations. Here, the commander acknowledged that public relations in IFOR was elevated to a *strategic*, command function rather than relegated to a staff function:

A commanding officer [is] responsible for everything that goes on in his command and, in that regard, I felt that I was personally responsible to ensure that we had ... a proactive public relations and public affairs campaign – and a staff that understood the importance of public affairs.

Several other interview participants mentioned specific behaviors that suggested defining characteristics of the behavioral molecule in strategic public relations management (J. Grunig, 2003; J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984; J. Grunig & Repper, 1992). For instance, NATO public relations managers often talked about a responsibility to *detect* or

stay informed about activities inside and outside of the NATO or IFOR organization. They would then decide which activities represented problems that might require them to inform senior leaders and plan a response. One U.S. officer who served in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a senior NATO public relations manager related a story about how he relied on NATO intelligence and operations officers to keep him informed of potential problems.

“The S3 Officer, which is operations,” recalled the officer, “would very often stop by and see me, give me a call, or whatever ... [to] make sure I knew what was going on in the theater [of NATO operations] because, if he didn’t, he’d be called to task by the commander.” This same officer then related how he would *construct* or think about the problem at hand and begin to consider various solutions to the problem:

I was kept fully informed about what was going on and then could help decide – or decide – what was put out at a daily press conference, if we were putting out a press release that, you know, we were initiating [an] interview or offering interviews on a particular subject. So, yeah, I would say that as the head of public information I was kept fully informed.

Another NATO officer serving in Bosnia-Herzegovina observed senior leaders and their public relations managers engaging in environmental scanning. This process involved collecting information directly from journalists – rather than relying on analysis of news reports – as a means to quickly detect and analyze emerging problems and issues within the IFOR operating environment: “Admiral [Name of IFOR commander] and later his successor ... did on a number of occasions have a media breakfast – a breakfast with invited journalists, in order to sound out their opinions.” He added that this

information was valuable to the IFOR commander, who wanted to “see what they thought of the operation, and where we were going, and whether we were moving in the right direction.” Finally, in a possible reference to scanning the environment for emerging issues, this officer explained that the commander liked hearing from journalists directly, because “he valued external opinions, as well as ... what you might describe as *non-military* opinions.”

Through an elite interview with the IFOR commander quoted in the previous paragraph, I was able to gather evidence confirming this account. The ability to gain insight into the meanings of both officers through a coorientation approach (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 2001; J. Grunig & Hon, 1999) added credibility to these reports and to the data that emerged from them. According to the commander, IFOR adopted a proactive approach to media relations.

By proactive I ... mean that we didn't turn down interviews, we didn't try to hide from the press. We understood that the press was going to be there [in Sarajevo] when we got there, they had been there ... they probably knew more than we did about what the hell was going on.

In the following excerpt, the admiral also described a *symmetrical* approach to communicating with media, an approach based on mutual needs and an equitable exchange of information rather than an asymmetrical or one-way approach:

So what I intended to do was to try to *not* co-opt the press, but be available to the press and make them aware of our availability.... So ... they would come to either the public relations ... officer, me, or other responsible individuals in the organization, ask bona fide questions, and get honest answers.

A senior U.S. military public affairs officer, who served in NATO's Atlantic region, provided an account that suggested how NATO considered and *defined* how to put communication alternatives into action. This officer also alluded to the importance of identifying, prioritizing, and considering the needs of key audiences – another feature of strategic public relations management:

Well, we consider what the message is, and what we are trying to convey; and also what the needs of each audience is. With 19 nations involved, many of our products need to consider that in order for a given article or press release to appear in a given country, generally you have to have some tie to the country.

Another NATO officer provided an especially vivid description of how he and senior leaders in Bosnia-Herzegovina would interact during meetings to *select* and *confirm* communication options based on an evaluation of potential outcomes and consequences:

U.S. Officer: Yeah ... not to have an inflated ego or anything, but I think the advice that I was able to give in these, these meetings would always be well, if you do that here are possible public information implications.... You know, how is it going to play in the press? That was just one factor that the commander had to consider, but I was always asked. You know, what do you think? If we do such and such, you know, if we have a meeting with Madame Plavsic [Biljana Plavsic, former president of the Bosnian-Serb republic in Bosnia-Herzegovina].

Interviewer: Plavsic, yeah.

U.S. Officer: Plavsic.

Interviewer: Biljana Plavsic?

[OC: Tape One, Side A ends. Recorder stops. Interviewer suspends interview, changes sides of tape, and restarts interview.]

U.S. Officer: Yeah, so I was saying the decision ... you know ... if we are going to have a meeting with her who should come? Should we let the press know that we are doing it? You know, what are the implications and how is this going to play in the Serbian press or the Croatian or the Muslin press, or what have you. So ... I won't say decisions were changed; it was just always a factor.

Interviewer: Right.

[OC: Interviewer uses a verbal pause to let officer continue his train of thought.]

U.S. Officer: The commander always wanted to know ... "What do you think will happen with this? Should we announce it ahead of time? Should we announce it afterwards? Should we do interviews after ... meeting? What do you think the person we are meeting with is going to say about the meeting afterwards? Should we keep it secret, private?"

After *behaving* – or implementing communication plans – NATO officers evaluated the results of communication activities before continuing their operations. The following passage was excerpted from a long interview with a British officer serving with NATO in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This excerpt revealed how NATO officers would use feedback from journalists and public relations managers to evaluate the outcome of communication activities. This passage also suggested the direct nature and frequency of the evaluation process that took place between the public affairs manager and a senior leader:

Feedback that came into the PI [public information] organization from journalists was fed up through the chief PIO [public information officer] to the commander, and they met at least twice ... virtually every day: early morning, late afternoon, or early evening ... and often at other times as well. And the commander was well aware of the PI and the media requirements and the pressure and considered it an important part of his operation. But he also valued the feedback that came from that direction. In other words, if journalists said, "This looked to us like the wrong thing to do, why didn't you do it that way?" he would take that onboard and might take that into account when some similar circumstance arose later.

The British officer then elaborated on the evaluation process and the importance of public opinions to NATO's senior leaders in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The officer's comments also seemed to imply use of a two-way symmetrical approach to IFOR's communication with news media:

The commander was particularly keen I think to have opinions ... to find out how our activities were seen who were not military as such, not in the military chain, but had some knowledge of military operations and some awareness ... you know, they had been covering this kind of activity for some considerable time. So, he was particularly keen to get feedback in both directions, to brief the media, but also to hear what they had to say.

The same officer then related how evaluation of feedback would be used to confirm or reprogram communication activities in an effort to improve public relations efforts:

I think feedback from journalists on particular things would enable him [the IFOR commander] to see how others saw what we were doing, and if the external

perception proved to him that what we were doing was wrong or appeared wrong he would reevaluate and maybe try and do that same thing in a different way, somewhere else, or later on.

NATO public relations officials also exhibited excellence in their management of *stakeholders* or *strategic publics*. Several NATO officers identified and discussed the importance of *strategic constituencies* (L. Grunig et al., 1992, 2002) to IFOR's organizational effectiveness. These officers distinguished between publics, placed the importance of these publics to IFOR in priority order, and focused IFOR communication activities such as media relations on strategic publics that were "most able to constrain or to help the organization" (L. Grunig et al., 2002, p. 95). Strategic publics tended to be groups of nations, political leaders, or citizens that IFOR depended upon for support or affected through their military operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These strategic constituencies included:

1. International publics that provided political and logistical support to the IFOR coalition.
2. Regional publics in and around the Balkans region who were influenced by political, military, and economic stability (or lack thereof) in Bosnia-Herzegovina.
3. Local publics in Bosnia-Herzegovina who were the focus of (and affected most by) IFOR's military peace operations.

A Canadian public affairs officer who served with IFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a media relations manager described similar publics and the channels used to communicate with them:

Canadian Officer: There were several publics. There was ... the international press that were right physically there and attended our daily press briefings.... They, of course, fed the world, so you had the international public, if you will. And you had the, ahh, local media who were a conduit to the local ... public. And then there were probably, I guess, for the member countries [nations that contributed troops to IFOR] ... target publics back home in their own countries.

Interviewer: Okay, and whose responsibility was it to communicate with those publics?

Canadian Officer: It was IFOR's public information responsibility to communicate with both the local domestic Sarajevo, Bosnia audience and with the international audience through the news media, local news media and the international media that were there.

Descriptions by NATO public affairs officers sometimes emphasized news media as a public or publics. For instance, another Canadian public affairs officer with IFOR observed, "Our focus was on media, and it was a pretty exclusive focus." Descriptions such as this one could imply that IFOR relied on a message strategy for its public relations program. However, not all participants identified news media as publics. Several focused on strategic publics that were informed by news media and identified news media as channels of communication. In the following exchange, a U.S. military public affairs officer who served in Bosnia-Herzegovina identified these audiences and explained how they were prioritized in strategic order of importance to NATO's peace operation:

U.S. Officer: I'm one that doesn't consider the media to be an audience in and of itself. They are the conduit that gets information to the various audiences. So we had the political leadership in each one of the NATO member countries ... that time, sixteen. We had the general public in each of those sixteen countries. You know, the Canadian general public and U.S., Iceland, and so on.... There were other countries that were watching and listening and supporting the effort too ... Indonesians ... Japanese were supplying material and so forth.

Interviewer: Right. I think at one time there were ... 36 nations.

U.S. Officer: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: So, far more than just the NATO countries?

U.S. Officer: So, yeah I don't mean to limit it to the 16 NATO nations. There was a worldwide coalition of support and so we had to be aware of all those audiences ... other supporting coalitions and we talked about the political operations in all of those countries.

Interviewer: How did you consider these audiences important? Did you consider some audiences more important than the others? If so, to what extent and how?

U.S. Officer: Sure. Yeah, I think we always, again, because of the NATO political ... control, we always considered the sixteen NATO nations more important. So if there was, I can't really think of an instance where we had to make a choice ... between doing something for a NATO country versus a supporting country or some country that had nothing to do with it ... [but] I guess we would lean toward a ... you know, a NATO country first, first choice, but I

think we had, we had the time, the opportunity if an Indonesian newspaper needed some information, or Japanese, we could, we could take care of that.

A U.S. military public affairs officer assigned to a NATO command on the U.S. East Coast also described the importance of strategic constituencies to his *local* headquarters organization. This officer seemed to describe an *active public* (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984): local constituents that lived around a U.S. military base that hosted the NATO command. The officer indicated that this constituency had become a focus of NATO's local community relations activities. NATO recognized the community support on which the local base depended and actively managed strategic relations with this constituency. The citizens, who benefited economically by having a military base in their community, organized and cooperated with NATO by staging local celebrations designed to recognize and preserve the mutually-beneficial relationship.

In the following excerpt, the NATO officer, who had just finished describing the importance of international audiences, recalled how members of the local community were considered a priority public. His account also reflected the *symmetrical* quality of relationships and communication, which is a defining characteristic of strategic public relations management (J. Grunig & Repper, 1992):

Here [the local command], the emphasis is on the things that this command, this headquarters, and the people assigned here contribute to the local economy; and what it, in turn, means to the local community to have this headquarters and these people assigned here.... The leaders of the local community ... are not only very supportive of this headquarters, but are very proud to have it here.

He continued, adding to the meaning he made of the relationship between the NATO headquarters command and the local community:

The relationship and pride manifests itself in many ways, but the foremost of which is an annual festival conducted within the city ... which is basically a tribute to NATO and the international community that resides here, many of whom have direct involvement or actually work here at NATO headquarters.

Some participants, however, indicated that the practice of strategic public relations management might have been limited to upper levels of the IFOR organization. This could imply that different levels of the organization applied public relations programs in a different manner. One interview participant, a former NATO public affairs officer, had served in two different IFOR public affairs offices located in Zagreb, Croatia, and Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina. He reported the following example to explain how the management roles and application of symmetrical communication could have varied according to organizational rank or level in IFOR:

It seemed to me ... at the levels I was involved in, in Zagreb [location of a subordinate office] ... it was predominantly a press information model.... There wasn't as much focus on management, I think for a number of reasons.... When I was in Sarajevo [location of a main NATO headquarters] ... I think it was more managerial.

To provide context, the Zagreb-based command was subordinate to the Sarajevo-based IFOR headquarters referred to in this account. The Zagreb command was led by a U.S. Army general who was junior in rank to the U.S. Navy admiral who led the IFOR headquarters. The respective U.S. military services (Army, Navy, Air Force, and

Marines) and senior officers within those services were reported to have had different cultural attitudes toward media relations. Differences in attitude also occurred as senior officers progressed in rank and command responsibility.

Department level. All participants described their public relations departments as *single offices*, dedicated to the public relations function, and *separate from marketing*. The conventional concept of marketing from a business perspective does not apply directly to NATO; however, indirectly, I equated marketing to military communication functions like psychological operations that are associated with influencing the behavior of publics. Furthermore, this research was conducted as a study of public relations, not marketing or psychological operations. However, the consequences on publics produced by any one of these communication functions became the management responsibility of NATO's public relations function – in theory and in practice. One NATO public relations manager explained that the public relations functions “were concentrated into a [single] section ... it is one public relations strategy.” Another NATO public affairs officer described his office as “a single, stand-alone office.” A third NATO public affairs officer who worked in the IFOR headquarters in Sarajevo said of the public affairs office, “It was its own separate department.” He also elaborated on the distribution of regional public relations offices throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina. These offices were subordinate to IFOR's headquarters' public relations office – referred to here as public information office or PIO – but were still separate from other communication functions:

The PIO had its headquarters' cell within the IFOR headquarters, and then the various sub cells that I talked about, press information centers, in different locations. They all worked for public information. And we had ... a number of

people working on that in Sarajevo, both in the IFOR headquarters and the ARRC [Allied Rapid Reaction Corps] land headquarters.

NATO clearly established single offices for its public relations activities; however, these offices did not operate in isolation from other communication and information functions. Some NATO officers explained that their public relations activities were *integrated*, synchronized, or coordinated with other information-related functions. A former commander of IFOR talked about strategic messages that were developed and adapted to different stages of IFOR's operational mission. These messages were part of a public relations campaign that was included in IFOR's overall operational plan. As such, public relations strategy was integrated with and coordinated with other functions of IFOR's organizational strategy. The IFOR commander reported:

At various stages of the campaign we would introduce ... new themes. The public affairs officer and his staff developed those with the help of the operations staff, because I felt that those had to go hand-in-glove.

A U.S. public affairs officer based in Europe identified various information functions involved in this integration of public relations and other operational functions:

We normally would do integrated operations ... we normally would sit down with the psychological operations branch [PSYOPS], with the CIMIC [civil-military cooperation] branch, with the POLAD [political advisor], with the legal officer, with all of the key players ... the international organizations and the NGO's [non-governmental organizations] ... and talk to them to make sure that we were all coordinating ... and that we were working in the proper direction.

This coordination effort was referred to by some participants as “information operations” and by others as an “information campaign.” These terms were defined by Combelles-Siegel (1998), who also described IFOR’s information efforts as an *integrated* “public information campaign” (p. 35). She elaborated in detail about the relationship between “the three pillars of the campaign: public information, psychological operations, and civil-military cooperation information” (p. 7).⁶

A non-commissioned U.S. public affairs officer who managed public relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina remarked on the importance of delineating between the different types of information efforts during integration of these activities: “It was important for us to keep a clear delineation between [public affairs] and the psychological operations because one of the basic tenants of . . . military public affairs is that we are truth-based.” Speaking softly and deliberately, this administrator elaborated on the delineation between information operations (e.g., psychological operations) and public affairs (e.g., public relations):

We do not try to mislead or deceive by telling any sort of falsehoods or lies to the news media, where psychological operations does not necessarily operate under those constraints. So, we had to keep a pretty clear line between the IO [information operations] world and the public affairs world.

Of note, a few participants expressed concern over emerging U.S. and NATO policies that govern the integration and management of public relations and other information activities like PSYOPS and CIMIC. A U.S. public relations manager who

⁶ Combelles-Siegel (1998) conducted field observations of IFOR’s public relations program in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1996. The Glossary of Terms after the appendices in this report clarifies some of the political-military concepts she and others have used to describe various aspects of military public relations programs.

managed NATO operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina after IFOR's departure from that region provided a detailed account of these concerns. In his account, the manager expressed concern that public relations would be absorbed into an operational department, thus interfering with the close relationship between the senior public relations officer and his or her senior leadership:

Well, one of the big ... issues of debate right now, which is causing a lot of consternation, is how ... there's a new, a new branch if you will, or a new section. It's called information operations and the [NATO] alliance is still wrestling with this as is America.

He continued in a passionate tone of voice, talking in short and energetic bursts:

The danger right now with what's happening is ... what's called an Information Operation Branch, and [some people think that] under that branch should be [PSYOPS, CIMIC, POLAD, legal affairs, etc.], including PIO.... The Information Operations Branch Chief would then either report directly to the chief of staff and the admiral himself or would report to the J3 which is the operations officer; either way.

Finally, the officer concluded that a reorganization of this type "would basically move the public information officer either one or two steps down the food chain and really inhibit the PIO's ability."

Although terms like PSYOPS are often associated with the U.S. military, concern over linkage between public relations and other information activities like PSYOPS did not appear to be unique to U.S. public affairs managers. A British public affairs

manager, who served at a NATO base in Europe prior to working in IFOR, also expressed concern:

We were very conscious ... having worked intensely with the media whilst supporting the UN [United Nations] operation in the Former Yugoslavia, that there was no way that the public information operation should be linked to either ... PSYOPS or CIMIC or any form of information ops. We wanted PI to be the interface between the operation and the public via the media, and the plan was written such that PIOs would never lie to the media, would never hide things from the media ... and, we in PI, did not want to be tainted – just in case the PSYOPS people were ... turning the facts into a favorable sort of ... perception if you like.

Like the previous account by a U.S. public relations manager, several other descriptions provided strong evidence of a *direct reporting relationship* between the public relations manager and the senior management. Another public relations manager who served in Bosnia-Herzegovina described her relationship with a commanding general and other senior officers: “He gave his public affairs officers complete access.... I was never excluded from anything.” This description seemed typical of command relationships described by other participants.

One of the most precise descriptions of the formal relationship between NATO public relations managers and commanders was provided by a senior U.S. public affairs officer who served on the staff of a high-level NATO headquarters. He explained that, according to the formal NATO command structure, a public information officer would report through a chief of staff to a deputy commander – immediate subordinates to the

senior military commander. Pragmatically, the PIO reported directly to the commander and kept the other senior officers informed about public relations activities:

My chain of command, by the wiring diagram, runs through the chief of staff and the four-star deputy supreme allied commander who is a Royal Navy admiral, to the four-star supreme allied commander. As a practical matter, [the senior public relations official works] directly for the supreme allied commander, the Army four-star, and [the senior public relations official works] to ensure that the chief of staff and the deputy are kept informed, provided opportunities to contribute, oversee, critique if you will.

NATO's senior public relations practitioners also practiced a *two-way symmetrical model of communication* – with some exceptions – and they *served in a managerial role*. In terms of *two-way symmetrical* communication, a British officer described how NATO public relations programs were designed to facilitate communication with external audiences. This officer referred to “a concept of openness and a concept of helping the press.” His reference to openness seemed to imply a willingness to share information and engage in collaborative dialogue rather than one-way, distributive forms of communication. Elaborating on this concept, the British officer also alluded to communication plans that were apparently designed to assist journalists and establish symmetrical relationships in an environment in which news media representatives were able to move freely about the country, observe IFOR, and gather information about NATO operations: “[We] were not in a position to *use* [emphasis added] the media, not in a position to censor anything that they did ... we had to *work with them* [italics added].” In another account, a NATO official stated his

office's communication goals as building "greater understanding and appreciation for NATO programs for the basic reasons that NATO exists." He went on to explain in a symmetrical sense that these activities were also designed to "address their [audience] needs" as well as those of NATO.

Nevertheless, some participants described public relations behaviors that were inconsistent with two-way symmetrical communication. For instance, one NATO public relations manager described public relations objectives in Bosnia-Herzegovina that were designed to "*compel* [italics added] compliance from the former warring factions." Factions referred to in this situation were Serb, Muslim, and Croat ethnic groups, living in Bosnia-Herzegovina, who had been at war with each other for more than three years. IFOR's mission was to separate military forces used by these factions to wage war, and to ensure that all Bosnian citizens complied with the peace agreement that ended this war.

Several other participants described coercive communication tactics employed by IFOR. As previously described, NATO's *general* approach to communication in Bosnia-Herzegovina appeared to be based on a symmetrical model. However, it seemed from listening to participants' reports that IFOR shifted to persuasion or coercion when communicating with hostile publics or in threatening situations – more consistent with a situational approach to communication than with symmetrical communication. For instance, remarks by a Canadian public affairs officer, who was deeply involved in IFOR's media relations program, provided a long and descriptive account that linked coercive behavior with IFOR's mission and wartime setting:

I mean the whole foundation of IFOR, as I mentioned earlier, was being a heavily armed force ... the fact that you are there with a heavy physical presence – in

armored vehicles and airplanes and the armed troops – that itself is a form of coercion.

As the officer hesitated and struggled to recall specific details of his experience in Bosnia, he continued his account by describing some of the military goals or milestones associated with coercion:

On those various milestones on the implementation ... achievement of those things, as I recall, you know ... not only was there creating a demilitarized zone, but I think mines, where mines were located had to be identified by the opposing forces and that information turned over to IFOR.

Pausing, the Canadian then implied that NATO incorporated a sense of fairness in coercive communication. He appeared to equate fairness with neutrality, or how IFOR applied coercion in a balanced manner across ethnic boundaries, and with ethical or legitimate intent – as in carrying out a legal, international mandate. He also suggested that this approach to coercion might gain trust and cooperation, increasing the chance of achieving milestones:

When you are communicating ... when you are seeking compliance, people will be more inclined to comply if they know that you are there implementing something that is neutral in its application, it is an international peace accord. It's been signed by all the parties, and if you are communicating to them that you are a neutral force that can be trusted then they are more likely to comply with you for that reason, but they will also comply, of course, if ... you are communicating a message that, you know, you must comply or we will force you to comply.

Concluding his account of coercion, the officer provided an example of how IFOR applied coercion in a measured, gradual fashion and with an ethical intent to gain compliance without bloodshed:

I remember there were several incidents where IFOR patrols and the DMZ [demilitarized zone] would encounter some other factions, armed patrol, and give them a few minutes to withdraw from the DMZ.... If they didn't, then there were, pretty soon ... aircraft circling overhead..... The local factions quickly got the message that they were out-gunned and out-armed, and so they would back off.

Accounts of coercion more accurately described one-way, distributive communication strategies than two-way symmetrical communication. However, several accounts conveyed a sense that NATO used coercion more as a short-term tactic to manage specific situations than as a long-term strategy. Applications of coercion were also accompanied by an apparent ethical intent to support legal mandates designed to preserve the peace agreement and prevent further bloodshed. If this meaning is accurate, then these accounts might suggest that NATO resorted to limited application of coercion but relied on a general framework of symmetrical communication to carry out the IFOR peace mission. I will explore and interpret this notion in Chapter V.

In terms of *managerial roles*, one NATO public relations officer asserted emphatically, “My job was *definitely* [italics added] as a manager.” She also described responsibilities that involved the daily management of a large staff of junior managers and technicians who carried out technical, media relations functions. Her comments in this regard were consistent with comments by most other long interview participants that described leadership, direction, planning, programming, evaluation, control of resources,

and other management functions described by J. Grunig and Hunt (1984). The following exchange between the interviewer and a senior U.S. public relations officer in NATO illustrated the way in which NATO PIOs performed as managers:

U.S. Officer: What [the senior PR person does] first and foremost, I think, is to provide direction to this small staff, and also to ensure that we have an adequate flow of current information within the headquarters organization so that the very limited resources that we have are applied as correctly as possible, to make our communication as effective as it can be, given the limited number of people that we have assigned.

Interviewer: O.K.

U.S. Officer: A portion of my responsibility and my day does deal with resources and attempting to more adequately, more properly, resource this office.... And a portion of my day is true leadership functions ... ensuring the personal and professional development and well-being of the personnel assigned to the office.

Few of the long interview participants deviated from a management role. These were generally less experienced public relations practitioners, immediately subordinate to public relations managers, who were assigned to administrative positions or specific roles such as spokespersons.

Attempts to identify the *potential for excellence* in NATO public affairs offices produced mixed results. As evidenced by the U.S. officer's account immediately preceding this paragraph, many NATO public relations managers – by virtue of their military training in leadership and management – had ample *knowledge of the managerial role* in organizations. Interview participants reported few exceptions to this pattern of

professional knowledge. For instance, a Canadian officer familiar with IFOR's public relations managers, recalled two British army officers who were assigned to public relations management positions in Sarajevo: "To my knowledge he didn't have any public affairs experience, nor did the one who had been commanding the CPIC (IFOR Coalition Press Information Center)." However, these officers were knowledgeable of strategic planning and management, and they were supervised by more senior public affairs officers who possessed knowledge of symmetrical communication and public relations management.

Furthermore, many NATO public affairs managers expressed general satisfaction with *levels of public relations training* in their offices. Still, most managers who addressed this topic expressed hope for more training or specific kinds of training to help manage their communication programs. The following exchange took place during a long interview with a senior U.S. officer who managed a public affairs staff at a senior NATO headquarters:

Interviewer: How would you describe the levels of professional knowledge and academic training in management and public relations within your department, including yourself and staff?

U.S. Officer: I would say that it's adequate for the personnel that are currently assigned ... as an across the board statement. If we are successful in reorganizing and resourcing the office, one goal is to raise, a bit, the level of experience and preparation, and also to increase the number of individuals, and also to improve ... the equiptage and budgeting functions to allow the people to be more flexible and effective.

As the interview continued, a probe elicited an example of training needs and successes identified by this officer:

Interviewer: Could you just cite an example or two that would help illustrate what you would describe as professionalism within your department?

U.S. Officer: Well, one example that shows both a deficiency and a way we have overcome it is the responsibility we have for maintaining the publicly accessible home page. The individual who is responsible for that in the organization arrived at this command with inadequate preparation and training but had an exceedingly willing attitude and aptitude ... for that work.... Through on-the-job training and elected professional courses ... in the last eight months ... and through selective acquisition of proper software and hardware equipment that individual is, I would say, highly capable now. We're working to achieve an even higher level of performance through additional training and additional equipment procured.

Moreover, most NATO officers exhibited high *levels of professionalism*, as defined by J. Grunig and Hunt (1984). All participants expressed professional values. They were members of strong, professional military and political organizations. Public affairs personnel were guided by and required to adhere to an enforceable set of norms or ethical codes of military conduct within their respective nations. As previously stated, NATO public affairs managers also described a system of professional public relations and management training; however, interviews revealed little evidence of an intellectual body of knowledge.

Several NATO officers held graduate degrees in communication and were somewhat aware of the body of knowledge in public relations – including *knowledge of*

the symmetrical communication model. Still, some seemed caught off guard when prompted to recollect this knowledge. For example, a U.S. officer who had previously studied the excellence theory in a prominent, U.S. public relations graduate program said of IFOR: “I think it was a case study in applying principles of public information, public relations, and public communication in a conflict situation.” When asked to elaborate on these principles, though, the officer responded cautiously, “Oh boy ... I know what, what I’m doing is searching for the vocabulary here and it’s been so long.” Finally, after another probe, the following exchange occurred, illustrated this officer’s knowledge of the two-way symmetrical model of communication in public relations:

Interviewer: That’s okay ... put it in whatever terms are at the top of your head.

U.S. Officer: Ahh, let’s, let’s take one ... two-way communication.

Interviewer: Okay.

U.S. Officer: With the two-way communication, for example, [name of a NATO public affairs officer] negotiated the contract [for an international press center] with the Holiday Inn [in Sarajevo] to ensure we had, again, a place that was a crossroads and intersection, a convening mechanism for, not just the media, but all different parties. [This] had the added benefit of facilitating communication not only between IFOR and the media and IFOR and the NGO’s [non-governmental organizations], but between the NGOs themselves and the media ... and anyone else who wanted to show up at the Holiday Inn.

Interviews uncovered little evidence to indicate that NATO officers had a comprehensive, *theoretical* knowledge of public relations programs; however, ample evidence emerged to suggest that NATO officers had sound *practical* knowledge of how

symmetrical communication programs could benefit organizations and their publics. Thus, data related to potential for excellence in public relations were inconclusive.

Finally, few data related to *equal opportunity* for men and women in public relations emerged from interviews. Participants provided a few broad descriptions of how men and women from different NATO and coalition nations coexisted and filled a variety of public relations management and technical roles within IFOR. These people were part of a coalition of approximately 60,000 military men and women from more than 30 troop-contributing nations.

A British officer who served in IFOR took particular interest in this topic when it was raised during a long interview. This officer had received training in the British armed forces to serve as an equal opportunity and diversity advisor. Even with this training, however, he admitted: “When we were writing and preparing this [public relations plan for IFOR], that wasn’t something that we really, seriously took into account. It was not a big issue then.” However, he added, “I think within the internal organization ... there was hardly any question of any problems in equality and diversity terms.” He then supported his report with a vivid description of the types of people who filled IFOR public relations positions:

You could not have had people there in the operational context who were seriously disabled and limited in their movements. But, other than that ... there were plenty of females ... [and] plenty of people from Asian or Black or other ethnic origins [in public relations positions].... We had people from ... at least 25 different nations at one stage or another working in public information.... So, I

think, more unconsciously than deliberately, we had an equal ops and diversity policy that ... worked, in such terms.

Other participants seemed to equate issues of equal opportunity to concepts of culture, race, and ethnicity more than they did to the concept of gender. When asked to describe the climate of equal opportunity and diversity in NATO, one officer responded:

Well, it's a very diverse work force in terms of nationality ... ethnicity, and race. The Europeans, of course, tend to all be of one race. The U.S. folks are very much integrated in terms of racial ... breakdown ... that ... generally reflects, what the U.S. military includes.

Organizational level. Just as interviews produced data describing program- and department-level principles in the excellence theory, interviews produced ample data to support the notion that NATO organizations adhered to excellence principles. First, numerous participants provided accounts describing symmetrical communication. This approach did not appear to be limited to program- or department-level activities or individual practitioners. Instead, NATO seemed to have adopted throughout its organization a *worldview for public relations that reflected the two-way symmetrical model*. A review of literature that supported this case study produced evidence of strategic public relations plans, approved by the highest levels of NATO's political-military authority, which provided guidance to NATO public relations practitioners. Although textual analysis of these documents was not used as a method in this research project, the texts were consistent with accounts of a symmetrical worldview provided by interview participants.

One of the most vivid descriptions of this worldview came from a British officer who had been directly involved in the advanced planning of IFOR's public relations program in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This planning was coordinated at the organizational, political-military level of NATO and not limited to IFOR's program or department planning. Throughout the interview, this officer referred to a "NATO alliance and the subordinate IFOR coalition," which represented, respectively, the political and military headquarters in Brussels, Belgium (NATO), and the subordinate, field-level coalition operating in Bosnia-Herzegovina (IFOR). An intervening military authority – the Supreme Allied Headquarters Europe (SHAPE) – was based in Mons, Belgium. Working with senior NATO authorities in Brussels and Mons, this British officer coordinated public relations planning to produce a communication strategy that was based largely on a two-way symmetrical model.

The following exchange depicts many of the underlying principles of two-way symmetrical communication. First, the British officer talked of planning the logistics to support public relations activities in the theater of operations. Rather than dwell on media and message tactics, this officer spoke of the importance of working with and understanding local audiences:

When we moved in to take over the operation ... we also took ... into the IFOR operation a number of local civilians.... We needed translators, interpreters, and we needed administrators and clerks and so on. Um, those who either were local or had been there some time working with the UN were very useful to us.

In this account, I detected patterns related to symmetry of communication. As the British officer continued his story, he made it clear that the utility of hiring local people

extended beyond the value of IFOR using these people to *collect* military intelligence, which would imply an asymmetrical communication strategy. Instead, he talked about how local people (e.g., translators and interpreters) helped provide IFOR with an understanding of local culture, customs, attitudes, and how IFOR operations might be affecting local populations. In the following narrative, speaking of information from local employees and local journalists, the officer distinguished between the value of collecting military intelligence (asymmetrical) and the importance of collecting information as a way to understand local audiences and the effect of IFOR operations on them (symmetrical):

Whilst not necessarily, um, of great ... I suppose ... *intelligence* value [OC: change in voice added emphasis to the term intelligence, in a military sense], it was nevertheless very useful to us to, to get their information. And I think that, from a PI perspective, more particularly, to get their *feelings* about particular people, particular attitudes, and actions that were going on [OC: Again, he added emphasis, placing importance on this term].

At this point in the long interview, I probed further, asking the officer, “How were these feelings important?” His response again underscored the importance that he and the NATO organization placed on *understanding* key audiences:

Well, it is, I think, um, a lot easier ... to run an operation in the military sense if you understand ... the people you’re dealing with, in one sense or another. And, certainly, the commander of IFOR ... and the chief PIO ... the better you know what’s going on, the better you have a feeling for it, the more important that is.

An awkward moment occurred at this juncture that illustrated my dual role as a former participant in IFOR and as a current instrument of this research. In the preceding paragraph, the British officer referred to IFOR's "chief PIO." At that point, he paused deliberately, left the scene of his story, addressed me directly, and added, "Which, you well know, was *you*." These moments reminded me that my former role as a supervisor, colleague, or subordinate of many interview participants held the potential to influence their responses. When a participant would try to approach me in my former role and close the critical distance that I needed for my observations, I would often try to reestablish critical distance with an interjection. For instance, I would reaffirm my role as a researcher, remind the participant that the information he or she was providing would be of use to readers of this research who were not familiar with IFOR, and ask them to provide an example that would help readers understand their communication points.

In this instance, the British officer continued his description of NATO's public relations worldview by providing the following example: "When we were dealing with the senior journalists, for example, and acquiring that type of information, we were also *working with them* [italics added] to know what types of information they wanted for their own audiences back home." He then clarified that this two-way symmetrical approach to communication extended beyond the individual, program, or department level to NATO's organizational or *command* level. The following passage is filled with themes related to principles of the excellence theory. For instance, the references to a senior NATO commander's interests in *relationship building*, *mutual concern* for organization and publics, and *two-way communication* (e.g., listening to audiences as

well as sending messages to them) provided evidence of the organization's two-way symmetrical worldview:

The commander rightly felt, um, that if he worked with them and built a *mutual understanding* [italics added], they would report more accurately and in a sense more favorably.... I think *building a working relationship* [italics added] in that sort of scenario, with the senior media figures at least, and as many as you can, and listening to them as well as trying to tell them things – instead of just putting up a spokesman, reading a statement, and going away – builds a much better relationship and becomes much more useful, and it does enhance the media reporting you get.

In a summary of his observations about NATO's and IFOR's public relations worldview, the British officer provided a description that seemed to set NATO's public relations program apart from the one-way, press agency approach often adopted by government or political-military organizations (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The following remarks described a worldview similar to a two-way asymmetrical or perhaps a two-way symmetrical approach:

I think it's one of the things that came over to me throughout the campaign, was that, umm ... is that the best way to work with the media and get what you want out of them isn't just to feed them what you want, it's actually to talk to them, work with them, and understand them as much as you're trying to help and make them understand you.

Data produced by interviews consistently supported a finding that NATO *public relations directors had power* in the NATO organization. I previously reported that

public affairs officers had direct access to commanders. This access led to participation of public relations managers in NATO's strategic decision-making process. A former commander of IFOR confirmed these descriptions of a direct-reporting relationship, commenting that his public relations officer was with him "all of the time." Furthermore, this retired U.S. Navy admiral described in very personal terms how he would listen to the advice of his public relations manager and incorporate that advice into his thinking about the overall operation:

I think one of the things that a commander can do is, and probably the most important thing besides taking humility pills, is to listen. And I listened to my public affairs officer, because he would say things to me like you know, we really have to - you know I was so busy prosecuting this war and trying to keep the peace and so forth that your time would fill up with operations. And I think you have to make time - I mean it's not enough just to have a public affairs officer. You know, I believe this. I mean even though he is with you all of the time, even though he sits in his - in your briefings, even though he knows what you know and what you hear, you still have to have that dialog, that one-on-one dialog with him or her.

Many NATO public relations managers were more junior in military rank than other senior managers in the dominant coalition. However, public affairs officers wielded knowledge and credibility that gave them power to provide credible counsel and influence decisions. One public relations officer who served with IFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the early months of the peace operation said, "I felt like I always had a voice, as though it was respected." After a brief pause, she added, "I think I had a lot of

credibility.” The following exchange occurred with a U.S. military public affairs officer who served in IFOR’s international press center near the IFOR headquarters in Sarajevo:

Interviewer: In general, what type of influence do you think the public information function or public information managers had among the senior leaders?

U.S. Officer: I think significant influence, and ... by significant, I would define that as the ability of the public information manager to influence, if not drive decisions on the part of the senior leadership.

Interview participants consistently provided examples that portrayed ways in which public relations managers held power among members of the dominant coalition. When asked about the extent to which public affairs officers influenced decisions by senior leaders, a non-commissioned public affairs officer responded, “I think to a great extent.” Describing how the IFOR commander followed advice from his public affairs officer, he continued:

[He] was a ... certainly a strong leader and if he made a decision ... it was going to be his decision. But I really do think he also weighed the advice of his senior staff ... and ... certainly seemed to take [his public affairs officer’s] recommendations to heart on most if not all occasions.”

Another NATO public affairs manager – a senior U.S. military public affairs officer – recalled his close observations of the interaction between the IFOR commander and his public affairs staff. This officer talked of an exchange of ideas between the commander and his PIO, and how they influenced broad decisions. His description

elevated the public relations-command relationship in NATO above a tactical level, to a sophisticated decision-making process that he compared to an ancient game of strategy:

The [commander] listened to what the issues were and took a direct response or gave us direct guidance to ... take those concerns and meet them head on: always in terms of the mission ... he could understand the crux of the question. He just didn't listen to the words ... his guidance that came back down always reflected the broader issue.... I always felt I was playing chess, never checkers.

Of significance, the degree of influence that public relations managers held in NATO's dominant coalition was considered by many participants as being greater than they had previously experienced in their military careers. A senior Canadian officer with many years of experience in government and political affairs commented on the relationship between IFOR public relations directors and their commanders: "Well, I was ... quite frankly ... I was impressed ... in terms of commanders paying attention to and listening to advice of public affairs people." This officer pointed out that public relations influence extended beyond the senior IFOR commanders, spreading down NATO's military chain of command to subordinate decision makers throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina. Here, he described daily conference calls between a senior IFOR military commander and his subordinate commanders – a call that regularly addressed public relations priorities:

In the early days of the deployment the ... commander had a twice a day conference call with his ... divisional commanders, by radio, twice a day.... We could listen in on them. And I was quite impressed by the fact that [the commander] not only [included] on that call his division commanders, but he had

several of his staff officers – including the public affairs person. And the commander gave public affairs direction quite often as part of that whole group conference call.

Remarking on how this behavior impressed him, the Canadian concluded:

And I was impressed by that because ... the commander was aware that he needed to give public affairs advice to his divisional commanders as part of the operational order ... and it had to be adjusted on a daily basis, and I was impressed by that.

With regard to *organizational culture*, interviews revealed few descriptions of NATO commands behaving in either a participative or authoritarian manner. However, based on previous observations and evidence from a literature review (e.g., Combelles-Siegel, 1998; North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1998) I assumed that NATO would behave in an authoritarian manner, given its political-military composition and mandate. This assumption seemed to be supported by a description provided by a senior public affairs director assigned to a large, European-based NATO regional organization. His account addressed the authoritarian, political influence of national capitals on NATO operations in the field. The officer's account of a journalist's question suggested that NATO operations were divided along authoritarian, national lines rather than joined together by participatory behavior:

When I was doing briefings ... announcing that [the regional command] was going to once again pick up the role of ... commander, if you will, for KFOR [NATO's Kosovo-based peace operation], a reporter asked me, "So do you think this is gonna really make any difference, because right now we have MND

[Multi-national Division] East, which is controlled by Washington; we have MND North, which is controlled by Paris; we have MND Central, which is controlled by London; we have MND South, which is controlled by Berlin; and we have MND West, which is controlled by Rome. And, they all do what they want to do, based on their different capitals.”

Another NATO public relations manager based in the United States described an organizational culture that seemed driven by the senior leader’s busy schedule. While this senior leader was accessible to the public relations manager and other staff members, his travel schedule and busy office schedule represented a barrier to his open participation in the organization. This schedule seemed to exude a sense of authoritarianism. Here was a commander operating physically apart from the rest of his staff members for long periods of time and operating on a very structured schedule that limited access to him:

Well, the leader, the CINC [commander-in-chief] ... has a very ... ahhh ... busy schedule that includes a very large amount of travel.... Given that he’s probably out of the building 60% of the time, it makes his in-the-office time very structured. So, I wouldn’t say that an open door or a closed door exists with the four star but, by necessity, he has to have a very structured schedule in order to meet the pressing ... the most pressing ... needs of his office.

Even describing other senior leaders, though, this same public affairs manager was hesitant to describe his organizational culture as open and participative:

With regard to the chief of staff and the deputy, I’d say that it’s *close* to an open-door policy. You know, most days I have access to either of them within minutes

or hours, assuming that they're in the building. The deputy travels a fair amount of the time. The chief of staff travels very little. So assuming he is not on leave ... or doing some limited amount of travel ... he's here and is extremely approachable.

Several other participants described organizational culture as a dependent variable, influenced by *national culture*. Results of these findings, along with relevant descriptions, will be provided in the section of this chapter dedicated to RQ2.

Exploration of *symmetrical systems of internal communication* produced results similar to those generated about organizational culture. There were only a few accounts of internal communication systems used by IFOR, and these contained only sparse data about the symmetry of these systems. For instance, IFOR established an internal newspaper, published in French and English, to inform troops about the progress of the NATO mission. One U.S. public affairs officer responsible for publishing this paper commented, "Yeah, we were proud of that newspaper." However, he went on to explain that NATO assigned responsibility for internal communication – what the military termed command information – to individual member nations.

Thus, the NATO organization seemed to pay little attention to internal information systems, symmetrical or otherwise, in comparison to other principles of the excellence theory. Again, like organizational culture, internal information systems seemed to vary by national culture. I will present additional data related to organizational culture and internal communication systems in more detail in RQ2 and discuss these results in Chapter V.

Interview results suggested that NATO was structured as a *mixed mechanical/organic organization* rather than an *organic organization* as described in the excellence theory. Participants provided only a few accounts of NATO's organizational structure – perhaps, because interview protocols provided limited opportunity to discuss organizational structure. However, general descriptions provided by participants portrayed NATO as a very large, hierarchical, geographically widespread, and highly complex organization typical of mixed mechanical/organic organizations defined by Dozier and L. Grunig (1992). A U.S. public affairs officer who directed public relations for a regional NATO command – one of three like it in Europe – described a large, public relations “office now of about 22 people.” These people were from several different nations, adding to the complexity of the staff.

Another U.S. public affairs officer, this one based on the U.S. East Coast at a large NATO headquarters, described a chain of command or hierarchy that required complex management (e.g., managed according to a matrix of offices and functions spread across a geographic area). This officer reported, “That was my chain [of command]. But to achieve [the commander's] goals, I felt we were matrix-managed, or at least matrix-coordinated with a variety of other offices in and around the area.”

Finally, a British officer provided a detailed description of IFOR's complex public relations structure within Bosnia-Herzegovina:

The plan included an organizational structure with different press centers in particular locations.... When originally written it assumed we would have one in Zagreb, where the IFOR headquarters would be; one in Sarajevo, where the land

force headquarters run by the ARRC [Allied Rapid Reaction Corps] would be;
and then three subordinate ones in each of the multinational districts.

This officer continued his explanation, struggling to recall specific details from his IFOR experience, which occurred nearly nine years prior to his interview. His explanation brought to mind the challenges associated with managing numerous press centers, populated by multinational staff members, spread across a wide geographic region, with individual centers located in different ethnic regions of Bosnia-Herzegovina:

I'm thinking on my feet now, but Tuzla, Mostar, and if I remember rightly, when it started, Gorjani Vakuf was the other one [subordinate press center], at first ... and also, one or two others at crucial locations like Split, on the coast, which was going to be a major port for the embarkation and disembarkation of troops and equipment. So we were trying to cover the *whole* geography of the region ... having a press center in each of the major sort of locations we thought major activity would be centered.

Before turning to results that described effects of IFOR public relations efforts, I will address NATO's operating environment. Data clearly showed that IFOR, even while conducting a *peace* operation, still operated in a very *turbulent, complex environment with multiple pressures* and lethal threats. First, participants described types of activist publics (J. Grunig, 2003; J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1997; L. Grunig, 1992b) that could, in theory, pressure an organization and create a need for excellence in public relations (e.g., J. Grunig, 1992a; L. Grunig et al., 2002). For instance, a U.S. public affairs officer who managed NATO public relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina recounted:

There are a certain number of people who are going to try and pass you information in any means possible, in the old days they would try and call you on the phone, then they would fax information to you and certainly during the beginning of Allied Force we were clobbered with activists sending us e-mails trying to do one of two things: influence us or also damage our capability to communicate with others by overloading the system.

Second, participants mentioned political as well as military pressures associated with NATO operations. A senior Canadian public affairs officer observed:

There was a *military* threat there [in Bosnia-Herzegovina] at times, and then there was also a highly *political* situation.... An international peace agreement [had been] brokered by outside powers and, ahh, IFOR had to implement this with the international community looking on to see ... how it was doing.... It was an extremely tricky environment militarily and politically. And plus you were dealing with a state that was basically a failed state and nothing worked.

As this officer continued his account, he also mentioned pressures related to civil unrest and lawlessness – a physical threat that also produced political pressure on NATO:

The news media of course ... went out and started doing all of these stories about how there was lawlessness in the suburbs [of Sarajevo] and they do all the stand-ups in front of the burning houses and so it looked like the whole of the Sarajevo, the suburbs were up in flames. And [according to the news reports] IFOR wasn't doing anything about it. And the [IFOR] commander, I remember, was worried that this would put political pressure ... back home ... on governments to [have] IFOR ... step in and do something.

This political pressure, according to the Canadian, then produced an immediate need for a public relations solution:

It wasn't within [the IFOR commander's] mandate to become a police force ... our policy [was] to avoid that ... so the commander posed what was essentially a public affairs problem to the public affairs staff saying, "How do I fix this?" And I remember working ... on how we would, what could we do to try and change that particular situation, and we came up with a plan.

Third, interview participants provided vivid descriptions of lethal, physical threats that confronted NATO's operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Canadian officer referred to in the previous account, described IFOR's environment: "It was a threatening environment in the sense that while it wasn't a war operation ... [we were] trying to separate belligerent sides ... at war with each other for several years with high emotions and hatreds." He continued, identifying specific examples of physical threats in IFOR's turbulent environment: "You did have rogue elements, snipers, and of course the ever-present land mines ... and populations that just absolutely hated each other and didn't want to ... cooperate with each other, so ... it was a very tricky environment."

A U.S. public affairs manager who served in IFOR elaborated on the physical threats to NATO. Here, he used an example of dangers that seemed etched in his memory:

It certainly changed dramatically in the six months that I was there. It was actually a fairly small operation at the beginning in January, when I first got there ... certainly very, very security conscious. I guess talking with [another IFOR public affairs manager] after I got there ... he had witnessed an RPG [rocket-

propelled grenade] attack on a tram very close to the Holiday Inn where the CPIC [IFOR coalition press information center] was located. And that was just a couple of weeks prior to my arrival there. There were still sniping incidents ... on convoys throughout the first few months that I was there.

Of note, this manager also described how the environment changed and became less threatening as IFOR's peace operation evolved and began to stabilize the security situation in the region.

I think as a security situation stabilized ... the NGO [non-governmental organization] presence grew greatly. The [country's] infrastructure began to be rebuilt and, as the security situation and the economic situation improved, more people came flooding into the country as well as developers. So, it was... evolving: The freedom of movement both for IFOR and for the local populous improved dramatically in six months.

Effects of excellent public relations. Finally, data needed to answer the first research question described several effects associated with excellent public relations programs: programs that *met communication objectives, reduced costs, and promoted job satisfaction among employees.* Many interview participants talked of *programs that met communication objectives.* In terms of successful completion of communication objectives, members of military services around the world often equate success with completion of an assigned military mission.

Therefore, successful completion of communication objectives in IFOR would most likely refer to public relations activities that supported the completion of IFOR's military mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina. NATO defined this mission as implementing

“the military aspects of a Peace Agreement, and to help create the conditions for a lasting peace in the former Yugoslavia” (Allied Forces Southern Europe, 2004, ¶ 3).

Furthermore, a NATO fact sheet stated that IFOR did successfully meet the goals of its military mission: “The IFOR mission has been successful since its very early stages and substantial compliance with the Peace Agreement (PA) has been monitored” (Allied Forces Southern Europe, (2004, ¶ 1).

Reports from several interview participants who were responsible for leading IFOR and managing IFOR’s public relations programs substantiated NATO’s claim about mission success. A senior assistant to one of the most senior officers in IFOR responded to a question about the success of IFOR public relations. In his response, he compared IFOR public relations with public relations programs in subsequent multinational operations and identified a possible source of IFOR’s public relations accomplishments:

I think in actuality we were pretty successful: much more successful in terms of the management of media and information operations than either Kosovo or Iraq. I would characterize that as ... a function of leadership ... their philosophy seemed to be that they would rather deal with the media and deal with them in a forthright manner, admit when we made mistakes and again, postulate what it was we were going to do to overcome those mistakes. So they were much more open and honest with the media than I perceive the other operations were.

This account came from a subordinate U.S. public affairs officer who described his feelings as he left Bosnia-Herzegovina following a five-month tour of duty. In his

report, he mentioned how accomplishing public relations objectives that helped NATO successfully meet the military goals of the peace operation contributed to job satisfaction:

As we rotated and got new staff officers in that everybody felt pretty good about what they had done – that we had reached the goals that had been set out. We certainly hadn't solved the problem. The three factions still didn't like each other and there were still problems in Bosnia, but I think everybody felt that they had ... done their part both militarily and from a public relations point of view.

Another former IFOR public information officer echoed the previous sentiments of the U.S. officer:

I felt the overall IFOR PI operation was pretty successful. We had glitches, we had problems, but overall the messages that came out both in direct terms and in the way in which the operations was seen by the publics in many European countries and ... the States and [other] places, seemed to be pretty favorable. And I think we did quite well. I say that, having talked to in the few months after end of the operation ... journalists and other people in several different nations....

The British officer corroborated his account by referring to research results from a survey of journalists who reported on IFOR's operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina:

I also know, um, of a particular individual, who, a couple of years after the end of the IFOR [operation], did some research [see Väättäinen, 1997] by contacting a couple of hundred journalists to write a small thesis on how the journalists viewed the IFOR PI operation.... The overall perception of journalists was that it was a considerable improvement on military public information ... over previous generations.

Descriptions also seemed to associate job satisfaction with meeting public relations objectives: receiving recognition for hard work and achieving excellent results improved morale. One U.S. military public affairs officer, based in the United States, described the public affairs office at his NATO headquarters as “a very happy place.”

Explaining possible sources for this emotion, he added:

I'd say for the vast majority of individuals [job satisfaction is] exceedingly high. The work ... that we do here is recognized and appreciated. And we do get very real-term, real-time feedback and input from both leaders and peers within the organization, here. People are genuinely appreciative of the work that's done here, especially when they consider the very limited resources ... that we have.

An Italian NATO public relations official based in Europe described how the tempo of operations and degree to which public relations staff members contributed to the overall mission could affect morale:

When people are engaged and they feel they are contributing to the overall effort, and they are in the picture, they work hard, they are right on the mark, they anticipate problems and they are very active. When, instead, people perceive that they are put behind, they are not in the picture, the organization is not counting that much on them, unfortunately, that further reduces the contribution they can give. Morale goes down particularly if ... somebody perceives that maybe the organization is not doing it the best way or it's not learning enough from past experience, then it's difficult to keep the good spirit ... you see that things could be done better ... so you do it, but without the enthusiasm which would maybe guarantee better results.

Finally, NATO public relations programs reduced costs associated with the IFOR mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Costs in the context of the IFOR operation related to savings in human costs (e.g., lives), economic conditions, and expenses associated with conducting large-scale military operations.

First, in the preface to this report, I attributed remarks to a former IFOR commander who credited public relations with preventing the loss of life during NATO's peace operations. While these data were not collected from interview methods used during this study, they do provide empirical evidence of claims that IFOR's management of communication and public relations helped to save lives and reduce costs. IFOR public relations programs helped reduce costs by promoting public understanding and support, building relationships, contributing to a peaceful environment, and perhaps reducing the strength of troops and length of time IFOR was required to remain in the theater of operations.

Reports by several interview participants seemed to support this assertion. A U.S. public affairs manager who served nearly six months in IFOR observed how public information supported peace operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina:

I think [public information] ... was really vital [to the success of the operation] because without the support of the populace there in Bosnia it would have been impossible for IFOR to have the success that it had. I think that without the support of the taxpayers in all of the countries providing troops to IFOR, the will to continue would probably not have been there.

A Canadian public affairs officer said emphatically: "I think [NATO's public information program] was a success. I think there's no other way to describe it." He then

reiterated: “I think that the mission was a success. I mean [the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina] ... it was a blood bath and ... when NATO went in ... that’s when the lives of the people in Bosnia began to get better.”

Finally, two former IFOR commanders reflected on the success of public relations efforts in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Both commanders described public relations as an indispensable part of IFOR’s success. One commander indicated that the contribution of public relations to IFOR’s mission was as important as any other military function:

An active public relations campaign ... had to be a part of it ... it was ... every bit as important as the rifles people were toting around, as the tanks we brought in the theatre, as the Seabees [construction battalion] that we brought in, as the engineers that we brought in. It was as important as any other element and the tapestry that when all wound together spells *success* [italics added] of what we were doing.

Summarizing his remarks, the commander made this comparison between the importance of public relations and a contemporary U.S. credit card commercial:

Well, I mean in today’s world, to coin a phrase ... I see public relations today in the United States military ... or in NATO military ... or in any military ... or for any organization ... I mean it is so important that it is your American Express card. You don’t leave home without it.

Communication and Culture

The second research question addressed the relationship between communication and organizational culture (e.g., Sriramesh & White, 1992; Wakefield, 1996), and how variations in organizational culture influenced the management of IFOR’s

communication and public relations programs. The description of results pertaining to the first research question already addressed evidence of culture's general influence on NATO's management of IFOR'S communication and public relations programs. Interviews also revealed that NATO's multicultural nature resulted in acculturation (Wakefield). These *societal* and *national* cultures appear to have created subcultures in the NATO alliance, which may have been a product of divergence (Wakefield). Divergence seemed to arise from descriptions of individual leaders and public relations managers who attempted to retain their cultural identities, or status quo, as they joined the NATO alliance's organizational culture.

Furthermore, data from interviews suggested that *societal* or *national cultures* had a more profound effect on IFOR's public relations and communication programs than did *organizational culture*. Hence, interviews provided clear evidence that organizational culture did, indeed, influence communication and public relations management at various levels of the alliance. However, this influence was mitigated by societal and national cultures to a greater extent than expected. Results of this inquiry are described in the following section.

RQ2: How did organizational culture influence NATO's management of IFOR public relations and communication programs in Bosnia-Herzegovina?

With respect to organizational culture, a few participants described this concept as a *dependent* variable within NATO, influenced by the *independent* national culture of NATO's various member countries – perhaps by *societal* or even *military* culture. When asked about NATO's organizational culture, a Canadian public affairs officer responded, “Well, I find you get a mixed bag because you've got ... an international force ...

different *military* cultures all intermingling.” He then demonstrated how intermingling of culture – or *acculturation* – influenced NATO’s management of communication:

Information sharing, I think, varies from force to force, and so when you get a *mélange* there of different things, you tend to get a mish-mash of sharing information. You get some nations [that] will sometimes hoard information for themselves, and others [that] share ... tend to share more collegially. And even within nations you get certain officers that might be more unilateral, national, than thinking in terms of NATO and thinking horizontally.

When asked about the source of cultural variation and its possible influence on different approaches to public relations in IFOR, the Canadian elaborated in a way that revealed different dimensions of culture: military, national, and social. He began by explaining how culture varied by military forces (e.g., armies) assigned to IFOR: “Well, I think it goes by the culture within each army that is in the force.” The Canadian then seemed to say that these military cultures were influenced by a type of political system that comprises national culture – similar to systems described by Sriramesh and Verčič (2001, 2003a) and Verčič et al. (1996) in a global perspective of public relations:

I mean within NATO [today] you’ve got a wide variety of *political* regimes. I mean they are all democracies, but some ... are only brand new democracies.... In those days [1995-1996] the countries we had in IFOR were all democracies, but each democracy tends to have its own culture.

Next, the Canadian officer addressed how societies – entities that exist beyond national boundaries – have unique cultures. He edified the concept of social culture by

referring to broad geographic regions, just as G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede (2005) differentiated between national and social cultures. The Canadian observed:

Some societies, some democracies are very, very open societies and others tend to be more, more secretive. I think generally speaking the continental, and I include the British in that, tends to be more of a closed system; whereas, North America tends to have a much more, we are used to a much more open, open culture and it is just because of the different class systems in our society or the fact that we don't have a class system in North America where some Europeans do.

Finally, he addressed sources of cultural identity. In doing so, the Canadian suggested that origins of culture within NATO were like cultural roots described by G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede: "I think our own cultural *upbringing* [italics added] has a lot to do with how [communication styles change], and our armies tend to reflect that."

Thus, according to the Canadian, cultural traits within NATO were *learned* rather than genetic or hereditary, as G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede (2005) posited. Furthermore, this officer's remarks seemed to differentiate social culture from organizational culture. As G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede (2005) might have explained, members of NATO moved into the alliance after they had acquired a cultural identity and they "did not grow up in it" (p. 35).

A military public affairs officer from the United States felt that culture varied more along the lines of national culture and personality of each senior organizational leader than by organizational culture. The officer illustrated his perspective with the following dialogue. Here, as the interviewer, I equated participatory culture with a senior leader's openness, accessibility, and involvement in exchange of information with

employees. Furthermore, I used the term *command climate*, a military term familiar to most participants, which is equivalent in a military context to the theoretical concept of organizational culture. This passage also illustrated methodologically how the interview protocol incorporated follow-up and interpretive questions (Kvale, 1996) to clarify meaning:

Interviewer: How would you describe the command climate, if you will, in terms of open- or closed-door policy?

U.S. Officer: In terms of allowing internal information activities to take place?

Interviewer: And, yeah, up and down the chain of command, accessibility, openness internally within the organization.

U.S. Officer: I think that was driven by the size of the “in box” and the attitude or the personality. You know, some people are more interested in working with public affairs than others. You know, from an internal stand point. I think unit commanders were very interested in internal information efforts because it gave them a voice and a vehicle to communicate with their troops.

Interviewer: To what extent were the senior leaders accessible?

U.S. Officer: For internal information purposes?

Interviewer: Well not just internal information, but internal communication. To what extent were they open to information coming up from the bottom of the organization?

U.S. Officer: Oh, you mean not, not as a public affairs vehicle, per se, but just as....

Interviewer: Yeah, the overall command climate.

U.S. Officer: Oh, okay ... I felt they were very receptive. I thought people, from an American perspective ... let's just start there ... I think the Americans were, were very sensitive to the fact that their troops were on the ground in an environment that was the first peace keeping, nation building, whatever you want to call it, peace-keeping effort since Somalia ... and that we were entering unknown territory.

Interviewer: Okay.

U.S. Officer: Let me just - so, so they were, they were very sensitive of that and they wanted to ensure, I think, a pretty free flow of information. On the other side of the fence, the rest of the nations who were there, I think there was some ... awareness on the part of the Europeans that it took American involvement to move NATO in and the UN out and they were, I think very sensitive to criticism....

Interviewer: But are you saying still that even with the openness within the organization it may have varied nation to nation?

U.S. Officer: Absolutely! In terms of the climate, in terms of the command climate within that particular country?

Interviewer: Right.

U.S. Officer: Yeah, well yeah. And the evidence that I would use for that is the... [OC: Here, the officer concluded by illustrating his assertion with a long story. The story contained personal information not suitable for reporting purposes.]

Finally, an Italian public relations manager with experience in NATO and IFOR recounted public relations situations in IFOR that were characterized by different cultures operating together. According to this manager, “There have been cases where there has been no harmony.” The discord suggested by this lack of harmony could represent an example of *cultural divergence* (Wakefield, 1996). However, he also implied that NATO seemed to accept the existence of different cultural perspectives toward public relations and that these differences were blended into NATO’s communication planning, which could represent cultural *convergence* (Wakefield). Still, he, like others interviewed during this research project, felt that NATO’s communication programs were influenced primarily by *national culture*:

The approach has not been the same throughout coalition activities, even vertically, at various levels of command. So, strangely, we have had somehow different, slightly different approaches, in planning for public information.... But also horizontally, you still have different *national* approaches ... in environments which are dominated, quote-unquote, in a sense that they are in a *national framework* ... you see the approach taken by that nation influencing the overall approach taken by the organization at that level.

Global Theory in Public Relations

As explained in Chapter II, the excellence theory produced public relations principles that were based largely on Western concepts of organizations and public relations that might not apply to other regions of the world (Culbertson & Chen, 1996; Kruckeberg, 1996a, 1996b; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002). Subsequently, scholars such as J. Grunig et al. (1995); L. Grunig et al. (1998, 2001); Sriramesh and Verčič (2001,

2003a); Verčič et al. (1996); and Wakefield (1996, 1997) have collaborated on development of a theory of global public relations. This theory is based on generic principles that could apply to most regions of the world with some adaptations. Global theory was derived in part from the excellence theory; therefore, results associated with the first research question have already described many of the global principles that NATO applied to the alliance's communication programs.

Data from this study provided evidence that NATO applied all of the global public relations principles (Verčič et al., 1996) to management of alliance communication and public relations programs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. First, public relations directors were *involved in NATO's strategic management process*. Second, these *directors had a direct-reporting relationship with senior NATO leaders*. Third, *public relations was integrated* with other management functions and, fourth, was *separated from other functions*. Fifth, senior public relations practitioners in NATO were *knowledgeable, senior communication managers* who directed public relations programs and staff members. Sixth, NATO generally adhered to a *two-way symmetrical model* of public relations when communicating with strategic publics; however, as explained in results related to RQ1, NATO resorted to coercive communication tactics in conflict situations. Seventh, NATO's multicultural alliance *embodied diversity* – especially in terms of cultural diversity – in public relations roles.

The two remaining principles were evident, but data related to these principles raised questions about how NATO applied these global principles to public relations programs. For example, some participants described NATO's employment of *symmetrical systems of internal communication*, but the degree to which these systems

were employed varied according to the cultural and national identity of senior leaders in those commands. Furthermore, NATO public relations offices exhibited *knowledge potential for the managerial role and symmetrical communication* in public relations. However, NATO's application of this principle also varied with differences in national and cultural identities.

Descriptions by interview participants in this study also uncovered several of the external, environmental variables that could influence application of public relations principles: political system, economic system, level of activism, culture, and media systems (Verčič et al., 1996). These systems, which are derived from national culture, fell into three categories: national infrastructure, media system, and social culture (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2001, 2003a).

I have not repeated the accounts of principles described in vivid detail by interview participants as I did under results of RQ1. Instead, I have dedicated this section to discussion of how excellence principles that were revealed during interviews are associated with generic principles of global theory. Furthermore, I will report data that relate to environmental variables, which could influence application of generic, global principles.

RQ3: Which, if any, excellence theory principles applied by NATO to IFOR communication programs were associated with generic principles of a global theory in public relations?

Results pertaining to RQ1 provided sufficient evidence to conclude that a close association existed between excellence theory principles and the following global theory principles in the NATO case:

1. Public relations directors were *involved in NATO's strategic management process*.
2. These *directors had a direct-reporting relationship with senior NATO leaders*.
3. NATO *public relations was integrated* with other management functions.
4. NATO public relations was also *separated from other functions*.
5. Senior public relations practitioners in NATO were *knowledgeable, senior communication managers* who directed public relations programs and staff members.
6. NATO generally adhered to a *two-way symmetrical model* of public relations when communicating with strategic publics; however, as explained in results related to RQ1, NATO resorted to coercive communication tactics in conflict situations.
7. NATO's multicultural alliance *embodied diversity* – especially in terms of cultural diversity – in public relations roles.

I have already provided ample description of these principles through accounts provided in response to RQ1. Therefore, I will refrain from duplicating description of these principles in this section. Instead, I will dedicate the remainder of this section to a description of data related to the two remaining principles of global theory:

8. NATO's *systems of internal communication*.
9. NATO's *knowledge potential for the managerial role and symmetrical communication* in public relations.

I will also report accounts that revealed evidence of external, environmental variables and systems that could influence application of global theory's generic public relations principles.

First, as previously mentioned, participants provided few accounts about the symmetrical nature of NATO's *internal communication systems*. Some interview participants seemed to indicate that the global, multinational nature of the NATO alliance influenced this result. As one U.S. Army public affairs officer explained, NATO assigned primary responsibility for internal communication systems to individual member nations. Under this policy, each nation managed internal information systems for their own contingent of troops assigned to IFOR. The U.S. officer provided this account of the situation:

Although we had a coalition newspaper, really the internal information was left up to the individual [nations]. So, you know the French were speaking to the French [troops], the Germans were speaking to the [German troops, etc.].

Thus, the existence of more than 30 troop-contributing countries in IFOR created multiple, nationalistic internal information systems and no clearly identifiable NATO internal information system.

Second, interviews produced inconsistencies with regard to *knowledge potential for the managerial role and symmetrical communication* among NATO public relations offices. NATO public relations offices exhibited some – albeit limited – *potential for excellence* in formal public relations training and education. Senior public relations managers in NATO and IFOR generally possessed advanced degrees, professional training, or several years of experience in public relations management. However, levels

of professional training were lower among more junior public relations staff members. One NATO public relations manager assessed levels of professional training and education in his office to be “adequate” but admitted the need for greater “level of experience and preparation.”

In a global sense, knowledge and training among public relations staff members may have been adequate for NATO’s traditional Cold War mission. However, deployment of NATO forces out of their geographic region and into a potentially hostile setting posed new challenges. These challenges also occurred at a time of NATO expansion, which included the addition of new member nations who were not familiar with or trained in Western-style public relations. The effect of this globalization on NATO was noted by some interview participants. One participant, a retired military public affairs officer who helped plan and prepare public relations support for IFOR’s entry into Bosnia-Herzegovina, reported on this phenomenon:

[Lack of professional public relations training] was a huge handicap, to be moving into, really, uncharted waters; to be having to deal with an increasing tempo of media interest in what we were doing; and increasing expectations among our leadership as to what we could do; when we really didn’t have the personnel with the qualifications to carry on a sound program.

Accounts of internal communication and knowledge potential seemed to suggest the influence of an environmental system and several external variables that were identified by Verčič et al. (1996) and Sriramesh and Verčič (2001, 2003a). This system is constructed from a framework derived from national culture and operating across elements of national infrastructure, media system, and social culture (Sriramesh &

Verčič, 2001, 2003a). Data from this study identified political systems, economic systems, media systems, and national culture that fell within this framework.

Political systems. First several former IFOR public affairs officers described the ways in which public relations programs – including internal information systems – varied by *national political systems*. Based on descriptions within this study, even *within nations*, some government public relations programs seemed to have evolved just as political policies have become more globalized. One military public affairs officer who worked for many years in the Canadian government before serving in IFOR, observed how Canada’s foreign policy agenda influenced that government’s public relations programs. Specifically, this officer reported that globalization of military missions approved by the Canadian government affected a change in civilian and military leadership’s perspective of public relations:

In my own career in the Canadian armed forces we went through periods where, ahh, at least a period in the seventies and eighties when commanders didn’t think public affairs were that important ... because ... we weren’t involved in a lot of missions because of the Cold War.... But when we began in the nineties to get highly involved in overseas missions, then they began to realize that if you didn’t pay attention to public affairs there were consequences.

Another Canadian public affairs officer described how many nations – especially new NATO member nations – have used the assignment of military personnel to NATO public relations positions as a means to spread national political influence. He said, “And as various nations love to fight to get their own, you know, [NATO public information positions are] seen as a good place for these nations to be.”

One of the Canadian officers who served in IFOR also touched on *economic systems* that influence NATO public relations programs. Here, the officer seemed to describe a situation similar to economic supply and demand. Many nations invest little national capital in the training and employment of a specialized corps of military public affairs officers. Nations that do invest significant economic resources in the training of a professional corps of government public affairs officers (e.g., the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom) must decide whether to assign these professional public affairs officers to NATO or to other unilateral or nationally-led coalition operations. Thus, a shortage of trained public affairs officers threatens NATO's ability to manage public relations programs for the alliance's growing number of global missions in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The Canadian continued:

I mean, the Americans ... obviously ... are very engaged on their own front within operation Enduring Freedom [U.S.-led military operations against terrorism]. They don't have people to put in, the Brits don't have people to put in, I have less people to put in. Well that essentially begins to exhaust your... your PI [public information] capability within NATO.

Media systems. Economic systems also seemed to influence national perspectives toward media systems and media relations. These national systems equated also to military systems of public affairs and media relations. Nations that invested much in their military public relations programs were in high demand in NATO because of their ability to manage media relations. For instance, the British-led, land-based rapid reaction component of IFOR was considered to be proficient in media relations because of the U.K. national system of media and public relations: "Culturally, they're [ARRC, or

Allied Rapid Reaction Corps] quite aware of... of media. They're quite aware of how it is they could serve their commander through the media, and thus the command climate was very positive in that regard."

On the other hand, participants described nations that invested little in public relations training for military officers as more close-minded, distributive, or asymmetrical in their approach toward media relations and media systems. Hence, Western public relations officers like this Canadian officer were suspicious of Eastern-European national media systems and public information capabilities:

It may be a, you know, Western bias, but when I compare that kind of example ... from a Communist-dominated society ... and all that that means for ethics and values in relationships with media ... [with] the ARRC, and ...with the Brits ... Americans and ... the Western nations ... I get concerned. The overlay on that, NATO, you know, NATO is not training PI effectively. It doesn't necessarily bode well for... for NATO's future ability to [conduct public information activities].

The Canadian officer continued his story with a description of different nationalities that personified differences in national media systems and military public affairs. Here, expressing near disbelief, he described an account of his experiences in NATO public relations following the departure of IFOR from Bosnia-Herzegovina:

My staff consisted of a Spaniard, a guy from the Netherlands, an American, Italian, a [member of a former Warsaw Pact nation], a [member of another former Warsaw Pact nation], myself, a Belgian civilian, and a German. So a very ... very mixed bag, and as I look at that group. Two, the [nationality] and

[nationality] were from former Warsaw Pact nations: both ... both incredibly smart people. But ... if you didn't give them a specific task, they could literally... I've never seen this before... they could literally sit in a chair for 10 hours, sitting there doing nothing.⁷

The Canadian public affairs officer then used a *hypothetical* dialogue with one of his public affairs staff members – an officer from a former Warsaw Pact nation – to illustrate his account:

Canadian Officer: [Calling out the name of the former Warsaw Pact officer], phone this reporter and give 'em... you know ... answer this reporter's question.

Former Warsaw Pact Officer: Well, how do I answer it?

Canadian Officer: Well, here's the talking point.

Former Warsaw Pact Officer: Well, I'm not, you know, I'm not... I don't really understand... I don't really understand that. Why would I be phoning him?

Canadian Officer: Because you're a media relations officer, right?

Former Warsaw Pact Officer: Well we don't do it this way in our [country].

The Canadian, exiting his hypothetical dialogue and reentering the interview, then explained a way that learned behavior grounded in national culture could influence media systems and approaches to media relations, just as G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede (2005) predicted:

⁷ I have chosen in this account to keep confidential the identity of the former Warsaw Pact nations. Considering the nature of remarks aimed at the former Warsaw Pact officers in this account, I hope to reduce potential harm or embarrassment to the participant or the former Warsaw Pact officers should a reader be able to associate the names of these countries with the officers assigned to the Canadian's staff.

It just... you know... the *upbringing* [italics added] of officers within that [Communist] environment, at least in my experience, and I had, you know, cause to deal with a good dozen or so pretty closely, just did not prepare them for that [NATO] kind of interaction.... I mean [to] actually be quoted and have their name in the paper was just ... beyond the pale.... And to think that, you know ... to provide any background or experience on or off-the-record just didn't compute.

Elaborating on his description, the Canadian provided additional speculation about how national culture influenced media systems and media relations in NATO and in NATO nations:

I guess national attributes are very evident in the way in which they work. I don't think it's a surprise to ... to see that... a view of being ... a view developed. If your experience nationally has been in a communist or socialist country where media are controlled, and all of a sudden you're part of NATO and expected to, you know ... subscribe to the ... DOD [department of defense] principles of information, I mean, you could read them, you might be able to recap them, but you can't ... you don't have the skill set ... or mind set to operationalize that – particularly if you've got a command climate that, you know, that reinforces the old ways, if you will.

In this account, the officer referred to a set of defense information principles.

Such principles are used by the U.S. Department of Defense. Although the U.S. principles have no legal standing in NATO, they are representative of a Western military approach to public relations management. These principles guide the application of public information programs and correspond with a type of ethical code of conduct for

such programs. Table 4 provides the text of these principles, which are offered here to clarify the context of the Canadian officer's remarks.

Table 4

U.S. Department of Defense Principles of Information

The Principles of Information constitute the underlying public affairs philosophy for DefenseLINK and the Department of Defense.

"It is Department of Defense policy to make available timely and accurate information so that the public, the Congress, and the news media may assess and understand the facts about national security and defense strategy. Requests for information from organizations and private citizens shall be answered quickly. In carrying out that DoD policy, the following principles of information shall apply:

"Information shall be made fully and readily available, consistent with statutory requirements, unless its release is precluded by national security constraints or valid statutory mandates or exceptions. The Freedom of Information Act will be supported in both letter and spirit.

"A free flow of general and military information shall be made available, without censorship or propaganda, to the men and women of the Armed Forces and their dependents.

"Information will not be classified or otherwise withheld to protect the Government from criticism or embarrassment.

"Information shall be withheld when disclosure would adversely affect national security, threaten the safety or privacy of U.S. Government personnel or their families, violate the privacy of the citizens of the United States, or be contrary to law.

"The Department of Defense's obligation to provide the public with information on DoD major programs may require detailed Public Affairs (PA) planning and coordination in the Department of Defense and with the other Government Agencies. Such activity is to expedite the flow of information to the public; propaganda has no place in DoD public affairs programs."

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs has the primary responsibility for carrying out the commitment represented by these Principles.

The Principles of Information are codified as enclosure (2) to Department of Defense Directive 5122.5 of September 27, 2000.

Note: Excerpted from the public Web site of the U.S. Department of Defense (U.S. Department of Defense, 2002).

A British officer who worked in IFOR public relations related a similar account about differences between U.S., British, and French perspectives of media relations. As he spoke, the British officer addressed the influence of national culture on a French officer and how the French officer adapted adroitly to the NATO public relations model through a process that sounded similar to convergence in acculturation:

We also were ... given, ah, a senior deputy chief by the French, and we got a French Army colonel; and, again, whilst he had done public information before, had only done so within his own national context within France. And the French, at that state certainly, had a much better tighter control over the media and could tell the media what to print and what not to print. ... [As] a NATO PIO [you had] to realize that we could not control the media; we had to work with them.... Soon he began to learn. And actually, he was very, very good. It's just, you know, his background was such that he had to adjust – make a major adjustment I would say in, in the way he looked at the media.

The same British officer also described the interrelationship between national culture and media systems among NATO and its member nations:

Different nations have a different perception of what public information or PR is and how it should be approached and what should be done with it. The Brits, for example see public information as part of what they call media operations ... [wanting] a story to have a certain angle ... [telling] the media about something in that way in order to put that point across. Whereas, NATO public information,

much like American public affairs, believes in, more or less, telling the truth and telling it openly and plainly.... Um, and there are still some nations that believe in telling the media nothing, ah, or as little as possible.

As he continued, the British officer added support to the notion that national culture could influence creation of a separate military culture, which also influences public relations approaches in a global sense: “So ... I think the same applies in ... or an extension of what those nations or their nation’s military believe in terms of the way the way they should work with the press.

Finally, the officer provided additional evidence to support G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede’s (2005) perspective of culture as a product of experience and education. Speaking of the way media systems vary according to national and military culture, he concluded, “Ah, that’s reflected in the nature of the training that they give to their people, um, and whether or not they view public information as a full-time or a professional type of following for military officers.”

Cultural variables. G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede (2005) identified several determinants or dimensions of national culture, which I described in the literature review of this paper. Interviews generated data that were related to several of these dimensions. These dimensions also fall within Sriramesh and Verčič’s (2001, 2003a) category of social culture.

First, several interview participants referred to the *importance of education* in the NATO alliance. Participants contextualized education in at least two different ways: professional public relations education (e.g., J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984) and general education as an element of national infrastructure (e.g., Sriramesh & Verčič, 2001,

2003a). NATO considered familiarity with Western-style media systems and government public relations programs to be an important qualification for membership in the alliance. Interview participants like this military public affairs officer referred to NATO efforts to provide such training and education to former Soviet Bloc nations:

The fact that NATO ... can't figure out how to train PI [public information] officers, the national organizations are trying to figure out how to train PI. But NATO is ... now, a majority of East European... former Warsaw Pact ... nations, who are still trying to figure out what this whole open-ended transparency thing is.

The officer continued his remarks, establishing an apparent association between Western-style public relations and national culture – and forecasting problems related to education and training that will plague NATO:

There are only four or five nations that [were open-ended], arguably a professional, full-time, bona fide PA [public affairs] organization. The combination of all that, you know, points to, I think, very significant problems for NATO, currently and in the future, and in it's ability to manage PI.

Participants also gave accounts that underscored the importance of general education in global public relations. Because much of one's learning takes place in school systems, education influences culture. Also, G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede (2005) listed a "better educational system" among factors that determine "more national wealth *and* less dependence on powerful others" (p. 70). Therefore, education became an important theme in describing differences in culture and power among nations in the NATO organization.

The following report by a Canadian officer in IFOR illustrated how NATO's Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC), the land forces element of IFOR, was led by members of a powerful nation: the United Kingdom. According to the Canadian, British officers benefited from excellent schooling that enabled them, at least in part, to assume prestigious public relations positions in the IFOR organization:

Within the ARRC media shop itself, a couple of dynamics are perhaps worthy of note: ARRC being a ... the framework ... from the U.K. I had found that the schooling and upbringing of the majority of ... some 60% of the officers being U.K. was just exceptional.

The Canadian also mentioned the *importance of language*, in the sense of speaking, articulating messages, and being understood in NATO. Here, he implied that language ability is associated with national culture:

[The British] ... you know, their upbringing is... is very much focused on their ability to speak and articulate their point of view. They're quite, you know, as a society, very open and transparent with their experiences in Northern Ireland and other... and other difficult areas.

The Canadian officer's description supports L. Grunig and J. Grunig's (2003) assertions that language is an "integral part of culture" (p. 333) and that multilingual capability is important to "anyone who wants to be a global practitioner" (p. 333).

According to Tklać and Pavčić (2003), the international nature of organizations "plays an important role" (p. 501) in formulating and disseminating public relations messages. Moreover, "speaking the same language" (p. 501) can become a challenge for multinational organizations that need to communicate with multicultural audiences.

Participants did report that language was influential in the development and practice of global public relations in settings like IFOR's peace operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, based on interviews completed during this research project, it became apparent that Europeans and Canadians had a much greater appreciation for the value of language in multinational organizations than did U.S. officers.

The official languages of NATO are English and French. All of the Canadian officers were fluent or proficient in both languages. Several European officers were multilingual. One British officer commented on his linguistic abilities, which enabled him to communicate from within NATO to news media organizations from many different nations. He paused during an interview and said with pride, "I am a linguist." He then continued: "I speak Spanish, French, German, and Italian – as well as English. And I did deal with a number of journalists in different languages from different parts of the world." This officer also spoke of a "very, very good" French officer who served in a senior public relations management position with IFOR. This French officer could also communicate in five languages: French, Italian, German, English, and Russian.

Hence, NATO's perception of the importance of language in the alliance was consistent with theoretical concepts of global public relations. Public relations practitioners in NATO did perceive that language was important to communication within a multinational, multicultural, multilingual alliance.

Finally, participants identified the *importance of personality* in NATO and global public relations. First, Sriramesh and Verčič (2003b) identified personality as a determinant of culture that "refers to the traits of individuals of a society" (p. 9). G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede (2005) wrote, "The personality of an individual ... is her or

his unique personal set of mental programs” (p. 5), which are a product of learning and genetics. Personality is influenced by culture and by learning gained through lived experiences. Thus, personality and culture enjoy a close association. This association was evident in data collected from interviews.

To some participants, the individual identity of senior NATO leaders seemed to play a pivotal role in determining knowledge potential in public relations offices – and culture varied according to the many national and military identities in the alliance. One of the participants in an elite interview had previous experience as a commanding officer of a U.S. naval station. This officer gave his philosophy of management, which included a symmetrical approach to managing relationships with naval station employees and the surrounding community:

Well a lot of it is what we refer to in the military as management by walking around. You try and make yourself accessible and you are out in the public so that people can talk to you ... so they can indicate to you ... again, how they think, literally, you are doing in your job [and] in ... meeting their needs as a community... Then of course it becomes the *style of the individual commanding officer* [italics added] as to how much of that does he want to hear. My philosophy and I applied it in terms of command, but certainly in terms of media and media relations is all information is good.

In this passage, the former commanding officer described his symmetrical perspective of public relations. This perspective was characterized by his interest in identifying the consequences of his organization’s actions on the community and his

willingness to change his or the naval station's behavior as well as affect change within the community:

I might not like the specific piece of information you are bringing me, but at least I now know that information and I can react to it in terms of either modifying my programs and my behavior ... or ... again, evaluate it and say this is not a valid point and here are the reasons why this particular person's opinions ... [are] not valid. So to me, that, that is always beneficial to know what is going on around you, whether it is good or bad. And, again, to the extent that, you know, you make yourself open to that.

In this example, a U.S. Air Force officer, who had observed one of the IFOR commanders in Sarajevo, attributed the commander's worldview of public relations to his roots in American culture. Furthermore, the commander's cultural identity was allegedly influenced by uniquely American experiences during military operations in Somalia. Commenting on the source of the IFOR commander's public relations perspective, the officer said, "I think because [the IFOR commander] was an American, his perception of the role of the media and public information in his coalition had been influenced to no small degree by the American experience with Somalia."

Another participant, a U.S. Air Force public affairs officer, provided the following account of the same four-star U.S. Navy admiral who commanded IFOR:

One of the things that I felt best about working in the IFOR headquarters with [the admiral], as opposed to many other arrangements where I've worked with flag officers [admirals], is that he got it. He knew what he needed to accomplish through the public affairs arena.

The U.S. Air Force officer continued his description of the Navy admiral by adding, “That was not always evidenced with some of his junior [admirals], but he certainly had it.” The latter comment provided additional evidence that the seniority or rank aspect of military culture may play a role in the development of public relations knowledge, worldview, and communication management style among senior military officers in NATO.

Demonstrating the contrast between an individual’s military service affiliation and rank, a U.S. public affairs officer who served in Bosnia-Herzegovina provided the following anecdote about a four-star U.S. army general who commanded NATO peace forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This public affairs officer had served with the general several years before they both deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina. At the time this story took place, the senior officer was a one-star general:

He [a one-star Army general] said that he didn’t want to talk to any reporters ... that we had a three-star corps commander to do that ... and my job was to keep him [the one-star general] ... away from the press. When he left two plus years later, at his departure ceremony, as I was going through a receiving line, I was able to smile and shake his hand and said, “Sir, you didn’t talk to a reporter the whole time, did you?” So I had done my job as far as he was concerned.

The U.S. public affairs officer then recounted how this general officer changed his approach toward media relations as he became more senior:

But there was a great transformation [from] the one-star [to] the four-star ... commander.... He was told ... by his bosses ... as he moved up in the general officer rank ... you know, you will learn to deal with the media, you will make

yourself available ... to the media and, and so he did... I won't say he ever liked it, but he became more comfortable with talking to the press as he moved up.

And [he] understood that it was a responsibility of command.

Thus, the multinational nature of the NATO alliance seemed to influence the operation of internal communication and knowledge potential and complicated the collection of data related to these concepts. I will analyze and interpret these findings in more detail in Chapter V.

Communication, Conflict, and Cooperation

As data collection progressed through a series of long interviews, evidence emerged that indicated NATO leaders and practitioners resorted at times to coercive communication tactics to manage conflict situations. Use of coercion was inconsistent with the two-way symmetrical model of communication that represented a general framework for NATO and IFOR public relations programs. As this qualitative research project evolved, I decided to explore this phenomenon. Methodologically, I employed elite and focus group interviews to gain deeper understanding of how situations along a spectrum of peace to conflict might explain variation in NATO's use of coercive and cooperative communication.

Elites and focus group participants, like long interview participants, confirmed that NATO selected distributive communication approaches to help manage certain situations. Data indicated that the alliance normally used these approaches in situations that were characterized by threats of physical conflict, political risks that threatened the peace agreement, and time pressure. These factors motivated NATO leaders and public relations managers to opt for one-way distributive or two-way asymmetrical

communication approaches that approximated the description of persuasive message tactics in negotiation theory provided by Gibbons et al. (1992).

However, IFOR sometimes went beyond persuasive rhetoric and resorted to coercion: use of threats that Rosenbaum (1986) equated to application of force or power. NATO's coercive communications were limited to short-term message tactics designed to protect IFOR personnel, compel compliance with the peace agreement, restore order, and protect long-term strategic relationships. NATO seemed to apply these tactics with symmetrical intent and generally adhered to a model of two-way symmetrical communication.

RQ4: How did conflict situations facing IFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina influence choice of communication strategies by senior NATO leaders?

First, interviews produced vivid descriptions of a turbulent environment in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As reported, the turbulence in this environment created a need for excellence in public relations. Turbulence in the context of IFOR was not limited to types of activist pressure described by the excellence theory and global theory in public relations. Turbulence in NATO's case in Bosnia-Herzegovina was created, among other factors, by post-war conditions and lethal threats. I previously reported comments by IFOR's first commander, who described the environment into which IFOR deployed as "an absence of war" (Smith, 1996, ¶ 15). This description portrayed a country in a dangerous transition: no longer at war but not yet at peace. The IFOR commander's account of this environment was corroborated by interview participants such as this former Sarajevo-based IFOR public relations manager:

[IFOR] was an operation not as a war, but it was [war]. When you are trying to separate belligerent sides ... at war with each other for several years with high emotions and hatreds ... that can be difficult.... The only way IFOR was able to achieve that was the fact ... that IFOR was heavily armed.

This officer also associated IFOR's use coercive communication with NATO's mission to implement military provisions of the peace agreement in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This mission required appropriate levels of force to contend with factions in the theater of operations that did not want to cooperate. Here, the manager referred to IFOR's implementation role:

IFOR had the muscle to back up its [threats]. That is why it is called peace *enforcement* ... because [IFOR] had the ability that when it met people who were violating elements of either side or a few sides that were violating the agreement, we had the military muscle to be able to threaten to use it if they didn't comply. That's why we were able to make people comply.

During an elite interview, another former member of IFOR also associated NATO's mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina with the need for coercion. This officer, who was not a public relations specialist, worked closely with senior IFOR public relations managers. His comments reflected his sense of the IFOR military commander's need to balance dual concerns: achieve the NATO political mission while using all available means to protect from harm IFOR military personnel and civilians in the operating area:

I would say that ... the two primary factors to me, as a commander, are mission accomplishment and taking care of my people. They are not mutually exclusive, but in general, I will accomplish the mission at whatever cost it takes to

accomplish it. I want to minimize my casualties, I want to minimize the damage that I do, but at the end of the day I've got a mission that I've got to accomplish.

In a richly detailed account, a Canadian military public relations manager described specific physical and political threats that concerned the IFOR commander. These included residual threats from the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina that interfered with implementation of the peace agreement and posed *life-threatening risks* to members of IFOR:

You did have rogue elements, snipers, and of course the ever-present land mines and ... populations that just absolutely hate each other and didn't want to, particularly want to cooperate with each other. So it was a, it was a very tricky environment. It was highly, so it, there was a military threat there at times.

He then added to his description by identifying *political* threats:

There was also a highly political situation, where this has been ... an international peace agreement brokered by outside powers.... IFOR had to implement this [agreement] with the international community looking on to see whether, how it was doing. And [it was] a very complicated situation because you had three warring factions, not just two.

The officer then summarized his description of the IFOR operating environment this way:

It was an extremely tricky environment militarily and politically. And plus you were dealing with a state that was basically a failed state and nothing worked. I mean ... you know the phones didn't work ... [and] the economy had [dropped] to zero.

Descriptions of IFOR's turbulent environment were uniform. To some participants who had experienced hostile threats at the beginning of IFOR operations, questions about the operating environment prompted a type of gallows humor. After surviving for months under stressful conditions, some participants joked about the hostile environment of Bosnia-Herzegovina. During a telephone interview, this British officer – among the first to deploy in the IFOR operation – responded with a laugh to questions about the operational environment he experienced in Bosnia-Herzegovina:

Hah! [OC: He is heard chuckling.] Yeah. A *changing* one is the instant response that comes to mind. When we first went forward into theater, um, the environment within Bosnia-Herzegovina was very tense. We were there just as the Dayton peace agreement had been signed to affect a cease fire between the three [former warring] factions: the Croats, the Serbs, and the Muslims. Um, but that cease fire had not been enforced. It, some of it, some aspects of it had been agreed with a considerable amount of reluctance.

As the officer continued his account, he described elements of this hostile environment that were not conducive to symmetrical communication strategies: former warring parties, for instance, that did not want to communicate with each other or with IFOR. He also described a physical scene fraught with ongoing hostility, destruction, fear, physical threats, food shortages, and distrust:

People on the ground in Sarajevo, did not necessarily, actually, want to be friends.... And, at the time we arrived, therefore, it was a county that had been torn by civil war for several years.... Buildings and the structures had been badly damaged by bombings, mortars, shelling, and so on. A lot of the people had been

living in fear. There were a lot of snipers, particularly in Sarajevo, ah, and there had been, ah, a shortage of food. So, it's pretty austere.

The British officer also spoke of the need to build relationships, which was indicative of IFOR's symmetrical intent with communication and public relations management. "It was very difficult in the early days, because ... we were not necessarily welcomed with open arms ... because a lot of people did not have a lot of faith in us or trust us," he noted. He then continued, "So, it was a pretty difficult situation, in which there was a lot of work to be done to just get settled and build a little bit of trust and build some relationships."

At this point in the interview, I recorded in a field note, "This is a recurring theme: importance of establishing and maintaining relationships as part of the PI program [for IFOR]." It occurred to me that participants like the British officer were describing important patterns of relationship management: trust, mutuality of control, and symmetry. They were also describing a hostile environment shaped by war that prompted the need for excellent public relations programs.

Yet, participants often talked of using coercion during interviews. A British officer explained conditions that seemed to contravene the use of dialogue and other forms of cooperative communication like negotiation in the early stages of IFOR's operations:

Um, there was ... still a lot of tension between the different groups, or factions, if you like. Uh, and trying to disarm them ... hand over their arms ... hand over their heavy weapons into cantonment areas and so on ... seemed like a relatively easy task. But it wasn't because the nature of the terrain is such that those types

of weapons are easily hidden. The nature of the people is such that they didn't want to give them up. And they certainly weren't openly going to walk out into the street and just hand over every single weapon. They'd go because they were afraid the other side ... might not.

Participants described specific conditions and challenges associated with IFOR's hostile environment that could have interfered with or prevented application of two-way symmetrical approaches to communication. Some descriptions referred to communication choices that were available to NATO leaders, and participants even discussed features associated with these choices. At this stage of research, elite, focus group, and additional long interviews produced more data that explained how conflict in IFOR's hostile environment influenced choice of communication strategies.

First, a former IFOR commander talked about his preference for using persuasive and coercive communication (here, referred to as yelling and threatening) rather than using lethal military force when confronted with conflict situations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The commander began this account by describing his preference for using communication instead of force:

If I allowed those guys [political and military leaders of former warring factions in Bosnia-Herzegovina] to get away with [violations of the peace agreement] at that level then they would take the next step and I didn't want them to take the next step. So it was a lot easier to yell at 'em and to threaten 'em and try to coerce them into doing something *without* having to use force than it would be to say, "Okay I'm gonna go kick your butt," and do it.

The commander also talked about the importance of credibility in communicating threats or warnings. He explained, “I mean they *knew* at the end of the day if I said, ‘If you don’t do this, this is what’s gonna happen.’” He then embellished his remarks with an elaborate story that illustrated how IFOR, trying to defuse a threat, successfully used coercive communication to accomplish its mission without using lethal military force:

I recall one time for instance, there was a situation down ... near [location in Bosnia-Herzegovina], there was ... a compound down there in which there [were] weapons stored and an [IFOR] army colonel wanted to get in and take a look at ‘em and the Serbs wouldn’t let him in. This occurred in July of 1995. And ... this colonel ... said that he had [an IFOR] helicopter go down there and take a look around and the Serbs threatened to arm both their air defense radars [a violation of the peace agreement]. And we [IFOR headquarters] got wind of this and I, I remember telling [my military executive assistant]. I picked up the phone and called [IFOR’s air forces commander] and ... we launched about 30 airplanes ... heading over towards Bosnia. I had [my executive assistant] pick up the phone and call the CAOC [IFOR’s combined air operations center] ... I said this is ... this is for show [of force, to deter the Bosnian-Serb threat].

The IFOR commander then explained that he had been prepared to follow through with application of lethal force if the coercive show of force failed. This account resembles closely Jentleson’s (2000) concept of *coercive diplomacy*, which employs “threat or use of military force as frequently necessary parts of overall preventive strategies” (p. 5). During an elite interview, the IFOR commander explained with great conviction how he would have backed up his demands to have the Bosnian-Serbs comply

with the peace agreement, allow inspections of their weapons facility, and keep hostile air defense radars turned off.

The commander's story concluded with an account of how he used his knowledge of Serbian intelligence operations and political systems to reveal his intent, express his willingness to use force if necessary, promote understanding of his persuasive goals, and gain cooperation of Serb authorities. The commander, who knew Serb intelligence eavesdropped on calls made over his open telephone lines, hoped that Serb authorities would find his threat credible and comply. The commander also called the former president of Serbia, Slobodan Milosevic, to encourage Milosevic to use his broad political influence over Serb factions in Bosnia-Herzegovina to influence them to comply with IFOR's demands – thus avoiding avoid armed conflict:

IFOR Commander: [After IFOR launches aircraft] you tell them [the IFOR CAOC] that if any [Bosnian-Serb] air defense radars come on line, and they are received by our pilots, and the pilot does not shoot them and kill them, I will personally court marshal the pilot that failed to take action.

Interviewer: [Chuckles at commander's colorful telling of the story].

IFOR Commander: And I did that because I knew our telephones were being ... listened to. I also called Milosevic and I told Milosevic on an open line that we had gotten information that they were gonna turn on their air defense systems and they had threatened to shoot down a helicopter. I said, "Let me tell you ... I just launched 35 airplanes, they're in route. You're welcome to take a look over there and you'll be able to see them with your radar but I'm telling you, Mr. President, if those radars come up, we will take every single radar in this country out and we

know exactly where they are.” Very shortly thereafter we know that Milosevic called down to that command center down in [Bosnian-Serb military command] and said something to the affect of “What in the world did you do to piss that [IFOR commander] son-of-a-bitch off?”

This story seemed to illustrate clearly how the IFOR commander used coercion in conflict situations. According to the commander, this approach appeared to help IFOR achieve political military goals and promote success of the IFOR mission while reducing bloodshed: “We had the three R’s of success, was a robust force, the right rules of engagement, and the resolve to use them.”

One other elite, a U.S. officer with extensive experience advising the most senior military commanders in IFOR, observed that coercion was among a spectrum of communication tactics available to NATO. According to this officer, coercion fell at one end of a spectrum or continuum of communication choices. Although the elite had no apparent knowledge of the excellence theory in public relations, his example bore an uncanny resemblance to the *mixed-motive continuum* in communication management (e.g., Dozier, 1995; L. Grunig et al., 2002). The following exchange illustrated this continuum:

Elite: I see it as there is a [communication] continuum there, and on one end of the continuum ... people are actively supporting what you are doing and want to see you achieve your objective and they need no ... [coercive] information strategies. They need nobody trying to push them to get it done because they are fully in compliance with it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Elite: On the other end of the spectrum is coercive. Where, again, there may be certain things ... certain actions that you need to have accomplished and the *only* way you are going to be able to affect the behavior of those individuals who you are trying to get to do it is coercively.

From a coorientation perspective, this officer's account was corroborated by a former IFOR commander. The commander, speaking about using coercive communication to resolve a potential conflict, explained that IFOR usually opted to use communication options at the collaborative end of the continuum but gradually "escalate" to coercive options, depending on the circumstances. In the following passage, the commander spoke of meeting with a Bosnian-Serb political leader to try and resolve peacefully a conflict over IFOR being denied access to a mountain-headquarters of former Bosnian-Serb army commander, General Ratko Mladic:

IFOR Commander: And so I demanded a meeting with her [the political leader] ... and I was very blunt with them and said if we are not granted access we will take access forcibly in whatever methodology we have to do: from bombing to forcible entry or whatever.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

IFOR Commander: ... I didn't talk about the ... the gradual escalation, although that is what we would have done....

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

IFOR Commander: And I used the public affairs officer to use, to go out with information.

As the commander continued, he expressed his intent to allow time for negotiations to succeed – without creating pressure from news media coverage – before escalating to armed tactics:

Interviewer: So you didn't want to escalate things at that time with the media?

IFOR Commander: I didn't ... I just didn't want to make a headline ...

Interviewer: Right.

IFOR Commander: ... of how serious we were, too soon, because I wanted, I wanted to give the Serbs time to act. And I had, as I recall, I had given her until close of business on Monday....

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

IFOR Commander: [We were allowed access to] the mountain headquarters of Mladic and ... so the media really never, as I recall, never exposed this as the potential crisis that it could have been.... I can remember thinking that I did not want to make this, you know, I wanted to defuse it. But on the other hand, I had to be ready to act [with armed force] as I had already said, and so we were positioning to do exactly that.

In his description of this communication continuum, another IFOR elite interview participant addressed an additional dimension of excellence in communication and public relations management: respect for long-term relationships. Here, he talked about communication's potential influence on these relationships, and how leaders in IFOR considered the consequences of coercive communication in less-than ideal situations:

You are going to be faced with decisions where you got to do something, you know, for the moment. And you are going to have to make that decision and do it regardless of the long term consequences.

He then followed up on his previous thoughts and expressed his preference for maintaining long-term relationships:

There are going to be instances like that [coercion], but I think what *has* to happen is – if you want to maintain a good relationship with that audience over the long term – if you ... did something coercive you are going to have to then balance it off by doing something that is good for them and something where they recognize that you didn't have to do it that way.

Although the elite was not familiar with the public relations body of knowledge, his description of mixed-motive communication seemed to be shaped by variation in the conflict situation – or at least by variation in relationships with audiences. Furthermore, his remarks seemed to capture the essence of L. Grunig et al. (2002), who wrote, “Persuasive tactics sometimes may be used to gain the best position for organizations within the win-win zone”; however, “such practices should be framed by a symmetrical worldview that respects the integrity of long-term relationships” (p. 358)

Finally, NATO leaders and public relations officers associated time pressure with choice of communication strategy. In turn, they related time pressure to decision processes that were compressed by military combat and other forms of conflict. In the following exchange, an elite interview participant described how NATO's choice of communication strategy could vary from peaceful to hostile situations. Specifically, the elite referred to the amount of time available to choose tactics and the effect of those

tactics. Here, he even identified an option to *jaw bone* – perhaps engage in negotiation – instead of coerce if time permits.

Elite: If I can accomplish the mission in a week instead of a day or two days and I don't have to dislodge people or hurt them or damage property, what's three or four days. And ... again, in peace keeping ... how did you refer to them ... as peace stability operations?

Interviewer: Peace operation.

Elite: Yeah. You can get away with that because you've got time. In combat operations you may not have time ... to be able to, you know, try and jaw bone or engage somebody like that.

Realizing that the elite had just commented on an important theme, I attempted to clarify his meaning by asking a follow up question:

Interviewer: Okay. So really the type of environment ... let me phrase it in the form of a question rather than a statement: How does the type of environment or situation influence what type of communication strategy you use?

Elite: I think it has *tremendous* impact. If you need to get something done right away, then you are not going to have time necessarily to, you know, implement an extensive communication strategy in terms of preparing people for what you are about to do and then managing the flow of information while you are doing it.

The previous follow-up question proved useful in elucidating the elite's remarks. The elite's remarks added to evidence gained through other interviews, which supported the notion that communication decisions by NATO leaders *were* influenced by the operational setting. This setting could rapidly change from peaceful to hostile. Hostile

conditions appeared to compress decision cycles, making NATO leaders more likely to choose coercive tactics. Furthermore, interview results seemed to demonstrate that NATO might choose between *short-term communication tactics* like negotiation and coercion that could vary from peaceful to hostile conditions. However, NATO's *long-term communication strategy* appeared to remain symmetrical – focused on maintaining peace and managing long-term relationships.

Ethics and Moral Reasoning

L. Grunig and J. Grunig (2003) determined, “Incorporating ethics and social responsibility into practice is necessary for public relations to achieve excellence” (p. 327). Bowen (2004) proposed ethics as a tenth generic principle in global public relations theory. The results of this study add to an understanding of how ethics – or lack thereof – play an important role in decisions about communication and public relations.

Interview data confirmed that NATO leaders relied on moral reasoning and consider the ethical nature of their decision when choosing communication and public relations strategies and tactics. Most of the participants interviewed for this study were educated in principles of moral reasoning, which they had learned during military leadership training and professional development – including training at U.S. military academies.

Not surprisingly, NATO participants also provided evidence of ethical *intent* in their decisions and actions. As a profession, most Western militaries require that all officers follow a strict code of ethical conduct, given the nature of their mission and potentially lethal consequences of their armed activities. Participants spoke often of concepts that they felt defined their sense of ethics and morality: honesty, trust, and

integrity. I will report these descriptions, below, and discuss their possible meaning and their significance to this study in Chapter V.

Indeed, participants demonstrated a strong commitment to moral leadership and ethics when making decisions. However, long interviews, elite interviews, and focus groups failed to identify any *formal* framework for applying moral reasoning and ethics in decision-making processes related to communication and public relations management. Hence, as long interviews progressed and data failed to identify a moral framework for making ethical communication decisions, I proposed a communication model for making justifiable communication choices (see Table 3 in the conclusion of Chapter II). Subsequently, I shared the model with focus group participants and solicited responses about its potential value to public relations management. Since most of the participants had little or no knowledge of the theoretical body of knowledge in public relations, I focused on discussion of the model's practical application to public relations and decision-making.

Presentation of the model to focus group participants succeeded in generating extensive discussion. The model was generally accepted as a useful tool in guiding decisions about communication at the level of public relations managers. Some participants expressed satisfaction that this model answered a need for more structure in making decisions about communication and public relations – especially in the turbulent environment of multinational alliances like NATO. Other participants expressed doubt that such a model could be of much use to senior political and military leaders, who were too busy to become deeply involved in the strategic decision-making process of the behavioral molecule in public relations. Still others suggested ideas for improvements to

the model that would broaden its application to a global setting. I will illustrate each of these results in the following paragraphs.

RQ5: To what extent did NATO rely on moral reasoning to judge the ethical nature of decisions about IFOR communication and public relations management?

Several participants in long interviews, elite interviews, and focus group interviews expressed a *general* sense of ethical behavior when questioned about how they used moral reasoning to justify decisions about communication tactics and strategy.

Evidence of ethics and moral reasoning. One of the elite interview participants, a senior U.S. Army officer, served as a public relations advisor to NATO's senior military commander in Europe (SACEUR, or Supreme Allied Commander, Europe). This officer had direct access to SACEUR and often observed political-military planning and decision-making related to communication and public relations. He offered this observation of ethics in NATO's decision-making process:

There were always political advisors, ... lawyers ... you know jumping in here but I think ... I think we honestly had to weigh the ethics of decisions about doing you know public information operations. Every time we did anything, we had to weigh all the various ramifications, politically, ethically, morally, ... what was going to be the impact on ... the troops, on the nations, on the leaders, you know all of those things were factored in ... I think before any decision was made.

Sometimes it was very methodical and other times there wasn't a whole lot of time to ... determine whether something was smart ... wise ... fair and ethical.

Many other interview participants associated ethics with truthfulness, credibility, and integrity. For instance, an IFOR officer who helped develop NATO's public

relations plan for the peace mission talked of truthfulness as being an important pillar in the public relations plan:

I know from my own ... experience ... perhaps in the second half of the operation, when one had more time to actually chat to journalists ... that quite a number of them will get upset very, very quickly if they feel they are being misled or lied to. And that was one of the reasons why, going back to discussing the plan, we did plan on telling the truth.

This British officer's perspective of truthful, open public relations seemed to contradict earlier reports that described a British worldview of media operations that was oriented toward putting a positive spin on news stories. However, using a coorientation approach (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 2001; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999), I was able to find evidence that the British officer's perspective may have been influenced by guidance from his IFOR commander.

Here, the former IFOR commander spoke of the value he placed on ethical public relations – which he associated with honesty and integrity: “Well, again I go back to what I thought one of our major centers of gravity was [in IFOR] and that was our integrity.” Elaborating on the concept of ethics, the IFOR commander revealed an apparent rejection of situational ethics and a personal philosophy of deontological ethics:

And you know ... you're either honest or you're not. Ethics are not situations, and that's one of the dilemmas we face right now today with this business of the prison scandal [OC: Here the commander refers to abuses of prisoners by U.S. forces at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq]. It appears that there are occasions where perhaps some people thought that they could bend the rules a little bit from an

ethical perspective because of the situation they happen to be in. I don't happen to think that ethics is a situation. And so, what you're really trying to do is ... it sounds so damn simple and it's almost embarrassing to say it ... but it comes down to what's right and wrong. And, one of the best definitions of integrity that I ever heard was being able to identify and keep your compass on true north in a storm. And we had a lot of storms, and I just tried to make sure I knew where true north [was].

Both of the former IFOR commanders that participated in elite interviews spoke about the process they used to make decisions – including choice of communication tactics and strategies. One of the commanders discussed how he weighed the ethical nature of IFOR actions and how the outcomes of those actions could be perceived by strategic publics: “Whether it was not necessarily ethical or not ethical but how it would be perceived at the end of the day. I looked at, I mean I was always looking for people to tell me what they thought.” The commander added, “I expected anybody at the table to be heard from or to make themselves heard if they thought there was an ethical issue or an issue of integrity that had not been properly handled.”

Role of experience and intuition in ethical decisions. The other IFOR commander described a general decision-making process that relied on analytical dialogue with his senior staff advisors. At one point, he referred to his use of “gut” instincts or intuition to guide moral decisions. The concept of intuition is perplexing. Its many connotations make it possible to view *intuition* (Fischbein, 1987) as “the way to reach the essence; the absolute truth” (p. 5) or as a “global guess for which an individual is not able to offer a clear and complete justification ... an elementary, common sense, popular, primitive

form of knowledge, as opposed to scientific conceptions and interpretations” (p. 4).

Interpretation of this concept and its importance to these data will be discussed at greater length in Chapter V. Here, it is important to note that comments provided by participants about gut instincts suggested that commanders used an *informal* decision framework constructed from intuitive knowledge. They seemed to have no knowledge of – or they rejected – a formal decision-making framework based on moral reasoning about empirical evidence. A comment by a former IFOR commander illustrated this pattern: “It just seemed to me that virtually everything we did over there [in Bosnia-Herzegovina], with the exception of things that required instantaneous decisions, I just applied my experience and as much common sense as I could.”

One of the elites – a U.S. Army public affairs officer who advised NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander, Europe – could not recall the existence of a formal, moral framework used by NATO leaders to make ethical decisions about communication and public relations management. Corroborating the accounts of the two IFOR commanders, this officer also acknowledged the role of experience and intuition when senior officers made ethical decisions:

You know ... I can’t recall us ever having ... I just can’t point to anything where we went to a rule book.... We had the Department of Defense Principles of Information [see Table 4]. Those certainly describe a framework of ethical dealings, you know, with audiences and media and just general principles of handling information. But I don’t know that we went through this checklist every time we had to do something that. Quite frankly, I think again when you get at

that level [of senior NATO decision makers] ... you're talking about people who've been around for many, many years doing that kind of thing.

Therefore, evidence suggested that IFOR commanders and other senior NATO leaders relied on moral reasoning, in the sense that they considered options and possible outcomes presented by their respective staff members. However, the decision frameworks used by the commanders appeared to be based largely on intuition gained from experience – a less formal approach than moral decision-making models described in theory (Bowen, 2002, 2004; Seib & Fitzpatrick, 1995).

During an elite interview, a senior policy advisor who had observed and contributed to decision-making by IFOR commanders described in precise detail the role of intuition. When asked about the potential value of using formal guidelines to make ethical decisions about coercion he replied:

Yeah. Don't know if you could ever come up with a check list [for making ethical decisions]. I think it's, it's the pornography argument. You know ... you will *intuitively* [italics added] or instinctively know based upon the feedback you are getting from the individual ... you are trying to communicate with as to whether or not this is going to be an effective means. And you almost have to play that by ear, because I don't think you can come up with a formula or check list which allows you to determine when you will or when you won't [use coercion].

This description of how intuitive knowledge played a role in NATO decision-making was supported by comments from two focus group members in the Pentagon. One military public affairs officer said: “The standard for ethics is already, I think... first

of all, implanted in our hearts. We *know* what is right. It's implanted in our Constitution, and it's implanted in our standards of conduct." Another public affairs officer expressed her opinion about ethical decision-making: "To me, much of this ought to be internal and automatic... as result of your training." Such comments implied that ethics are part of a societal cultural trait, influenced by national political systems and learned from upbringing in a national or even a military culture.

Despite participants' frequent references to an informal sense of ethics, NATO's decision-making process incorporated several formal concepts from moral theories such as just war theory and from J. Grunig and L. Grunig's (1997) research on activism. I will describe these next, using a framework that combines principles from just war theory and activist theory in public relations.

Justifying coercive actions (jus ad bellum). NATO's peace operation was justified by *legitimate authority*, which took the form of a United Nations mandate and a NATO resolution. These charters provided international authority for NATO to deploy IFOR forces to the sovereign territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina and use military force to implement the peace agreement. This authority included military rules of engagement, approved by political leaders, which deemed what military actions the IFOR commander could take in various situations. One IFOR commander said of this authority, "I had a mandate, I had rules of engagement, and I had force."

However, interviews identified only a vague sense of authority that would justify specific application of coercive communication. At least two interview participants mentioned U.S. Department of Defense principles of information, which authorized the conduct of U.S. public information activities. These principles, however, are part of U.S.

military doctrine and have no legitimate authority in NATO. When prompted to identify sources of legitimate authority needed to conduct coercive communication tactics, a senior IFOR officer implied that IFOR often assumed authority for selecting and applying coercive tactics, reporting to higher authority only when such actions might have political implications. This approach sounded similar to the military concept of *command by negation* – or assuming authority to take action unless senior authority preempts such action. The following exchange illustrated these data:

Interviewer: Okay. Now some of these tactics and strategies sound pretty severe. You know, taking people out, giving them no option to communicate, etc. In your experience within IFOR, did any of these types of options, these public relations approaches, communication approaches, the threats, warnings, or let's say moving to preemption without having any communication at all, require approval from any higher authority?

IFOR Officer: I would say approval, but again we tried to, we made the higher authority *aware* of when we were taking operations or there was potential for operations that, again, would have a political impact....

Interviewer: What would happen in a case where, let me start over.

IFOR Officer: Sure.

Interviewer: ... Let's say higher authority didn't approve of [a coercive act]. What kind of effect would that have?

Interviewer: Well, first of all you wouldn't do it. I mean if your immediate superior in chain of command tells you, "You can't take that action," then you are not going to take that action. You will then have an opportunity to go back to that

higher chain of command with either a modification of your plan, or at a minimum, rationale for why it is you need to do what it is that they have refused you the authority to do. And give them an idea of what the implications or consequences are going to be. If they are willing to accept those implications and consequences, then their actions stands. However, if they are not, then they might modify them and allow you to do something. You know, maybe not as drastic or as forceful as you wanted to, but you would still be able to make a point without necessarily exercising the same level of force.

Interview participants also indicated that IFOR's coercive acts were a *limited response to an act of aggression*. As I have already reported, several officers expressed a desire to use dialogue before coercion and coercion before lethal force. Comments such as "I think in almost all cases we would rather use the threat or the coercive, or use the threat and achieve the desired condition without having to use the force" from a senior IFOR advisor seemed to imply that NATO leaders adhered to the notion of proportionality when applying coercive communication tactics.

NATO leaders interviewed during this project also expressed a philosophy that coercion should only be *carried out with just intentions*, and even then *only after diplomacy and other options failed or were explored*. For some, such as this former IFOR commander, protection of life justified use of coercion and even military force:

Well, frankly at the bottom line is loss of life and there is nothing more precious than life and frankly if you can solve anything diplomatically it is better. On the other hand, I believe that diplomacy with a big stick is a hell of a lot better than

diplomacy with no stick.... If the diplomatic path doesn't work, what is your next step? [It is,] operationally, to try and force diplomacy to work.

As IFOR leaders selected coercive tactics, however, they sensed the need to *reveal their intentions* behind use of coercion. Here, an IFOR elite spoke of openly communicating the intent behind using a threat: "And therefore when you made a threat you were perfectly, perfectly willing and prepared to carry out whatever coercive methods you had *indicated* you were going to do."

An IFOR commander also addressed the final principle of *jus ad bellum*: only carrying out coercion if it provides a *reasonable chance of success*. Here, the commander expressed his preference for less confrontational options than coercion or military combat; however, he added that sometimes coercing and fighting provide the only options for success: "The idea is to always force this without having to fight. But you always have to be prepared to fight, otherwise it won't work."

Justifying application of coercive communication (e.g., jus en bello). Interview participants often referred to military rules of engagement that guided application of military force – similar to the principle of *jus en bello*, which identifies justifiable conduct in war. One IFOR commander discussed these rules of engagement and commented on how they *limited his application of force* and *discriminated between combatants and non-combatants* in Bosnia-Herzegovina. During an elite interview, the commander was asked, "To what extent would it be useful to have some kind of a moral framework other than ... gut instinct ... that you could use to help incorporate ethics into your decisions [about coercion]?" After the commander paused to collect his thoughts, he talked about limited actions:

I think that's kind of what rules of engagement are, but they allow you to use force in certain circumstances and it kind of spells them out and, it's a way of just sort of providing a political guidance for when you can and cannot cross that line and ... take offensive action.

He then added his thoughts about difficult decisions related to avoiding collateral damage while waging war, or discriminating between innocent civilians and military targets:

But then again, there are ethical dilemmas, for instance collateral damage, is ... an ethical dilemma. And we know that collateral damage is something that we tried very hard to limit in Bosnia.

Again, the commander paused, seeming to collect his thoughts. He then continued to report deep feelings about his responsibility as a military commander to protect not only the lives of innocent civilians in war, but also the lives of people that served under his command:

I think ethics extends beyond objecting to offensive power. Ethics in my view also incorporates protecting the people ... that are serving under you.... At some point [a commander] makes a decision and he is responsible for that decision ... and you can't get away from it.

Finally, *evaluation* becomes an important part of public relations management and of establishing a tradition of justifiable actions. A senior U.S. Navy officer during an elite interview provided an elaborate description of how IFOR conducted after-action evaluation. This description included references to several concepts of strategic public

relations management: environmental scanning, issue management, symmetrical communication (collecting feedback from publics), and reprogramming:

And then [there is] post-accomplishment, trying to go back and clean up whatever you did wrong in an information management sense and try and rectify the problems that you encountered. If it is something that is more long term or it is something where you don't have a physical confrontation or a potential conflict, an immediate conflict, then you have time to manage that. You have time to put in place a program whereby you can raise the public's awareness to a particular issue or problem, make them aware of it. Then you've got time to indicate to them how you think this problem could be resolved. Allow some time for feedback so that you may modify your plan based upon what you are hearing back from the community prior to execution and you can be much more leisurely in the matter in which you implement that plan.

Proposed model of just communication. Given the lack of evidence to identify a formal framework for applying ethics to decisions about public relations, I proposed a model for use in justifying communication choices. Two of the elites and several focus group participants provided useful comments about this model. I will interpret these comments in Chapter V and incorporate them in a subsequent revision to this model.

First, two former IFOR commanders addressed the proposed concept of an ethical framework for justifying communication choices. One expressed reluctance at having to draft or having to adhere to a rigid moral framework, but he admitted there might be a practical need for having such a framework:

I'm not sure that I would want to be the one to try to draft that ethical framework; nor would I want someone to give it to me and tell me to follow it ... because again I don't think ethics is situational. But then again, there are ethical dilemmas [that provide incentive for having such a framework].

Another former IFOR commander also identified the need for such a communication model. Commenting on his past role as a military commander, he recalled, "Often times what is missing ... are rules of engagement for public affairs for particular circumstances." He also implied that it might be time for the military to move beyond informal rules governing public relations and communication management that are simply "in someone's head." He then continued, describing the need in NATO operations for formal rules that extend up and down the military chain of command:

IFOR Commander: All too often you don't get those rules of engagement, public affairs rules of engagement down to the levels where the colonels and the lieutenant colonels and others are, are comfortable with them. And I think we lose something in the opportunity to communicate our part of the story. I mean brilliant, by fault or otherwise, there is, you know, having an imbedded media in this last go around with Iraq. You know, I have got to believe they had rules of engagement for them.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

IFOR Commander: And I think it ought to be a standard practice that you have the rules of engagement and not in the sense of constraint of what you can say and what you can't say is that other people would interpret that that way as though it is constraining. I think it is, it is what you can do, not what you can't do.

As my elite interview with the commander continued, he differentiated between the legal and ethical nature of communication decisions, once observing that an act might be legal but still might not be the right thing to do. Also, the commander expressed a reliance on teamwork, experience, and intuition when making decisions. However, he also recognized the need for a more formal framework for guiding decisions about public relations:

You can't go out and just wing it or do it ad hoc. You've got to have, you've got to have that session with your team and if your public affairs goes out and represents you then he kind of knows your thinking, the team's thinking and so forth and I would, I would, you know, he should never be put in a position and I would hope you never were, to where he didn't know how far he could go.

Second, focus groups provided an opportunity to deeply explore the proposed communication model. Participants commented at length on the model and offered numerous suggestions. Several patterns emerged from these group discussions.

Lack of universal framework for military public relations. Focus groups were no more fruitful than long and elite interviews in identifying any formal, ethical framework used by NATO to guide decisions about communication and public relations. During a discussion at the U.S. Defense Information School (DINFOS), I asked group members to identify a framework they might have used in the past to advise a military commander about communication choices. One member replied bluntly, "My gut." Trying to elicit a more detailed response from the participant, I followed up, "Your gut?" He reiterated, "Right, I mean that."

As the discussion progressed around the conference table, another DINFOS participant elaborated: “The closest we’ve come is ... I think ... a class on command messages.... But we’re still wrestling with it because there’s ... really [no framework] to draw from.” Another participant – a DINFOS faculty member – commented on the way in which DINFOS teaches ethics and moral reasoning. This comment also evoked images of an informal rather than formal approach to application of ethics in military communication decisions:

I mean the ethics are taught ... we have kind of a discussion about ethics. You know, we try and lace it throughout the instruction so that it’s not so much a deliberate box to check ... but that it is part of an almost unspoken, uncrystallized thing, that it’s just woven into the nature of how we work the process.

Ethics as a political-military process. Focus groups also generated much discussion about ethical processes and political-military responsibility for ethics in an alliance like NATO. Some participants felt that military public affairs officers should act as the conscience of an organization. Others disagreed. One faculty member at DINFOS described ethics and credibility as “a process, not a decision.” In the opinion of this faculty member, that process – like public relations – should be the ultimate responsibility of the most senior member of an organization:

If you have to say somebody in the room is defined as the ethics officer ... you’ve lost already.... I would submit that if the military has decided ... well we have to be ethical about this, that’s gotta be done at the very, very top – or you’re doomed.

As the DINFOS discussion neared its end, I called for more discussion of the proposed communication model. I asked, “Looking one more time at the model ... if such a model could be useful, [at] what level of the chain do you see this being implemented?”

One group member responded, “The highest.” Another explained, “If it happens at the highest levels it will evolve down, have a much higher rate of success evolving down to the lower levels.”

The sentiment that military commanders should be responsible for ethics in their organization was also expressed in focus group discussions, elsewhere. For instance, members of the Pentagon focus group were in resounding agreement that the senior military commander must make ethical decisions about use of coercion. The Pentagon group engaged in the following discussion about reporting information versus coercing adversarial publics in a hypothetical case:

Interviewer: Let’s ... talk about an enemy. You have a choice between coercing, threatening ... let’s say coercive diplomacy. A threat of military force if you guys don’t comply...

Female: If we are accurately reporting what our government is communicating to the world at large with the objective being that the enemy is part of that audience, that’s... that’s reporting.

Interviewer: Right. But understand now... this threat is conditional, if you don’t do this, we will do that. So your communication, your participation in that strategy now conveys a certain weight, as opposed to taking a less aggressive approach and maybe just informing, putting out a news release, etc.

Male: It depends who says it, too. Does the PAO say it, or does the commander say it?

Male: The commander says it.

Interviewer: Okay, well then that's my question. Who makes these kinds of decisions? Do you simply inform or do you now threaten?

Male: The commander does.

Female: The commander, yeah.

Male: The commander does.

Continuing the discussion, this officer suggested that the commander may make the decision about ethical use of communication but the public relations manager must make a recommendation:

Male: You know, [the IFOR commander] did that several times, even at a tactical level, in Bosnia. You know, if you don't move this tank over to this parking lot by tomorrow, I'm going to move it for you. [OC: Laughter heard.] You know ... the PAO helps relay that ... information ... supporting the commander.

Several discussion group members added comments that expanded on the responsibilities of organizational staff members to advise senior leaders about ethics. The following dialogue took place at the Defense Information School. Members here discussed conflict that often emerges over advice given by the public affairs officer and other members of a military staff:

Interviewer: Who makes those ethical decisions on the staff in your models of strategic planning? ... Chaplain, lawyer, public defender's office, commander?

DINFOS Group Member: More often than not, the PA [public affairs officer] on my side has been the ethical pulse where ... you know ...the colonel's ... are yea, yea, yea go, go, go, [take action] and you get to the PA and you know like ... well let's not do that.

DINFOS Group Member: Because of the consequences.

DINFOS Group Member: We're really gonna be hurtin' later.

DINFOS Group Member: The arbitrator is the commander.

DINFOS Group Member: That's right ... and the public affairs officer has to be, has to be firm and he he's probably the only one that's gonna really be the compass there.

Summarizing this discussion another DINFOS member added, "When I look at this I see this as more of a political solution ... and not a military solution."

During the Pentagon discussion, a retired U.S. Army public affairs officer with experience in NATO and IFOR described how alliance public relations managers and commanders interacted. Her description of this interaction resembled a reasoning process that was used to evaluate potential communication options, contemplate possible outcomes of decisions, and consider the ethical nature of consequences on publics affected by those decisions:

Even apart from media interactions, the PAO, as an advisor, tells the commander what the media impact and the public impact is going to be of other actions that he's contemplating. If he's planning on doing a weapons sweep in a certain area, the PAO may be aware that there are some sensitivities in that area or that the press is going to be staged in that area and whatnot, and give him some heads up

and some advice on how to direct ... the operation be conducted. He assimilates that ... along with the advice and counsel he gets from everybody else ... and then decides what he wants to do.

Two of the focus groups assigned ethical responsibility to levels above a military commander. In the opinion of some members in the DINFOS and Military Academy groups, political leaders must assume ultimate responsibility for the legal and ethical nature of military communication options like coercion. The rationale used by these members seemed to be that coercive communication tactics, like armed combat tactics, must be authorized by the same political entities that approve military operations like war – since military options are considered by most Western nations to be an extension of political policy. This view seemed to support the *jus ad bellum* principle of just war theory that requires legitimate authority to declare war.

A member of the DINFOS focus group located this level of ethical responsibility at “the *highest* levels, probably more on the political side than the military side.” An officer in the U.S. Military Academy focus group agreed by saying,

As well as remembering that rules of engagement should be the commander’s rules first and foremost ... rules of engagement are *political*, they’re operational considerations, and last but not least, they’re *law*.

Another member of the Military Academy focus group commented on political responsibility for armed conflict:

Again, it’s controversial in some sectors ... the moral authority of soldiers.... People think that soldiers are judged simply by their conduct, not by a political war itself because it is a political responsibility.

This officer then associated communication tactics with military tactics that are subject to rules of engagement. He suggested here that both communication tactics and military tactics that involve application of force should require political and legal approval:

Once we acknowledge the government sent us to war, what we have to do is decide whether or not the means we're using are appropriate and communication would be no different than artillery for instance.... Nonetheless you notice once we started the war we still tried to restrain ourselves to law and ... [be] discriminating.

Culture and universal ethics. Focus group discussions also provided extensive data related to cultural aspects of ethics and raised questions about the practicality of a universal code of ethics. These discussions seemed to spring from an appreciation among discussion group members for difficulties associated with questions of value in multinational settings. For instance, G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede (2005) reported on a number of “value-laden problems” (p. 372) associated with culture. They also observed, “Both what is ‘rational’ and what is ‘ethical’ depend on cultural value positions” (p. 373), which are complicated by special interests. Furthermore, “There is a strong tendency in international politics to use different ethical standards toward other countries than toward one’s own” (p. 373).

This theoretical concept was operationalized – in the context of communication – in vivid detail by a U.S. Army officer with significant multinational experience who participated in the U.S. Military Academy focus group:

Among Western nations ... there's a common acceptance of what is morally acceptable for the most part when we talk about combative operations. Well ... I

go back now to cultural understanding of Islam, which is *not universal*. There are sects within Islam ... there are digressions within it ... but ... I can be sitting next to a Turkish officer who is a Muslim and sitting next to a Saudi officer who is a Muslim and I will guarantee you one of these two gentlemen will have differing moral understanding, based on their culture, of what is morally acceptable and just in terms of communication.

The statement by this officer prompted agreement among several other group members. These members added their emphatic support to this notion and expanded on the discussion of a cultural dimension of ethics – including ethical relativism:

U.S. Army Officer 1: Well that's the same though with any [thing] ...

U.S. Army Officer 2: Well that's true, *absolutely, absolutely!*

U.S. Army Officer 3: To me that's another reason to divorce this [proposed communication model] from even the terms *moral* and *ethical* to more *cultural*. I felt that it's cultural considerations the commander needed to make and ... usually you can, may divide it up into two different cultural considerations: one is you know in context of Iraq ... and then the other context would be coalition partners. They may include or exclude then the NGOs or other U.S. departments. But then you don't get into the quagmire of talking about relative morality.

The Defense Information School focus group also engaged in a lively discussion about the cultural and situational dimensions of the proposed model of communication. Again, several members spoke with emotion about the difficulties associated with interpreting and making ethical decisions in a multicultural environment.

DINFOS Group Member: Only thing that immediately comes to mind, I might not think this is an interesting model, I can't possibly digest it thoroughly here but I think this, Mark, will require very *sophisticated* definition of the term coercive....

Interviewer: Uh huh....

DINFOS Group Member: And the reason I say that is that I do not think ... that it's intuitively obvious what that means in all situations ... I mean, one person's coercion is another person's truth.... I think it requires a good situational review of the term moral.

At this point, another member – a DINFOS faculty member with experience as a military public affairs officer – interrupted the discussion. He interjected his thoughts while glancing at a copy of the proposed communication model and following the steps outlined in the model:

DINFOS Faculty Member: If you take this thing [model] and overlay it on two places, Iran and North Korea.

Interviewer: Right.

DINFOS Faculty Member: They're following this same pattern now [steps in the model], at least in the *political* realm. They're doing this, you know what, when they get back up to here [OC: He refers to a step in the model.] ... they've accomplished nothing. Because you cannot, you *can't* do this to two cultures that don't understand what ethical communications is all about....

DINFOS Group Member: They're very pragmatically driven in the way they use information....

DINFOS Faculty Member: Yes, yea.

As the DINFOS discussion continued, group members embarked on a dialogue about the universality of ethics – or the lack of universal ethics. Data that emerged from this conversation could be valuable when considering ethical principles in a global theory of public relations – a theory that might be applied across many cultures. DINFOS members seemed to suggest that the absence of a universal code of ethics complicates communication management from a global perspective:

DINFOS Group Member: But it [the model] does not translate ... that's the point, it does not translate to another culture, they ... don't see the logic.

Interviewer: You know you're addressing a difficulty of achieving a universal ethic -- which no one has found yet.

DINFOS Group Member: There isn't any.

DINFOS Group Member: Well, I just think that we Americans fail to see that and say well it makes perfect sense to all of us around the table ... but ... you know, you bring in an Iraqi or someone from the Middle East or someone from the Far East and ... they don't get it at all. They don't know what you're talking about.

DINFOS Group Member: You can bring a Russian in and they won't know.

DINFOS Group Member: I was gonna say ... Europeans, members of NATO....

DINFOS Group Member: Right, when it comes to the French ... [laughter].

A member of the Pentagon focus group also expressed skepticism that a universal code of ethics existed. She mentioned professional, international, communication

organizations that have produced such codes and mentioned U.S. Navy efforts to codify ethics in regulations governing Navy public affairs. She also joked about difficulties associated with identifying such a code, but she did acknowledge the need for universal norms to help guide public relations practice and to help professionalize the field:

Pentagon Group Member: The International Association of Business Communicators – IABC – does have a ... code of ethics. And, they tried to put one into our Navy Public Affairs regs [regulations], which, God help us all, will be published this year. We need help, you know. Ethics of public affairs, and you know, you can well imagine in a group discussion ... how are ya' gonna pin that one down. But I do believe ... that we don't have ... we're not a profession, though we're always going to be considered tacticians, unless we have some norm that we all agree on that is recognized.

Questions of conceptual precision and legitimacy. Members of the U.S. Military Academy focus group shared many concerns of DINFOS focus group members about culture. The academy group, however, seemed to be most concerned about precision of language and associated cross-cultural interpretations of concepts like *legitimacy* that were expressed in the proposed model. Influenced, perhaps, by opposition to ongoing U.S.-led military operations in Iraq, one U.S. Army officer at the Military Academy raised questions about legitimate, *international* authority to wage combat operations:

We quite clearly in most of the world opinion do not have a plurality of support for operation Iraqi Freedom. So we do not have legitimacy in the eyes of the United Nations ... so this proves to be a stumbling block, not one to throw away the model but one that bears some examination upon making a recommendation.

Another U.S. Army officer in the Military Academy focus group observed that the current U.S. administration's policy of preemption might fall outside principles of just war theory. Furthermore, this policy may be viewed by other nations as unethical. Hence, the officer seemed to use this example to illustrate how *legitimate* international authority for military operations might be denied for actions that are perceived as immoral, unilateral, and outside the bounds of a moral framework. The officer began by commenting on the U.S. preemptive policy:

There may not be a legitimacy internationally speaking. There's been a significant shift within the national planning to the extent I'm not even certain that just war theory takes [the current situation] into consideration. It's been clear we made the decision ... there's a shift to ... a preemptive doctrine ... that basically says we take our national interest, for lack of a better phrase [and say] almost "To hell with the rest of you," I mean we are, this is now a national doctrine.

The officer then addressed how this type of situation could interfere with international understanding, acceptance, and legitimacy for communications associated with unpopular, unilateral policies that are perceived as unethical:

A U.S. standpoint which is not acceptable ... you add to ... not only having legitimacy, we may not even have a common cultural understanding and acceptance of what is morally correct in communications.

A member of the academy discussion – with a background in international law and experience in multinational military operations – then added a concern emanating from his knowledge of legitimacy's linguistic roots and the concept's legal interpretation:

With regard to the confirmed stuff, confirming legitimate authority ... what we believe to be a legitimate authority may not be what others believe to be legitimate. So you may use a different term with regards to *authorized*, or *permissible*, as opposed to *legitimate* ... because you still have the root word of *legis* of law from Latin, which implies that there is a duly constituted authority who has created a rule, which allows you to do what you are to do.... When you have conflicting authority then ... you're stopped at step #5, confirmed.

Complexity of communication model. Several focus group members commented on the complexity of the proposed model of communication. A member of the DINFOS focus group said after reviewing the model for approximately five minutes, "I can't possibly digest it thoroughly here." A member of the Military Academy focus group, after his initial review of the model, seemed put off by complexity of the formal framework. Here, he seemed to favor a simpler, more intuitive approach based on values learned through military experience:

It could be of use, but in this age of information ... overloaded commanders having yet another layer of considerations put on top of them ... aside from the private [lowest enlisted military rank] level onward ... we all should be imbued with a sense of what's right and what's wrong – to the extent that he can keep things simple and say, "Act legally, morally, and ethically."

Upon brief reflection, however, the officer – who had experience as an ethics advisor in the U.S. Army – added support for the model and then proposed improvements:

You have an excellent model here. I have to say I often over complicate matters.... I will propose to you off line perhaps a simpler model, [one with] four steps as opposed to eight ... and certain of the steps that you have here could be consolidated or further simplified.

As the officer continued, it became apparent that the concept of asymmetrical communication might confuse military officers who commonly associate this concept with asymmetrical threats and warfare:

As outstanding at this may be sir, that you may reconsider for instance talking about limiting asymmetric communications in justifiable situations.... This may not be doctrinally correct nor would it be practical where the whole nature of asymmetric warfare is such that you counter a threat not with force on force but you counter vulnerability, so you may not want to hold off asymmetric targeting until you absolutely have to, you may want to be proactive in that.

Value of an ethical model. Finally, one theme emerged consistently in all three focus groups: the value of the proposed model of communication to ethical decision-making in military public affairs. A member of the Pentagon focus group said, “I certainly *like* the idea of having [formal public relations guidelines].” She added, however, “I don’t know if ethics is the right word, but some norm ... [laughter] ... public relations indicators of professionalism or something.”

A member of the DINFOS group, after briefly examining the model, praised its value in *clarifying ethics* in decision-making: “I think it’s certainly a model that would provide some clarity.” He then continued, “Sometimes you just need a little guidance, a

little ... you know ... somebody saying, 'This is the way we're gonna go,' then I can go there."

Other focus group members expressed similar sentiments. During the DINFOS discussion, another member talked of the need for something beyond an internal sense of ethics when making decisions. This model, he thought, would provide a valuable external framework to guide ethical decisions: "I would say to a certain extent this ... in some respects ... this is trying to make overt something ... in the morality and ethics piece ... that we say is supposed to be inherent to our profession." He warned, however, about the framework simply becoming a checklist instead of a reasoning process. "There may be some value in trying to make that a more overt ... item," he observed. "I guess my concern ... and I don't think that's the intent of this [model] ... my concern is that if we reach the point where we have ... ethics as a checklist item." As the DINFOS discussion evolved around an evaluation of the model, one participant said, "Everybody here's trying to do the right thing, the moral thing, the ethical thing. But, it's probably worth our while to more formally look at this from the standpoint of ethical standards."

A Pentagon focus group member also valued the proposed model for its potential use in preventing a process of situational or *selective* ethics from creeping into decision-making. Observing that the military public affairs "profession has changed in the past decade," she commented on the risks of relativity associated with making ethical decisions without a moral framework for justifying decisions:

I mean there's nothing ... you know, there's nothing ... written down that really defines what is morally correct when it comes to the dissemination of information. We naturally assume that we tell the truth, but more often we

selectively manage the truth based upon our own biases and opinions.

The proposed model also seemed to fill a current need for a more formal framework than intuition in ethical decision-making. Probes designed to reveal current models of moral reasoning in communication that might already be in use within military commands failed to produce evidence that any models existed. This dialogue took place with a U.S. Army public affairs officer during the Military Academy focus group:

Interviewer: Do you have a moral framework, an ethical framework, a legal framework that guides, you know, when do I use that course of message as opposed to when do I use other means or use dialogue?

U.S. Army PAO: Nothing that's clear and written other than our base doctrine of philosophies and the values that we prescribe to as an army.

Interviewer: I'm talking about an operational setting where you might have to move quickly.

U.S. Army PAO: In an operational setting ... the only thing ... and I'll just call them advisors okay, they're sitting around the table with that commander.

Interviewer: If you could expand and elaborate on the guidance you just mentioned, what is it, how does it work, maybe how it's lacking or is it sufficient?

U.S. Army PAO: If this was the table here [OC: Officer gestures to the table in front of the focus group members.] ... and we're sitting around it and you're the commander ... then I as your public affairs advisor have to take the next step and say, sir we've got a lot of other implications here.... My question to you is as your professional communicator is, what is the message you want to send? And what's the second and third order effects if we send that message?

The officer concluded the dialogue on this topic after describing a hypothetical scenario that required an ethical decision regarding public relations. Again, he denied knowledge of a moral framework for such decision-making currently in existence: “I don’t think there’s a piece of paper or doctrine out there that exists, and if there is I don’t know about it.”

Communication Consequences and Social Responsibility

Results of this study demonstrated that NATO leaders were aware of the consequences of communication choices. They considered these consequences when making decisions about communication and public relations. They also assumed responsibility for the consequences of their choices on strategic publics.

NATO leaders did not appear to behave in an arbitrary manner when making choices between dialogic and coercive communication. Data also clarified how participants made meaning of the moral and ethical issues related to application of coercive communication to convey powerful and sometimes lethal threats.

Rubin and Brown (1975) observed that persuasion and coercion both convey information relevant to bargaining. However, persuasion and coercion could have different outcomes. Threats generally have a more immediate effect and are more likely to gain compliance but they often promote hostile feelings toward the originator of threats. Therefore, results of this section are important to an understanding of how NATO leaders made communication choices – especially in conflict situations.

RQ6: What perceptions did senior military leaders hold about consequences associated with coercive communication?

Results of inquiry into the fourth research question showed that conflict situations often influenced NATO leaders and public relations managers to employ coercive communication tactics. A literature review revealed potential consequences of these tactics on audiences and demonstrated the need for organizations to take social responsibility for the consequences of their actions on strategic publics. Several participants in long, elite, and focus group interviews talked about communication choices, the potential influence of these choices on strategic relationships, and how leaders in IFOR considered the consequences of their communication choices. For example, one of the elites, a senior U.S. Navy officer who advised NATO leaders in Bosnia-Herzegovina, talked about facing decisions, considering consequences, and taking action regardless of consequences. He reported, “You are going to be faced with decisions where you’ve got to do something ... for the moment, and you are going to have to make that decision and do it regardless of the long-term consequences.”

Consideration of communication choices. The naval officer also referred to the spectrum of communication choices available to NATO leaders. As reported for RQ4, these choices ranged from “rosy” dialogue in settings characterized by cooperative relations to coercion at the other end of the spectrum:

Again, to me I go back to the continuum or the spectrum. In communication there are, there are all, you know there is a spectrum on the communication line of means of communication and manners of communication. And it seems to me that one of them has to be coercive. If for no other reason it’s got, you got to, what is at that end of the spectrum? The other end of the spectrum is everything’s rosy and you know I’ll do whatever you want because you are asking me to do it.

Also, as reported earlier, NATO leaders considered the consequences of their communication choices and demonstrated a preference for cooperative approaches. Again, the elite explained that dialogic communication activities might require “a week instead of a day or two days” to produce desired effects,” but cooperative communication tactics did not require IFOR to “dislodge people or hurt them or damage property.” Referring to situations in which harm to strategic audiences could be avoided, the elite asked rhetorically, “What’s three or four days ... in peace keeping?”

The elite admitted, however, that IFOR considered coercion to be necessary when other communication tactics failed. These situations seemed unavoidable in peace-keeping operations, and IFOR at times had to coerce – regardless of the consequences on long-term relationships – in order to protect the peace agreement:

But there are certain people that the only means of getting them to do it will be to either tell them they have to do it and then coerce them if they don’t do it. I don’t see how you get around that because there are those persons ... there are those personalities, there are those governments, there are those institutions that, that don’t react.

Consideration of consequences. NATO leaders were not cavalier in their approach to coercion, though. It became obvious from results of elite interviews that IFOR commanders and their advisors were well aware of coercion’s potentially serious consequences. A NATO elite described these coercive consequences as having “disastrous implications down the road.” He also remarked that coercion would require IFOR to look “for an opportunity to reverse” harmful consequences. Furthermore, NATO leaders considered carefully these consequences in their decision-making process.

In this account, a NATO elite described how IFOR leaders considered consequences of coercive acts before making decisions about communication:

Are we in fact going to use those coercive methods or was it merely a threat that we didn't intend to follow through on? That would be determined by, again, the *consequences* of carrying out the coercive action. One would like to think that you would not make a threat unless you had already considered what the consequences were going to be and the negative implications of it.

Interviews also produced several examples of coercive effects. During interviews, NATO leaders and advisors identified such things as loss of life and organizational credibility as potential consequences of coercion.

Loss of life. Several interview participants referred to the protection of lives – lives of IFOR military forces and lives of civilians – as an overriding concern when conducting peace operations. These participants also acknowledged that coercion could threaten lives – especially if threats failed to produce a desired result and military action was required to carry out the threat. This former IFOR commander stated his desire to use diplomacy rather than coercion – in order to avoid the armed consequences of a failed threat:

Well, frankly, at the bottom line is loss of life ... and there is nothing more precious than life. And ... if you can solve anything diplomatically it is better. On the other hand, I believe that diplomacy with a big stick is a hell of a lot better than diplomacy with no stick.... Any smart commander is planning for both eventualities.... If the diplomatic path doesn't work, what is your next step? Operationally, to try and force diplomacy to work. The idea is to always force

this *without* having to fight. But you always have to be prepared to fight, otherwise it won't work. So it is a two-edged sword here.

Loss of credibility and support. One elite participant mentioned the risks to IFOR associated with using coercive threats that NATO was not prepared to back up. During the interview he registered his concern over potential loss of IFOR's organizational credibility. Here, he equated loss of credibility to a reduction of support or capability needed to carry out IFOR's peace mission:

I think that, again, the bad things about threats are ... if you make it you have to be prepared to carry it out. You cannot make a threat and ... when somebody says okay, I'm not going to do what you wanted me to do, not act on that. The level of support you are going to get when you make threats is going to be much less.... So, you know, I don't think that threatening is always the way you want to go.

A former IFOR commander also talked about loss of credibility in terms of a political foe's personal *face*. G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede (2005) defined face as a "concept bred in the collectivist family ... [that] describes the proper relationship with one's social environment" (pp. 89-90). According to the Hofstedes, "the importance of face is the consequence of living in a society very conscious of social contexts" (p. 90). Furthermore, Balkan groups like Bosnian-Serbs are considered to be part of collectivist societies that place high value on social context (p. 83).

Therefore, the IFOR commander's remarks – regardless of whether or not he was aware of the theoretical implications of face – seemed to express his practical awareness of the face-saving need to maintain cooperative relations with political leaders in Bosnia-

Herzegovina. Thus, he understood coercive consequences could embarrass civilian leaders that NATO depended upon to implement political provisions of the peace agreement. The consequent loss of face among those leaders could therefore imperil progress toward accomplishment of the peace mission. Conversely, careful use of communication – considering effects on IFOR and publics they affected – could produce beneficial consequences. This probe and response from an IFOR commander illustrated the importance he placed on protecting relationships with Bosnian political leaders:

Interviewer: Well, was your intent in using the communication only to get the results you wanted? Because you mentioned before the importance of maintaining the relationships of Plavsic [former Bosnian-Serb president] and others.

IFOR Commander: No, no. Of course, the benefits are [to] reassure ... it builds a relationship.

The commander also elaborated on his notion of using diplomacy rather than force, when possible, in order to respect face and thereby protect strategic relationships:

And ... my gut was I just ... to go as gradual as I could to give ... Plavsic time to work. Because I didn't want to have the Serbs backed into a corner to where it was us or them losing face, those kinds of things ... I wanted the diplomatic way to work rather than the use of force.

This theme was also revealed in remarks by another elite, a senior U.S. Navy officer who sometimes provided advice to the commander. Here, again, awareness of coercive consequences and respect for face and relationship management is evident in the officer's account:

I think in the vast majority of cases, most military people would tell you if I can achieve the mission and achieve it without having to use force, I would rather do it that way. And again, for obvious reasons you create a lot of ill will, you create a lot of bad feelings, you create potential problems in the future when you use force.

Finally, two elite interview participants described the reasoning process used when IFOR leaders chose between collaborative and coercive communication tactics. First, a former IFOR commander described how his decisions were influenced by a “war counsel” of senior advisors who, in a crisis situation, would openly discuss military options and assign priorities to the options that were based on an assessment of consequences:

I had a war counsel and I used the war counsel frequently. I had people that I trusted that I called in when we had to make decisions. When we had concerns we would talk things over, we would kind of understand the complete implications of an action that we might take, we tried to game it out and ... take it out to second, third order. We tried to [understand] the consequences of our actions in ... the later on.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

As this study concludes, I recall the purpose of my research: to propose a model of ethical communication that extends the excellence theory and contributes to the development of a global theory in public relations. In this chapter, I will explain how this study has fulfilled its purpose. However, beyond fulfilling its theoretical purpose, this study has also helped fulfill a purpose that gives meaning to my life. As I described in the preface, my professional public relations experiences in the U.S. Navy and in NATO led me on a search for non-violent means of communication to help manage deadly conflict. My education and experiences as a scholar have shown me *how* to conduct this search.

James Thurber (1956) moralized about his fable, *The Shore and the Sea*: "All men should strive to learn before they die what they are running from, and to, and why" (p. 174). So it is with my life's experiences from sea to shore and finally to the purpose of this study: running from, to, and why. I have *run from* the screams of dying men in the Persian Gulf, through peace fields in Bosnia-Herzegovina, *to* a course of rigorous research. Now, as I conclude this phase of research, I will explain what this case study of NATO public relations activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina means to theory, to practice, and to society. Before I finish, the analysis and interpretation contained in this section will help answer, "*Why* is this important?"

Summary of Significant Findings

Of the many research findings in this study, the five most significant are worth summarizing before I proceed. First, during peace operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina,

NATO conducted public information activities that were consistent with most principles of the excellence theory in public relations. I found direct evidence of these principles at all levels of NATO public relations: program, department, organization, and effects.

NATO public relations programs were managed strategically, by single or integrated public relations departments that were separate from psychological operations, civil-military information, and other military information activities that were treated as the equivalent of marketing functions in this study. These departments were led by senior public relations managers who reported directly to NATO leaders and exerted influence over strategic organizational decisions. Furthermore, NATO public relations programs were characterized by a two-way symmetrical communication strategy designed to manage long-term relationships. This strategy incorporated a mixed-motive continuum of collaborative and coercive communication tactics to manage threats in the turbulent, post-war environment of Bosnia-Herzegovina. NATO public relations departments also exhibited professional knowledge of public relations and management, and public relations personnel enjoyed high levels of morale. Finally, there was widespread evidence that NATO public relations programs met communication objectives and reduced costs by helping to implement the peace agreement in Bosnia-Herzegovina without resorting to lethal and costly military force.

NATO did behave inconsistently with some principles of the excellence theory. For instance, data regarding gender among NATO public relations practitioners were insufficient to judge equality of opportunity; however, NATO did not appear to achieve requisite variety in terms of gender. Still, there were ample data to conclude that NATO public relations offices were diverse in terms of ethnic and cultural qualities. Data

related to organizational culture and internal systems of communication also exhibited some inconsistencies in terms of symmetry. The organizational culture of NATO was influenced by a mixture of national culture, military culture, and the personality traits of individual leaders who headed various NATO military commands. This finding revealed that some NATO leaders held asymmetrical worldviews of communication, perhaps because of learned or inherited cultural traits. Furthermore, since NATO assigned responsibility for internal communication programs to member nations, data were not available to completely evaluate the symmetrical nature of internal communication systems. Finally, the large, complex nature of NATO suggested that the alliance was structured as a mixed mechanical/organic organization rather than an organic organization.

Second, NATO's application of excellence principles to its public relations programs corresponded with nine generic principles in global public relations theory. Data also identified empirical evidence of cultural variables related to national infrastructure, media systems, and societal culture that influenced the application of these principles. These findings have important implications for managing strategic public relations in multinational organizations that operate in global, multicultural settings.

Third, NATO resorted to the use of coercive communication tactics, which at first seemed inconsistent with the symmetrical model of communication associated with the excellence theory. After repeated interviewing and deeper examination of data, I discovered an important pattern that explained how this behavior was, in fact, consistent with the excellence theory. This pattern revealed how NATO preferred to use collaborative communication but resorted to coercive communication when faced with

hostile threats that posed risks to lives or to the peace agreement. Hence, this pattern was analogous to the mixed-motive communication continuum in the excellence theory.

Furthermore, NATO used coercion as a limited, *short-term tactic* to support a long-term, symmetrical strategy: establishing a peaceful environment and restoring collaborative relationships in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Fourth, I found that NATO leaders routinely engaged in moral reasoning when choosing between collaborative and coercive communication tactics. Through this reasoning process, they considered options and took into account the consequences of their communication acts on strategic publics. They acted with ethical intent, limited their actions in order to protect lives and property, favored dialogue over coercion, and – even when they coerced – revealed the intent of their communication activities.

However, NATO leaders followed no *formal* framework to guide their reasoning process. This was inconsistent with other types of reasoning related to military operations in NATO. For instance, whenever NATO engaged armed adversaries with lethal military force, alliance leaders typically followed a formal, external, legal framework that incorporated rules of engagement (ROE), which required approval by political authorities. However, when engaging in coercive communication – which could result in armed conflict – NATO leaders relied almost exclusively on informal, internal reasoning from intuitive knowledge. Interviews did reveal the existence of a framework for U.S. principles of military public information; however, these principles were of little use to a moral-reasoning process and held no legal standing in multinational, political-military operations. This finding led to an assumption that intuitive methods of moral

reasoning that relied upon incomplete cognitions of personal experience might be susceptible to ethical relativism.

Fifth – and finally – a proposed model of communication based on ethical communication and moral theories gained general acceptance among senior military leaders, public relations managers, lawyers, clergy, ethicists, and educators. This model was viewed by interview participants as having value in guiding moral-reasoning processes used to select communication tactics and strategies – especially in conflict situations. In particular, participants believed that the formal structure of the model made application of ethics in these decisions more overt than internal cognitive processes. Hence, the model showed promise in helping to apply ethics, justify choices, and avoid the problem of relativism when making communication decisions.

Critical feedback from interview participants also suggested ways to improve the model. In particular, more work was needed to clarify concepts in the model, thus making the model more global (and less Western) in theory and in practice. The model also required more parsimony, to make it more useful to managers and leaders who operate under compressed decision cycles in time-sensitive crisis situations. Next, I will elaborate on the significance of each of these findings.

Conclusions

Excellence Theory in Multinational Public Relations

Which principles of the excellence theory in public relations did NATO apply to its public relations programs in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1995 to 1996?

I was motivated to undertake this research, in part, by my interest in looking beyond country-specific studies to find out how the excellence theory might be applied

by multinational organizations. I was also eager to investigate claims that the excellence theory did not represent how public relations was practiced in non-Western nations (J. Grunig & Jaatinen, 1998; L. Grunig et al., 1998; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2001, 2003a; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002; Van Ruler et al., 2004; Wakefield, 1996, 1997). I felt that results of this type of research held strong potential to support the theory's positive as well as normative value and extend the excellence theory to a global perspective.

Having chosen NATO as an instrumental case for this study, I was immediately concerned with the political-military nature of this alliance. I assumed that NATO might use a one-way, public information approach to communications because J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) reported that public information "is nearly always the model used in government agencies" (p. 26). Furthermore, political and governmental agencies are often considered authoritarian; and J. Grunig and L. Grunig (2001) observed, "The two-way symmetrical model of communication ... is a model that organizations can use but often do not use because an authoritarian dominant coalition sees the approach as a threat to its power" (p. 320). Therefore, I assumed that NATO might reject principles of symmetry in the excellence theory that senior political and military leaders could regard as threats to their authority.

I was interested, therefore, to find that NATO *did* apply most principles of the excellence theory, including the two-way symmetrical model of communication. Furthermore, I found that NATO's application and adaptation of these principles to the Eastern and Western cultures of the alliance's member nations provided strong normative and positive support for the excellence theory. Hence, contrary to previous claims (e.g., Culbertson & Chen, 1996; Kruckeberg, 1996a, 1996b; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002), I

found that NATO public relations programs based on principles of the excellence theory were well-suited to societies outside of the Western hemisphere. Given these findings, I began to interpret their meaning.

Data provided few surprises with regard to findings about excellence principles at the levels of program, department, or effects. NATO was similar to other political-military organizations that typically adhere to a strategic management approach to problem-solving, employ professional managers, and invest in types of training and education that promote professional development among their employees. These organizations are often structured in a hierarchical fashion, with clear divisions between functions and direct-reporting relationships. A British officer who participated in a long interview described this phenomenon in NATO as a “stovepipe” system, which allows for communication to proceed directly in a vertical path from lower levels of the organization to both NATO and to national political authorities. Also, operational functions within these organizations are often coordinated closely. Several military participants in focus group interviews referred to *matrix planning*, which is typical of the way military organizations coordinate various activities during planning of military operations.

The most interesting finding within the first research question related to how NATO adopted a two-way, symmetrical worldview and applied two-way symmetrical communication – despite its authoritarian culture, mechanical/organic structure, and occasional use of coercion. Because NATO’s coercive behavior was closely associated with conflict, I will defer discussion about coercive communication to the section in this chapter devoted to conflict, ethics, and moral reasoning.

With regard to the remaining questions of symmetry, a possible answer to the dichotomy referred to in the previous paragraph lies within NATO's charter. First, as Pien (1994) reported, alliances and coalitions like NATO often are produced by conflict and exist to "collectively address" (p. 11) and resolve issues that matter to stakeholders and diverse groups. Van Dyke (2003b) also reported alliances and coalitions exist to promote "collective action and cooperation" (p. 14).

NATO's founding document, the Atlantic Charter, which was written in 1949 to prevent a recurrence of world war, provides practical support for observations by Pien (1994) and Van Dyke (2003b). The NATO alliance is today still united in a mission to preserve "security through *mutual guarantees* [italics added] and *stable relations* [italics added] with other countries" (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1998, p. 23). Hence, collective action and consensus among NATO member nations are important principles to the alliance. In fact, one NATO public relations officer, during a long interview, described the way in which IFOR's public relations plan was created: "The IFOR plan was written and briefed to all the [NATO member] nations and copied to them well in advance ... in an attempt to get some form of consensus." Thus, the NATO public relations plan for peace operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina was born out of consensus, designed for collective action and cooperation, and enacted to achieve stable relationships even in coercive situations.

A *theoretical* understanding of consensus could also help explain how NATO applied two-way strategies to its communication programs, even when engaged in asymmetrical military or political situations. For instance, Gilbert (1997) identified concepts of agreement, consensus, attachment, and inclusion as among the most

important aspects of *coalescent argumentation* (p. 63). Marsh (2001) also identified “unification and consensus” (p. 88) as defining qualities of Isocratic rhetoric. Finally, Toth and Heath (1992) explained that rhetoric, even with its persuasive roots, is not inherently a one-way communication process. Rhetoric could also represent a dialogic communication “exchange by which interested parties seek to induce agreement and action” (p. xii). The rhetorical concepts therefore explain how NATO, which often engages in political negotiation and argumentation, could adhere to principles of two-way symmetry in the excellence theory even when the alliance communicates persuasively.

Investigation into NATO’s application of excellence principles produced one other significant finding that required further analysis and interpretation: efforts to integrate military public relations with psychological operations. First, many participants expressed concern and confusion over a movement within the U.S. government to combine public relations (e.g., public affairs and public information) with psychological operations and other types of strategic communication.

The product of this combined communication approach was described by many participants as *information operations*, which I have defined in the Glossary of Terms. I reexamined data from interviews in an effort to learn more about this concept. Discussion of information operations occurred in some long interviews and, most frequently, in focus groups. These interviews involved senior public relations managers who had been involved in recent planning efforts related to information operations. In the next few paragraphs, I will interpret the meaning of this term and assess its significance to this study.

According to participant descriptions, the concept of information operations is very similar to the concept of integrated marketing communication in private-sector public relations. Just as integrated marketing communication has become a controversial concept in the private sector (see Hutton, 2001), so has information operations generated controversy in government and military agencies. Interview participants feared that combining public relations with psychological operations – considered by many to be a propaganda tool – could subordinate public relations to other functions, sever the direct reporting relationship between public relations and senior leaders, and damage the credibility of public relations activities.

One senior U.S. Navy public affairs officer who managed public information for a NATO command in Europe described with grave concern the efforts to establish a NATO information operations function:

Well, one of the big ... issues of debate right now, which is causing a lot of consternation, is how, there's ... a new branch if you will or a new section: it's called Information Operations. And the alliance is still wrestling with this as is America.

As this officer continued to express his concerns, he explained how he made meaning of information operations, which was consistent with explanations of information operations provided by other participants:

Right now, information operations is supposed to be a coordinating mechanism... We normally would do integrated operations anyway, we normally would sit down with the psychological operations branch, with the CIMIC [Civil Military Information Coordination] branch, with the POLAD [political advisor], with the

legal officer, with all of the key players ... all coordinating our focus of ... operations ... working in the proper direction.

He then expressed his fear about the influence of information operations on public relations as he interpreted the difference between *coordinating* public relations with other information functions and *subordinating* public relations to information operations:

The danger right now with what's happening is there are some people that think that the information operations person should fall in what's called an information operation branch, and under that branch should be all of these people that I've just described earlier – including PIO [the public information officer]. And, this particular person, as the information operations branch chief, would then either report directly to the chief of staff and the admiral, himself; or, would report to the J3, which is the operations officer.

The Navy officer then seemed to identify his primary concern: the subordination of the public relations function and elimination of the existing direct-reporting relationship between NATO public relations managers and senior military commanders. “Either way, it would basically move the public information officer either one or two steps down the food chain,” the officer reported, “and really inhibit the PIO’s ability to get command information, strategic commander kind of information quickly.”

Other participants reported that a similar integration of public relations and propaganda functions is occurring at high levels of the U.S. government. One of these officers described this integration in current U.S.-led coalition operations in Iraq (anonymous, personal communication, April 11, 2005). Two senior U.S. Army officers

exchanged ideas on this topic during the U.S. Military Academy focus group. One officer, who had experience in public affairs, defined military public relations:

In a purely military function, what we call public affairs has four basic disciplines. You have ... employee communications ... community relations ... public information or media relations ... and then the last one ... that you start to see come out ... in the past few years is strategic communications.

Another Army officer followed up immediately on the previous statement and interjected a question:

I had a question about that last one actually ... the strategic piece.... I've seen a lot of heated discussions going back and forth in PA circles about being used as an asset or tool to help *influence* certain target audiences – you know as opposed to PSYOP.... Where do you think it's going to go?

This question led to another comment by an experienced military public affairs officer, who said with conviction: “You hit on a key point there, and that’s the PsyOps-PA integration. And the IO [information operations] community is wrestling with this ... right now.” This comment prompted a U.S. Army officer with many years of experience in law, public relations, and ethics to say:

The reality of the joint, combined,⁸ interagency realm is such that even at the tactical or the operational level you have fusion cells, you’ll have a symbiosis of a variety of different information operations which cannot be conducted without having a close coordination between PsyOps as well as the public affairs assets ... it is not the law that prohibits the integration, it is simply national policy.

⁸ The term *joint* defines operations of one nation that involve more than one military service. *Combined* operations involve more than one allied nation. These concepts are defined in the Glossary of Terms.

After careful review of this exchange between U.S. Military Academy faculty and staff, I extended my analysis to include an interpretation of *national policy* – trying to identify to which national policy this officer referred and to determine how this policy might affect public relations in the context of this study. After a brief literature search, I located two references to government management of information that related to comments made by interview participants. The two references, both news reports, described efforts among some government agencies to integrate information activities. The reports quoted several senior, U.S. government officials who expressed concerns similar to those of interview participants in this study: Blurring the demarcation between public relations and psychological operations could lead to loss of credibility of military public relations.

First, a *New York Times* report by Shanker and Schmitt (2004) reported, “The Pentagon is engaged in bitter, high-level debate over how far it can and should go in managing or manipulating information to influence opinion abroad, senior Defense Department civilians and military officers say” (p. A1). The report added, “Critics ... say such deceptive missions could shatter the Pentagon's credibility” (p. A1). Second, the *Los Angeles Times* (Mazzetti, 2004) reported, “‘The movement of information has gone from the public affairs world to the psychological operations world,’ one senior defense official said. ‘What's at stake is the credibility of people in uniform’” (p. A1).

Shanker and Schmitt (2004) also reported failed efforts by the U.S. Department of Defense to establish an “Office of Strategic Influence” (p. A1). This office, which was reportedly designed to “provide news items, possibly including false ones, to foreign journalists in an effort to influence overseas opinion” (p. A1), was closed after receiving

intense criticism. Corroborating an account by one U.S. Military Academy focus group participant, Shanker and Schmitt reported that this effort had extended to military operations in Iraq:

Within the Pentagon, some of the military's most powerful figures have expressed concerns at some of the steps taken that risk blurring the traditional lines between public affairs and the world of combat information operations.

These tensions were cast into stark relief this summer in Iraq when Gen. George W. Casey Jr., the top commander in Iraq, approved the combining of the command's day-to-day public affairs operations with combat psychological and information operations into a single 'strategic communications office.' (p. A1)

Quoting the U.S. armed forces' highest-ranking military official, Shanker and Schmitt (2004) summarized concerns of many military public affairs officials and senior leaders:

In a rare expression of senior-level questions about such decisions, Gen. Richard B. Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, issued a memorandum warning the military's regional combat commanders about the risks of mingling the military public affairs too closely with information operations. (p. A1)

Quoting the chairman's letter, the news report continued, "While organizations may be inclined to create physically integrated P.A./I.O. offices, such organizational constructs have the potential to compromise the commander's credibility with the media and the public,' it said" (p. A1).

What does this finding mean and how is it significant to this study? The current controversy over mixing military public affairs and psychological operations has, to now,

been largely driven by the United States. However, the influence of this issue is spreading to multinational operations led or supported by the United States. If concerns expressed by interview participants and other government officials are realized, combining public relations and psychological operations under a single functional manager would contradict principles of the excellence theory – the application of which enhance the credibility, autonomy, and strategic value of public relations. This issue warrants further research. However, findings from this study suggest that efforts to combine public relations with other information functions – moving away from principles of the excellence theory – could have disastrous consequences on the ability of military public relations efforts to help organizations like NATO achieve communication objectives.

Culture and Global Theory in Public Relations

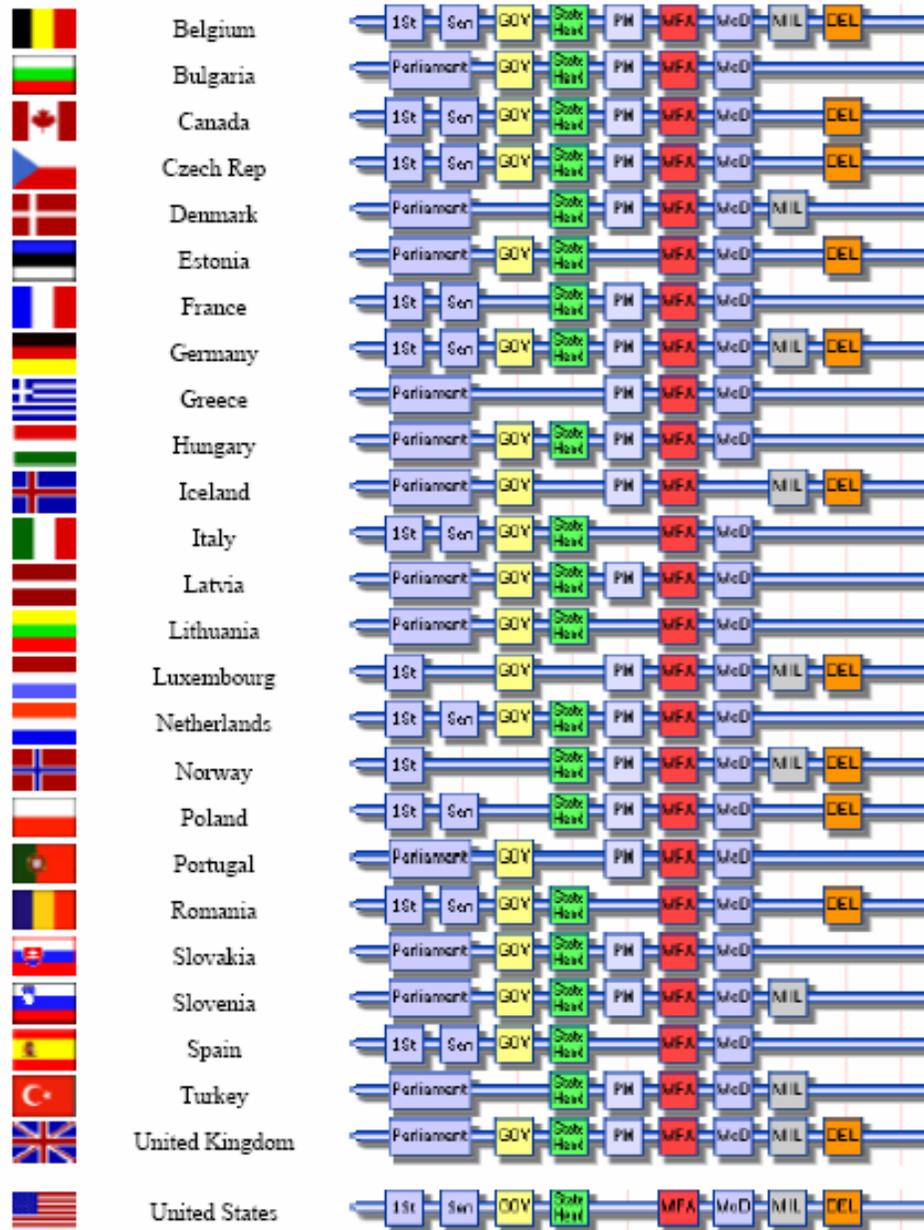
The finding that *culture* influenced the management of communication and public relations in NATO was not surprising. There is ample evidence from previous studies to demonstrate interdependence among culture and communication (Sriramesh & White, 1992). Moreover, studies have shown that *organizational* culture (Dozier, 1995), which arises from *societal* culture (G. Hofstede, 1980, 2001; G. Hofstede & G. J. Hofstede, 2005), affects organizational communication management by shaping the *worldview* of public relations (J. Grunig, 1992b). Worldview, in turn, shapes decisions made by organizational leaders, including the choice of public relations models and communication strategies (Sriramesh et al., 1992).

Hence, this study found that organizational culture is a *key* element in public relations management. First, NATO's organizational leaders and the decisions they made

were, as Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) found, “key to the effectiveness of the overall change process” (p. 433). Second, choice of symmetrical communication was a “key choice” (J. Grunig, 1992b, p. 24) in effective management of the NATO organization.

However, I found that organizational culture and communication in NATO’s *multinational* setting had a more complex relationship than previously reported in studies of *national* organizations. For instance, acculturation produced by a confluence of 26 national cultures in NATO seems to have had a much more profound effect on organizational culture and worldview than described in less culturally diverse organizations. The complexity of NATO’s cultural diversity is depicted in Figure 6 on the next page, which represents the flags of NATO members along with some political and military elements of member-nation governments (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2005).

Furthermore, the acculturation in NATO was apparently influenced by cultural determinants such as *personality* (G. Hofstede & G. J. Hofstede, 2005) and external variables such as *national infrastructure* and *media systems* (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2001, 2003a). I also discovered a *military culture* that I have not seen identified as a determinant of organizational culture and worldview in previous studies of public relations. Since these cultural factors are so closely related to principles of global public relations, I will analyze and interpret results of both the second and third research questions in this section.



Legend: **1st** : parliament, 1st chamber; **Sen**: senate, 2nd chamber; **Gov**: government; **State Head**: head of state/president; **PM**: prime minister/chancellor; **MFA**: ministry of foreign affairs; **MOD**: ministry/department of defense; **MIL**: military/chief of staff; **DEL**: national delegation to NATO

Figure 6. NATO Member Countries (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2005).

How did organizational culture influence NATO's management of IFOR public relations and communication programs in Bosnia-Herzegovina?

J. Grunig (1992b) and Sriramesh et al. (1992) identified the influence of culture on worldview and organizational decisions about public relations. These authors referred to organizational culture in a singular or *broad* sense, as in “a broad base of worldview, meanings, and values that affect all decisions in the organization” (Sriramesh et al., p. 579). Findings of this study suggest that organizational culture in multinational organizations is a much more discrete concept, discriminated by several variables. I found that the organizational culture of NATO was comprised of many subcultures, rather than a single, broad culture. These subcultures operated at various levels of NATO's organization as distinct pillars instead of a broad base that supports organizational decisions. J. Grunig and Repper (1992) referred to subcultures as “population segments” (p. 141) or social groupings that are useful to strategic management of publics. The authors also differentiated between narrow subcultures and “broad national cultures” (p. 143).

My analysis led me to interpret NATO's organizational culture as a *divided culture* (Keyton, 2005) characterized by a system of subcultures or groups. According to Keyton, “To the extent that different sets of artifacts, values, and assumptions develop in these groups, an organization's culture is said to have subcultures” (p. 57). Furthermore, “the way in which subcultures coexist creates the culture” (p. 57) of the organization. Descriptions of NATO's organizational culture provided by interview participants are strikingly similar to a description of a divided culture by Keyton, who wrote:

Subgroup distinctions often occur along functional or occupational roles; geographical locations; product, market, or technology distinctions; and hierarchical levels. In addition, subcultures can develop and be sustained when two or more organizations merge or work together in a joint venture or strategic alliance.

Keyton (2005) also identified two types of phenomena in divided cultures: *differentiation* and *fragmentation*. Differentiated subcultures occur along the lines of managers and technicians, different types of employees, and “any of the dimensions along which organizational members identify and organize themselves into language communities” (pp. 60-61). In fragmented subcultures, “organizational members are part of shifting coalitions, forming and reforming based on shared identities, issues, and circumstances” (p. 63). According to Keyton, fragmentation, because of its shifting and ambiguous nature, often impedes the creation of a broader, organizational consensus.

Keyton (2005) differentiated a divided approach to organizational culture from a consensus approach. She explained, “A consensus view of organizational culture is based on the congruence of artifacts, values, and assumptions jointly held or shared by organizational members” (p. 53). From a consensus approach, an organization’s culture grows more consensual as it becomes more unified and more consistent in the interpretation of culture among its members. Keyton referred to this phenomenon as a “powerful culture” (p. 53). She also explained that powerful cultures are often associated with strong leaders who shape an organization’s value system and use strategic communication to propagate an integrated culture. She identified the U.S. Marine Corps as an example of a unified or strong culture.

Keyton's (2005) comparison of the U.S. Marine Corps with strong culture was relevant to findings in this study. The presence of a *military subculture* was one of the most intriguing aspects of NATO's organizational culture. Many participants described different approaches to public relations management that they associated with national and societal culture. Moreover, participants described a military culture within a national culture, and they further segmented military culture into subcultures associated with different branches of the armed forces within a country.

A Canadian officer described changes in NATO perspectives of communication and public relations management that occurred when military leadership of the peace operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina changed. After the first year of operations, NATO shifted command of its peace forces from a U.S. Navy admiral to a U.S. Army general. The Canadian, who witnessed the transition, described how perspectives of public relations management changed immediately from an open approach to media relations under the admiral to a much more closed approach under the general. Several other accounts provided descriptions of how public relations perspectives varied among U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force cultures. From all accounts, this military subculture seemed to have a profound effect on NATO's overall organizational culture and, by extension, to NATO's management of communication and public relations.

I interpreted a military culture as part of national infrastructure described by Sriramesh and Verčič (2001, 2003a), rather than as a separate cultural entity. I reached this conclusion after considering that military services in democratic nations (e.g., NATO member nations) are part of national political systems under the authority of elected or appointed civilian leaders. As such, military subcultures in NATO, as a component of

national culture, seemed to operate as yet another variable that influenced public relations and communication management.

My interpretation rejects perspectives that identify NATO as a single or broad universe of worldview, meanings, and values that influence public relations management. Instead, my interpretation treats NATO as an organization that is culturally divided and differentiated according to Keyton (2005). Thus, NATO is constructed from what I have termed an organizational *constellation of cultures*, which is derived from unique subcultures rather than a unified culture. However, the coexistence of these differentiated subcultures – unlike fragmented subcultures – create a consensual culture within NATO that subscribes to a dominant paradigm of mutual understanding, consensus, collaboration, and collective action.

Part of NATO's cultural constellation is depicted in Figure 6, which contains symbols representing flags and various elements of national infrastructure associated with NATO member countries. These elements identify political and military systems: heads of government, parliamentary systems, ministries of foreign affairs, and ministries of defense. G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede (2005) and Sriramesh and Verčič (2001, 2003a) identified many of these institutions as cultural variables that influence management of public relations and communication. Hence, I consider these elements to be like celestial bodies, each orbiting a cultural constellation that represents NATO's organizational environment. Furthermore, just as celestial bodies in an astrological constellation exert gravitational influence over other bodies, the basic elements that comprise NATO's cultural constellation influence the alliance's worldview of communication and public relations.

After identifying these subcultures, I determined that they produced acculturation at all levels of the NATO alliance. Furthermore, acculturation produced signs of *both* convergence and divergence. A British officer provided an account of convergence when he recalled the French public affairs officer who adapted to NATO-style media relations: “His background was such that he had to adjust – make a major adjustment I would say in, in the way he looked at the media.” A U.S. Army officer who managed public relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina provided a similar account of a French officer on his staff who attempted to learn from and help the French military adapt to NATO media systems:

[He] collected every field manual, paper that I could provide him ... and sent [the information] back to France because they wanted to institute a public information program within the French military and training for their senior officers like we had in the United States and like we were doing at NATO in Bosnia.

On the other hand, an Italian public relations manager in NATO related a much different perspective of acculturation. In what appeared to be a description of divergence, he talked of the lack of “harmony” among levels of NATO public relations, which he attributed to “different, slightly different approaches, in planning for public information.”

Thus, the concept of organizational culture seems to be dynamic in NATO. For instance, according to theoretical perspectives of culture, changes in leadership or membership in NATO would prompt changes in national traits and national infrastructure within the alliance’s cultural constellation. The NATO worldview toward communication and public relations seems to remain based largely on Western concepts

of symmetrical communication, cooperation, and collective security – because of NATO’s collective security charter.

However, even subtle changes in the national composition of leaders and members must inevitably influence the characteristics of NATO’s subcultures at various levels of the organization. These alterations in subcultures would then influence changes in the way alliance leaders and public relations practitioners manage communication at subordinate levels of NATO. This interpretation seems consistent with J. Grunig and Repper’s (1992) observation of the “circular” (p. 143), changing nature of organizational culture’s influence on decision-making and public relations.

The changing nature of NATO’s organizational culture and the alliance’s subcultures may also be subject to other theoretical interpretations. First, NATO’s senior leadership positions are often assigned to Western nations that hold a two-way symmetrical worldview of communication. This leadership might influence adoption of a *dominant* worldview or corporate culture that values symmetrical communication – just as Schneider (aka L. Grunig, 1985) observed that messages from the top of an organization could influence the entire organization. However, an organizational culture based on cooperation and collective agreement could prompt NATO to adjust to or accommodate a plurality of worldviews held by individual member nations. A similar phenomenon has been described by Verčič et al. (1996) and by Brinkerhoff and Ingle (1989), who explained that organizations often make adjustments that provide them with “structured flexibility” (Brinkerhoff & Ingle, 1989, p. 32) needed to cope with changes in their environment. Second, divergence theory might explain how member nations of NATO might resist the imposition of a monolithic, dominant culture and try to retain

their own worldview of public relations and communication, with some adaptations (Wakefield, 1996).

Deeper analysis of results related to questions of culture revealed sources that produced subcultures. These sources related closely to concepts associated with a global theory of public relations.

Which, if any, excellence theory principles applied by NATO to IFOR communication programs were associated with generic principles of a global theory in public relations?

NATO applied nine generic principles of global public relations described by Verčič et al. (1996). Data related to two of the principles warrant further analysis: NATO's employment of symmetrical systems of internal communication and the existence of knowledge potential for the managerial role and symmetrical communication in public relations. I will also interpret data related to external, cultural variables that could influence application of generic, global principles.

Internal communication. First, I equated internal communication to the U.S. military's concept of command information or internal information. Military internal information systems are designed to promote dialogue between senior military commanders, middle managers, junior enlisted personnel, civilian employees, and family members of service members – up and down a military chain of command. NATO's peace implementation force in Bosnia-Herzegovina did publish an internal "command information" newspaper designed to keep members of the peace force informed about the progress of the IFOR mission. Some participants mentioned the newspaper and expressed pride in its long record of success as an information tool that still helps to promote morale among peacekeepers in Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, publication of

this paper seemed to be a departure from NATO policy, which traditionally assigned responsibility for internal information to individual NATO nations and coalition partners.

I interpreted this finding to be a function of limited economic resources and educational values. First, NATO seemed to dedicate most of its public relations resources to media and community relations – activities that NATO perceived as keys to mission success. Assigning responsibility for internal relations to member nations spared NATO the responsibility for dedicating funding and personnel to this function. Furthermore, production and management of internal information products required specialized training and equipment. United States military forces like the U.S. Army have dedicated units that train and deploy with their forces to produce command information products. I found no evidence that the NATO alliance had any such capability. Therefore, I concluded that the low value assigned by NATO to command information training and equipment contributed to a lack of symmetrical systems of internal communication.

Knowledge potential. As reported, knowledge potential in terms of professional education and training in management and theoretical communication concepts seemed to diminish below the level of senior or deputy public relations managers in NATO. Furthermore, according to participant accounts, only the United States and Canada maintained a corps of trained, military public relations professionals needed to fill NATO posts. A small number of European countries (e.g., United Kingdom) provided some professional public relations training for officers but had no dedicated cadre of military public information specialists. According to some participants, lack of professional

knowledge in public relations among military officers is becoming problematic for a NATO alliance undergoing rapid changes in membership and cultural identity.

As I analyzed these data, I concluded that national differences in values applied to public relations education might explain this phenomenon. For instance, L. Grunig et al. (2002) reported that public relations practitioners in the United Kingdom placed significantly less importance on public relations education than practitioners in the United States. Culbertson (1996) observed the same trend, noting that the United States led the world in terms of the value placed on formal, public relations education. Therefore, lack of formal education in public relations and related management disciplines could inhibit the acquisition of knowledge needed to select and apply two-way, symmetrical communication in excellent public relations programs. Pratt and Ogbondah (1996) also concluded that globalization requires nations to develop new knowledge about other cultures and their social systems – including communication; yet, such knowledge is lacking. Without this knowledge, the potential for professional excellence in public relations is limited.

Personality. Several participants described in vivid detail how the personalities of individual military commanders and senior public relations managers influenced the application of public relations programs. This finding was apparently related to two factors: military culture and determinants of societal culture. First, participants sometimes described how military culture influenced development of public relations perspectives as military leaders achieved seniority and assumed higher levels of command responsibility. For instance, a senior U.S. Army public affairs officer described changes in his commander's personality and attitude toward media relations

over a period of several months in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He attributed the change to “command influence” and added, “[He] may have been influenced by his bosses to be more open and available.”

Second, G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede (2005) described culture as “mental programming” (p. 4). Among the determinants of this programming, or culture, is *personality*. According to the Hofstedes, personality is both inherited and learned. It is learned in the sense that “unique personal experiences” (p. 5) modify culture. Furthermore, Sriramesh and Verčič (2003b) identified personality as a determinant of societal culture. Therefore, I interpreted accounts about personality traits as support for Sriramesh and Verčič’s notion that cultural determinants can influence development and application of global public relations programs.

Managing International Conflict:

Moral Reasoning, Ethical Communication, and Social Responsibility

Analysis of data related to NATO’s management of international conflict led to some of the most meaningful results to emerge from this study. Conflict in IFOR’s turbulent operating environment influenced NATO leaders to select coercive communication tactics. However, leaders selected these tactics only after a moral reasoning process that applied ethics to the decision-making process and considered consequences of coercive actions. In view of the ethical, socially-responsible intentions of IFOR leaders, I interpreted their use of coercive communication to be part of a mixed-motive communication continuum that remained consistent with the excellence theory.

Still, important questions remained after my initial analysis. First, was NATO’s application of coercive communication appropriate to the situation? Second, when

engaged in moral reasoning, NATO military leaders used an internal reasoning process that relied on intuitive knowledge to make decisions. What did reliance on this intuitive process mean in terms of ethical behavior? Finally, given the lack of a formal framework to guide moral reasoning, what were the possible consequences of NATO's coercive actions?

How did conflict situations facing IFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina influence choice of communication strategies by senior NATO leaders?

Given the conflict situations faced by IFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina, I analyzed NATO's coercive behavior from a perspective that combined moral philosophy, communication theory, negotiation theory, and game theory. Based on this analysis, I interpreted NATO's application of coercive communication to be appropriate to the conflict situations that the alliance faced in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

First, trying to understand how NATO leaders reasoned about their communication choices, I interpreted NATO's actions using two Western *philosophical approaches* that are commonly used to evaluate coercion from a human rights perspective: teleology or utilitarianism (e.g., Mill, 2000) and deontology (e.g., Kant, 1949). In a general sense, I reasoned from both perspectives that NATO's coercive tactics were justified.

From a *utilitarian perspective*, "individual liberty may rightly be restricted for the sake of some more important benefit like the prevention of harm or suffering" (Rosenbaum, 1986, p. 19). I reported earlier that IFOR commanders often engaged in coercion to avoid "loss of life." Therefore, I interpreted IFOR's coercive actions as an outcome of NATO leaders rationalizing that saving lives far outweighed consequences

associated with limited restriction of personal liberty. This approach would seem consistent with the type of utilitarian calculations described by Seib and Fitzpatrick (1995) in the context of public relations ethics. These calculations consider factors such as emotional intensity, duration, uncertainty, remoteness, future, purity, and numbers of affected people. Hence, utilitarian calculus associated with coercion versus military force would likely move NATO leaders to choose less lethal forms of power to protect lives.

NATO's coercive actions were more difficult to justify from a *deontological perspective*. For instance, Kant associated moral action with *good will* "by virtue of its volition" (Kant, 1785/1949, p. 141) rather than the goodness of an action's outcome. His moral imperative also judged actions ethical if they complied with universal law and were found to be acceptable by all rational people. Coercive acts like those applied by NATO are not generally associated with good will, nor is coercion seen as universal or rational. In fact, according to Rosenbaum (1986), Kantian ethics are often associated with an independence from arbitrary coercion. However, "Possession of a basic right also gives the title-holder a 'title to compel respect' for the right in question" (Rosenbaum, 1986, p. 20). Therefore, even from a deontological perspective, leaders might justify IFOR's use of coercion, since NATO's *international* mandate authorized them to compel compliance with the peace agreement and save lives that were under the protection of the peace agreement.

Second, from a *communication perspective*, I also interpreted NATO's coercive actions as justified. Organizations coerce through powerful acts – including the communication of threats and promises – that are designed to exercise control over others. Coercive communication acts could be associated with one-way, distributive

communication strategies. However, NATO leaders did not view coercion as a strategic choice. Instead, they saw coercive communication activities as short-term tactics that were part of a longer-term, symmetrical strategy to manage relationships that were needed to establish and preserve a peaceful environment in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

To elaborate on this interpretation, I applied accounts of NATO's use of coercion to a framework for activism in public relations theory provided by L. Grunig (1992b) and J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1997). First, the hostile elements in IFOR's operating environment seemed to fit the definition of activist publics: former warring military forces; local, national, and international political factions; Muslim, Serb, and Croat ethnic rivals; and even terrorist organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These and other factions seemed to represent groups of "two or more individuals who organize in order to influence another public or publics through action that may include education, compromise, persuasion, pressure tactics, or force" (L. Grunig, 1992b, p. 504). Furthermore, these activist publics often became "initiators of ... public relations programs" (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1997, p. 35) as well as targets of IFOR's coercive communication efforts. Organizations like NATO must attend to these groups because they can "create issues and threaten organizational autonomy" (J. Grunig, 2003, p. 94).

During the peace mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina, different political and non-governmental political groups mounted international pressure on NATO to pursue and capture military and political leaders of former warring factions who had been indicted for war crimes. A senior U.S. Navy officer who served in IFOR recounted this pressure and how IFOR often had to communicate in response to this pressure:

An issue that comes to mind is the apprehension of persons indicted for war crimes (PIFWC), which is an on-going issue even as we speak today. There was certainly a *movement* in the international community for IFOR to apprehend these persons indicted for war crimes, or PIFWCS as they are called. [The IFOR commander] made it very clear to both political and military authorities in NATO that his mandate did not call for him to actively go out and apprehend these people.

Given the existence of activism within Bosnia-Herzegovina, IFOR then recognized a need to respond through communication. Piecing together different accounts from interview participants and analyzing IFOR's action from the perspective of J. Grunig and L. Grunig's (1997) activist theory helped reveal how IFOR acted ethically, even when using coercion. First, IFOR public relations practitioners used a situational theory approach to identify threatening publics (e.g., activists who threatened the peace agreement or IFOR's autonomy) as well as members within the NATO coalition that shared responsibility for the issue. Second, the existing IFOR coalition, which was granted authority to implement the peace agreement in Bosnia-Herzegovina, was normally powerful enough – politically and militarily – to manage the issue. Third, evidence from interviews demonstrated that the IFOR coalition usually attempted to communicate symmetrically with activist groups before resorting to coercive communication.

When symmetrical communication resolved the issue, IFOR continued using symmetrical approaches to communication. When dialogue failed, IFOR resorted to asymmetrical communication, including coercion, “to force” (J. Grunig & L. Grunig,

1997, p. 40) or compel an activist group into compliance. Once compliance was gained, IFOR again returned to symmetrical communication, established cooperation, and continued to work toward long-term relationships that were essential to implementing the peace agreement. IFOR's coercive communication behavior was characterized by two other ethical actions identified by J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1997): IFOR began with symmetrical communication attempts and, when symmetrical communication failed, IFOR disclosed the intent of its persuasive communication tactics. Hence, I interpreted IFOR coercive communication to be ethical from a communication perspective.

Finally, I broadly interpreted IFOR's use of coercion as ethical from the perspectives of *negotiation theory* and *game theory*. Although I did not conduct an in-depth analysis of IFOR's coercive behavior from these perspectives, my review of principles from negotiation and game theory provided support for IFOR's actions. For instance, J. Grunig (1989b) favored negotiation over coercion in conflict resolution. However, J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1997) subsequently demonstrated that even application of force (e.g., coercion) can become an acceptable means of conflict resolution if guided by ethical rules. Gibbons et al. (1992) defined coercion as an element of negotiation, or "the exercise of power through the use of particular tactics that aim to reward and punish the opponent" (p. 160). Furthermore, as Gibbons et al. prescribed, IFOR tended to use threats, rewards, and other "coercive tactics [as] a measure of last resort" (p. 160).

The concepts of threats and warnings from negotiation and game theory were of special interest to my analysis. For example, several participants provided accounts of how IFOR issued threats as a means to coerce activist groups into complying with the

peace agreement. IFOR's communication plan also seemed to incorporate messages designed to inform audiences about threats related to violating the peace agreement and the rewards associated with working toward peaceful relations.

Therefore, I concluded that IFOR's coercive behavior resembled Schelling's (1980) notion about "the *strategy* of conflict" (p. 3), which treats conflict as a game in which participants try to win. Within this theoretical context, strategic games consider the variable nature of decisions and alternating player actions. From this perspective, data in this study seemed to describe how IFOR entered into games of conflict management and considered strategic moves, calculations about actions by other players, and implications of coercive communication actions. This approach was similar to Jentleson's (2000) concept of *coercive diplomacy*, which employs military threats as "preventive strategies" (p. 5)

Upon further analysis, I was also able to clarify the meaning of IFOR's coercive actions. Based on my interpretation of participant accounts, it did not seem that IFOR expressed threats as a strategic move to achieve a *win-lose* position in a zero-sum game. Instead, threats issued by IFOR seemed to represent NATO moves that were designed to achieve a win-win position: attainment of peaceful relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina that would benefit all parties. This approach, described by many participants, appeared to be consistent with Schelling's (1980) view of *winning* in international conflict, which "is not winning relative to one's adversary" (p. 4). Instead, IFOR's notion of winning in peace operations was more closely associated with "the avoidance of mutually damaging behavior" and concern for "the common interest" (p. 5) of all parties in a conflict. In this regard, IFOR's use of coercion seemed to be consistent with the goal of mixed-motive

communication in the excellence theory: to achieve a position within the *win-win* zone (Dozier, 1995).

Concepts of threats and warnings in negotiation merit further analysis and interpretation as they relate to IFOR's coercive communication. IFOR seemed to rely primarily on threats when attempting to coerce (e.g., as compelling compliance by placing someone under threat of military force). As previously explained, threats and warnings, however, have different connotations as well as potential outcomes. IFOR leaders expressed several concerns about potential outcomes of coercive actions. Since my analysis of this issue is related primarily to outcomes, I will defer further discussion of threats and warnings to the subsequent section dedicated to consequences of communication actions.

To what extent did NATO rely on moral reasoning to judge the ethical nature of decisions about IFOR communication and public relations management?

The use of internal, moral-reasoning processes by NATO military leaders merits special consideration and interpretation. I considered NATO's use of moral reasoning in communication decision-making to be a positive indicator of excellence in public relations – as it provided evidence of ethical behavior. L. Grunig and J. Grunig (2003) determined that ethics and social responsibility are essential to public relations excellence but, as I have already explained, more research – like that of Bowen (2000, 2004) – is needed to establish a principle of ethics in public relations theory.

However, reliance of NATO leaders on intuition and the leaders' lack of a formal framework for guiding moral decisions raised questions about the reliability of this moral

decision-making process. First, I will analyze the use of intuition by NATO leaders and, second, I will interpret the meaning of this phenomenon.

First, honor, integrity, and a sense of moral behavior have been important values in the education of military leaders for centuries. For instance, the U.S. Revolutionary War hero Commodore John Paul Jones – considered as the founding father of the U.S. Navy (U.S. Naval Academy, 1997) – once remarked:

It is by no means enough that an officer of the Navy be a capable mariner. He must be that, of course, but also a great deal more. He should be as well a gentleman of liberal education, refined manners, punctilious courtesy, and the nicest sense of personal honor. He should be the soul of tact, patience, justice, firmness, and charity.... In one word, every commander should keep constantly before him the great truth, that to be well obeyed, he must be perfectly esteemed. (Buell, 1991, p. 37)⁹

Montor and Ciotti (1984) also noted that moral responsibility for a naval unit has been placed on the commanding officer of that unit since the publication in 1775 of *Rules for the Regulation of the Navy of the United Colonies of North America*. Furthermore, Montor and Ciotti wrote: “If they are to meet their obligations to the country, the navy and marines must continually reemphasize the assumption of moral responsibility and leadership. The type of leadership practiced and taught in the naval service must always have a moral foundation” (pp. 70-71). According to another textbook on military leadership, “A professional who lives by an ethical philosophy understands the importance of assuming authority, fulfilling responsibilities, and being accountable for

⁹ The exclusive use of masculine gender by Jones must be considered in its historical context. Jones served at a time when women were excluded from serving aboard ships of the line at sea; therefore, naval officers were exclusively men.

his [or her] actions” (Montor, McNicholas, Ciotti, Hutchison, & Wehmueller, 1998, p. 518). Scholars of ethics have gone so far as to define ethics as “the moral basis of the military profession itself” (Cook, 1998, p. 35).

Second, what did it mean for NATO leaders to rely so heavily on an internal, intuitive process for moral decision-making? I interpreted this phenomenon among military leaders in NATO as a product of their military upbringing, education, and experience. As such, a NATO military leader’s sense of honor and predisposition to follow a strict code of ethical conduct seemed to be a trait of his or her military culture. Clearly, current and former military service members who participated in this study demonstrated a strong commitment to moral leadership and ethics. However, I interpreted their reliance on intuition and lack of any formal framework for making ethical communication decisions as a major weakness in the moral-reasoning process used by NATO leaders. A conceptual understanding of intuition helps to reveal this weakness. Fischbein (1987) explained:

Intuition summarizes experience, offers a compact, global representation of a group of data, helps overcome the insufficiency of information, introduces behaviorally meaningful interpretations in a reasoning process, and thus confers on the mental activity, the qualities of flexible continuity, of firmness and efficiency which characterize an active, adaptive behavior. (p. 12)

Intuition may be flexible, firm, and efficient; however, Fischbein (1987) also pointed out that intuition can lead to invalid assumptions about ethical behavior:

Intuition remains a potential source of error because it does not represent a simple duplicate of practically given conditions. Its role is to offer behaviorally

meaningful representations, internally structured, of intrinsic credibility, even if these qualities do not, in fact, exist in the given situation. It is highly possible that the process of rendering intuitive will produce a distorted representation of the original reality and the predictions made could be totally or partially wrong. (p. 12)

Furthermore, in terms of a guide for moral reasoning, Fischbein observed that intuition could lead to “an a priori knowledge” (p. 4) of actions that are right and wrong.

Because of intuition’s potential for inaccuracy, I concluded that NATO leaders’ reliance on intuitive knowledge without using a formal framework to guide moral decisions could lead to harmful consequences, which I will discuss in the next section.

What perceptions did senior military leaders hold about consequences associated with coercive communication?

NATO leaders considered the consequences of communication actions and they perceived many of the positive and negative outcomes of coercion. These leaders understood the ethical importance of revealing the intent of threats and conveying “information about a bargainer’s preferences” (Rubin & Brown, 1975, p. 279). They understood that coercive tactics could increase the chances of *quickly* achieving compliance (De Dreu, 1995; Rubin & Brown, 1975), which became especially valuable to leaders who faced crises that placed time constraints on decision-making processes. They also understood the importance of using coercion as a last resort, thus preferring to use cooperative communication strategies that promoted “the development of trust and a mutually beneficial, cooperative relationship” (Rubin & Brown, 1975, p. 263).

NATO leaders were also aware of coercion's negative consequences: that choosing coercive rather than collaborative tactics could "tend to elicit greater hostility" (De Dreu, 1995, p. 652). They expressed concern over having to follow through on threats, which implied they understood Schelling's (1980) position that a threat could require a leader to "do, in a contingency, what he would manifestly prefer not to do if the contingency occurred" (p. 123). They also understood that *not* following through on a threat could damage NATO's credibility and, thus, reduce the chances for success of future coercive communication tactics.

The question of whether NATO leaders were able to distinguish between concepts as finite as *threat* and *warning* was, however, unclear. I was unable to interpret whether NATO leaders understood the consequences of their reliance on intuition as a basis for moral reasoning. First, it appeared from my analysis that NATO leaders would benefit from a more precise understanding of differences between threat and promise as coercive communication tactics. I based this conclusion on several ethical principles. For instance, *conditional* threats attempt to exert control and they deny personal freedom. Such tactics would be more difficult to justify from a deontological perspective. Threats also reduce the number of strategic moves or choices available to a decision maker. As Schelling (1980) pointed out, a failed *conditional* threat forces reduces a decision maker's strategic alternatives to two: act on a condition one would prefer not to carry out, or balk and destroy credibility. Either alternative, according to Schelling, "makes one worse off than he need be" (p. 123).

A *warning*, unlike a threat, is issued *without* condition. According to Schelling (1980), a warning provides information about consequences that *could* be "painful to the

adversary if the latter fails to comply” (p. 123). However, since a warning is issued without condition, there is no requirement on the part of the transmitter to follow through on actions that could make both parties worse off. Hence, the transmitter of a warning preserves a wider range of choices than the transmitter of a threat.

Furthermore, threats could be seen as more ethical from a philosophical perspective. A threat “is designed to alter the beliefs and actions of others in a direction favorable to yourself” (Dixit & Nalebuff, 1991, p. 120). A warning plays “an informational role” by merely conveying factual information or indicating intent without condition (p. 126). In summary, both coercive threats and warnings could be considered ethical means of avoiding deadly conflict. However, warnings might be considered more ethical than threats by virtue of their symmetrical communication structure, their use in promoting *mutual* understanding, and the unconditional nature that permits greater choice in avoiding unwanted consequences.

Second, I viewed the apparent inability of NATO leaders to identify a formal means for justifying communication choices and their over reliance on intuition as justification for the model of communication proposed in this study. Intuition’s vulnerability as a “potential source of error” (Fischbein, 1987, p. 12) invalidates its usefulness as a *sole* or *primary* source of moral guidance. Errors in intuitive reasoning could lead to decisions that produce unwanted communication consequences. Furthermore, basing moral decisions on intuitive knowledge developed from a set of personal experiences, cognitions, or beliefs could introduce into the moral reasoning process risks of subjectivity or ethical relativism.

However, intuitive knowledge could be, as Fischbein (1987) wrote, “a method, a sort of mental strategy [*sic*] which is able to reach the essence of phenomena” (p. 3) or designate “forms of immediate knowledge” (p. 4). In this context, intuitive knowledge could become a useful means of triangulation when used in conjunction with more credible, external, and formal means of moral reasoning. As a result of this interpretation, I have concluded this discussion section with a proposed model that could be used to formally guide a moral-reasoning process, incorporate ethics in communication decisions, and justify communication choices.

Toward a Theory of Just Communication

At the conclusion of the excellence study in public relations, L. Grunig et al. (2002) cited the need for research “to develop a theory of ethical decision making in public relations” (p. 554). This study moves ethics research in public relations beyond the personal ethics of practitioners to a level that represents the “ethical conscience of an organization” (p. 554). Moving in this direction brings public relations – in theory and practice – closer to “a management function primarily responsible for introducing moral values and social responsibility into organizational decisions” (p. 554).

The following model has been revised from the initial model presented in Table 3, using feedback obtained during elite and focus group interviews. This model has been modified to support decision-making at the senior public relations manager level; in national, multinational, and global settings; and in a variety of situations, from peace to conflict. This model also incorporates suggested axioms, rules, and principles for an ethical theory of public relations adapted from L. Grunig et al. (2002, pp. 554-556):

1. A strategy that supports an understanding of organizational, member, and

stakeholder values; and an understanding of how strategic choice should be an ethical process.

2. A moral imperative to manage relations with publics affected by organizational decisions and to value dialogic (symmetrical) communication over other forms of communication.
3. An ethical approach that:
 - a. Considers the consequences of organizational decisions on affected publics (teleology).
 - b. Accepts a moral obligation to disclose consequences of organizational decisions on affected publics and to manage those consequences through dialogic communication (deontology).
4. Includes stages of moral reasoning that affirm:
 - a. The organization is acting based on moral reason (and not for reasons based on politics, monetary gain, or self-interests).
 - b. The organization considers implications for publics as well as for the organization.
 - c. The organization considers its social responsibilities to the organization, to strategic publics, and to society.
 - d. The organization relies on symmetrical communication throughout the decision-making process.

A Model for Making Justifiable Communication Choices

The following model represents a revision to Table 3. The revised model incorporates concerns and suggestions communicated by interview participants.

Table 5

Revised Model for Making Justifiable Communication Choices

1. *Detect and Construct.* Use strategic public relations management to *detect* threats and *construct* the situation. Identify and prioritize key publics. Evaluate relationships and compare perceptions held by the organization and publics of each other. Organize or strengthen coalitions to empower collective action. Base communication on dialogue (two-way, symmetrical).
2. *Define* available communication strategies and tactics. Evaluate each communication option, using a *formal* reasoning process that considers ethics, effectiveness, and efficiency of options. Ensure that concepts and process are culturally appropriate. Define a public relations strategy. Continue dialogue. Identify and evaluate secondary communication options. Consider asymmetrical communication tactics such as coercion only as a short-term tactic if dialogic communication fails. Base overall communication strategy on dialogue, which values collaboration and long-term, mutually-beneficial relationships.
3. *Select* primary and optional communication strategies and tactics, guided by the following principles:
 - a. Select tactics appropriate to the situation that can be justified cross-culturally.
 - b. Implement persuasive communication tactics such as coercion only if intentions can be justified cross-culturally.
 - c. Use persuasive communication tactics such as coercion as a last resort, after all other options have failed or been considered.

- d. Do not use persuasive communication tactics unless they stand a reasonable chance to succeed in establishing, restoring, or protecting just values (e.g., freedom in large, long-term relationships). The concepts of value and freedom must be understood across cultures.
4. *Confirm* communication alternatives. Obtain approval or ensure that approval has been received from an appropriate authority (e.g., legal, political, military) before employing coercive means of communication. Avoid indiscriminate use of coercive tactics – even those limited to non-physical acts.
5. *Behave* by implementing strategies designed to communicate with affected publics through dialogue. If a public responds dialogically, continue two-way, symmetrical communication. If a public responds asymmetrically or refuses to communicate, consider using negotiation or employ persuasive tactics – including coercion, if necessary – to restore dialogue. While communicating, adhere to the following constraints:
 - a. To remain ethical, disclose the intent of communication.
 - b. Limit persuasion or coercion to a level commensurate to the most severe threat associated with the situation. For instance, use warnings rather than threats if the less invasive tactic is sufficient to restore dialogue.
 - c. Discriminate between publics when implementing persuasive communication. Do not use persuasive communication (e.g., psychological operations, coercion) that could have unintended consequences on publics not involved in the situation.

6. *Evaluate* and *Scan*. *Evaluate* communication outcomes and effects. If dialogue and relationships have been restored, continue dialogue. If conflict remains, reevaluate and reprogram. Conduct research and report lessons learned that promote better understanding of how strategic communication and public relations contribute to conflict resolution and relationship management. Once conflict is resolved, continue to *scan* and manage relationships with dialogue until another conflict situation is identified.

This revised model is illustrated in Figure 7 on the following page.

Evaluation

My goal for this qualitative study was to arrive at a deep understanding of a complex social phenomenon: the case of how NATO managed public relations during peace operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1995 and 1996. I have arrived at that understanding, which is a *much* deeper than the understanding I had previously achieved as a former participant in these peace operations.

To achieve my goal I used a “systematic, empirical strategy for answering questions” (Locke et al., 2000, p. 96) and relied on two of the unique strengths of the qualitative research genre: *exploration* and *description* (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). I avoided potential biases by rejecting the credibility of *my* experiences during peace operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Instead, I situated other participants in the social context of NATO’s peace operations and described *their* experiences. By reporting the descriptions of others, I was able to provide support for the analysis and interpretation of results in this study: my “warrant for a claim” (Locke et al., p. 117).

Model for Making Justifiable Communication Choices

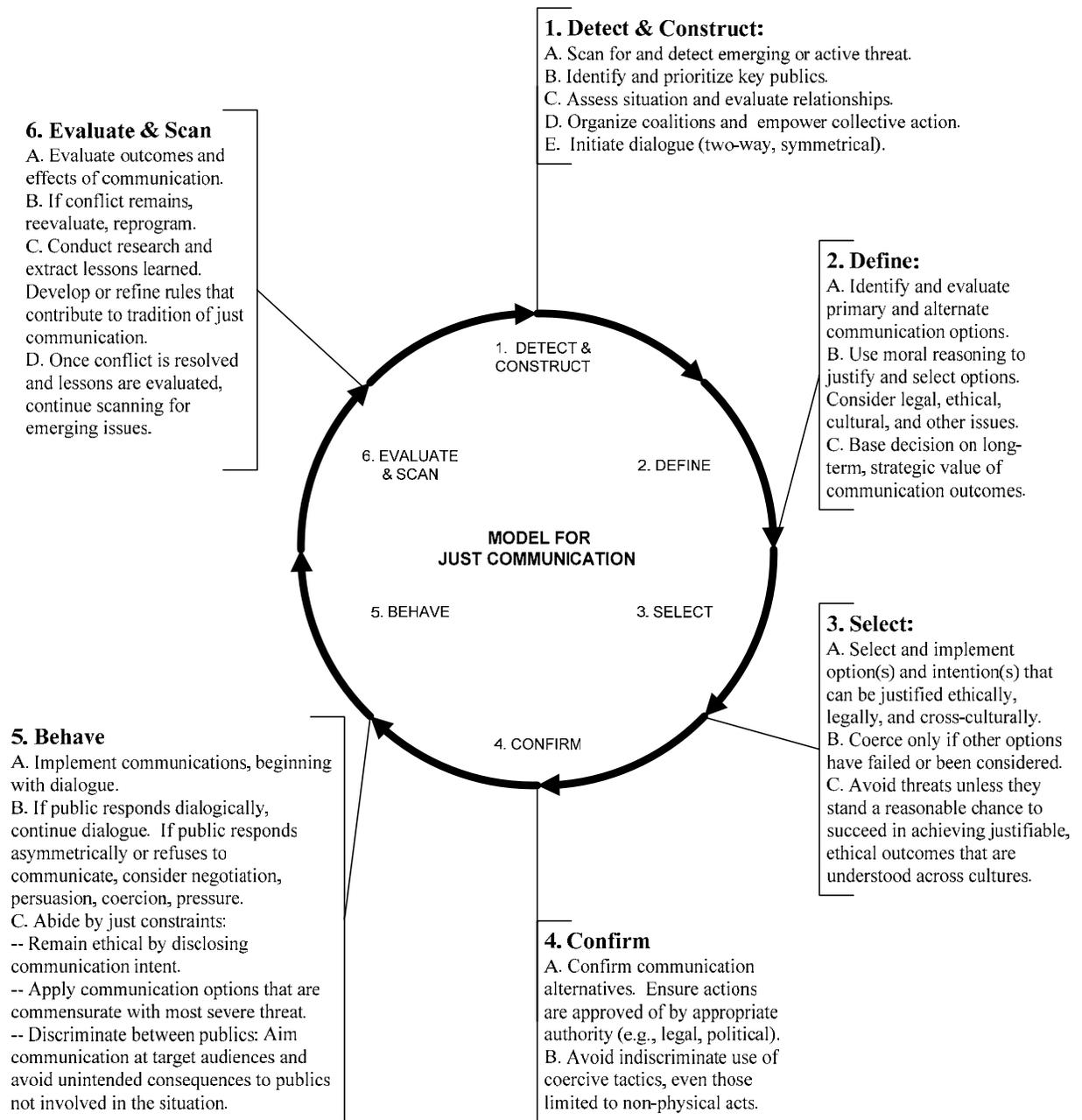


Figure 7. Moral Framework for Justifying Communication Choices (Revised)

My research strategy ensured that I remained logical, rigorous, and scientific in my “search for facts” (Barzun & Graf, 1992, p. 13). This strategy incorporated a clearly stated research purpose and questions. Thanks to advice offered by my committee members, I was able to revise and state this purpose in concise terms. I then used my purpose like an internal compass to point the way as I progressed through various research stages. I also used an extensive literature review to identify the theoretical foundation for this study and explain how relevant concepts would be operationalized in the social context of my research setting. I employed long interview, elite interview, and focus group interview methods to answer research questions. Combining these three types of interviews helped to make my results more credible (McCracken, 1988; Stake, 1995). Finally, as I have explained in depth, I relied on Wolcott’s (1994) approach to description, analysis, and interpretation as a means to report this study’s results in a way that both readers and researcher would understand.

I have exercised great care and discipline in adhering to my research strategy. I believe this approach produced a *credible* research report that will withstand rigorous and repeated scrutiny. Yes, I rejected objectivity in this study; however, I avoided pure subjectivity by recognizing my role as an instrument of research and by revealing and managing my potential biases. I documented and evaluated my role and my potential biases through reflexive writing in memoranda, in observer comments, in summaries of interviews, and in sections of this report. I also adopted “an attitude of detachment” (Vidich & Lyman, 1998, p. 42) to distance myself from interview participants with whom I had former professional and personal relations. This detachment enhanced the

credibility of research results by allowing me to more accurately observe participants from a critical distance (Crane, 2000; McCracken, 1988).

I have also fulfilled important goals in this research by acknowledging and protecting participants from the minimal risks associated with conducting and reporting the results of interviews. I gained approval from my university's institutional review board to conduct human subject research and I adhered to ethical rules that apply to this research. I have explained procedures that I used to implement these protections elsewhere in my paper, and I have provided in the appendices examples of how I disclosed these risks to participants through interview protocols.

Limitations

Along with the many successes associated with this research, I recognize some limitations of this study. First, as an instrumental case study, this research was limited to observation of a *single* multinational organization: NATO. Some critics may wonder what can be learned from only one organization. This study has been carried out in the spirit of Wolcott's (1995) answer to that question: "Why, [we learn] all we can!" (p. 171). My intent was not to generalize, except to theory. My intent was to gain deep understanding of NATO and of the theoretical concepts that NATO applied to its public relations programs. However, understanding how public relations management operates in a global sense could be enriched by studies of multinational organizations other than NATO.

Second, my access to the natural field of study was limited. Douglas (1998) advocated, "Get out and do it" (p. 157). His appeal referred to the *direct* experience of working with naturally occurring data in the field, which Douglas viewed as "the most

reliable form of knowledge about the social world” (p. 7). Unfortunately, it is no longer possible to “get out” and observe IFOR. IFOR, NATO’s peace *implementation* force, was recreated in 1996 – under different leadership and public relations management – as a peace *stabilization* force, SFOR. Therefore, I had to rely on interviews with former IFOR members to gain access to an organization that no longer existed. Organizational documents and historical texts could have provided other forms of evidence that would restore some of IFOR’s “vanishing subject matter” (M. Gergen & K. Gergen, 2000, p. 1039). However, the delimiting of methods necessary to achieve the desired scope in this study did not allow such inquiry.

Third, like vanishing subject matter, qualified participants who could recall their experiences in IFOR are dispersing throughout the world and are becoming more difficult to locate as time passes. Hence, this study was subjected to sampling limits. I relied on convenience samples of participants who fulfilled interview criteria. These criteria included location (e.g., participants who lived or worked near my home, or participants who could be located and contacted by telephone) and language ability (e.g., participants who were able to contribute to a discussion in English). Even for participants who could be located, passing time and deteriorating recall of lived experiences in Bosnia-Herzegovina reduce the credibility of their reports. Second, my interview criteria limited participation in interviews to English-language speakers. This was necessary to for me, a native English speaker, to uncover meaning – especially in focus groups. However, this language criterion prevented me from accessing the experiences of IFOR members from other, non-English speaking nations. The experiences of these individuals could have

contributed in important ways to a deeper understanding of the IFOR case, especially with regard to cultural and global public relations issues.

Fourth, the interview methods chosen for this study were limitations as well as strengths. While interviews did help uncover deep meaning, they also took place in unnatural settings: homes and office spaces rather than in IFOR's field of operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Again, this was unavoidable, given the vanishing nature of IFOR's direct experience.

Fifth, my sample of NATO public relations managers who served in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1995 and 1996 was limited in terms of gender. Most of the NATO military public affairs managers who deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina during this period were male, since most senior military public relations positions in NATO were held by males at that time. During this research project, I interviewed two of the only women who deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina to serve in senior NATO public relations management positions between 1995 and 1996. The disparity between numbers of female and male participants in my study posed a potential problem: lack of requisite variety. Requisite variety in terms of racial, ethnic, and cultural demographics was evident in my sample of interview participants. However, the disproportionately low number of women interviewed for this study fell below the gender threshold of requisite variety between NATO and the alliance's key publics – an important characteristic of the excellence theory.

As I have previously explained, I did not attempt to achieve a representative sample of interview participants in this qualitative study. Instead, my research design relied on convenience, purposive, and snowball samples, which are non-probability

sampling techniques. Still, the lack of female voices in this study could have obscured the meaning that women made of public relations experiences in Bosnia-Herzegovina and led to a male-biased description of NATO's peace implementation operations there. In retrospect, I could have employed quota or dimensional sampling (Broom & Dozier, 1990) to increase the number of women in my study. These non-probability techniques focus on important criteria or strata of a population (e.g., gender) to ensure that the sample reflects key characteristics of that population.

After considering the strengths and limitations of this study, I have found the most important aspect of this research to be its theoretical contributions. I have overcome limitations and used the strengths of this research to help build theory in at least two ways. First, I have proposed an ethical model of communication that extends the excellence theory in public relations. Second, I have identified generic principles and environmental variables that contribute to development of a global theory in public relations. Next, I will explain these implications and their significance to theory, practice, and society.

Evaluation of Self as Instrument of Research

In Chapter I, I reflected on issues that related to my dual roles as a former NATO public relations manager and as a researcher. As a qualitative researcher, I also discussed how my role as an instrument of research – including my interactions with participants in this research – could influence results of this study. Furthermore, I identified actions or “coping strategies” (Wolcott, 1995, p. 159) that I would employ (e.g., writing reflexive memoranda) to manage the potential effects of this influence.

Wolcott's (1990, 1994, 1995, 2001) perspective of qualitative research as science *and* art influenced my approach to this study. As I became immersed in my research, I, like Wolcott (1994), tried "to understand [what I was observing], rather than to convince" (p. 369) other scientists. Although I endeavored to establish the credibility of my work, I focused more on the communication and construction of meaning in my study than I did on searching for validity and reliability (Kvale, 1995; Wolcott, 1994, 1995). I rejected the concepts of validity and reliability from a qualitative perspective but I wrestled with the notion that bias may have crept into my study and I may not have "gotten to the bottom of things" (Wolcott, 1995, p. 126). Wolcott (1995) summarized this notion:

We can never get all the possible detail into the figurative canvases we set out to paint, and of what we do get, as Geertz reminds us, we can never escape the suspicion that we are not quite getting it right. (p. 126)

As I neared completion of this dissertation and became more confident in applying the scholarly knowledge and research skills learned in the academy, I enjoyed a greater sense of freedom and independence in the field than I had previously experienced as a student in the classroom. However, I also recalled Wolcott's (1995) prediction that I would "have to return to academia, and thus to academic scrutiny, to gain an audience" for my research results (p. 142). This realization was especially important for this study, given the nature of dissertation research and the need to satisfy an audience represented by dissertation committee members – all respected scholars.

Hence, I anticipated that readers would question my research and ask how I could produce credible results from the study of a *single* case (e.g., NATO's management of public relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina) – especially a case that had such personal

meaning for me. By disclosing potential sources of bias and describing how I would manage effects of bias I hoped to establish the credibility of my research results.

Still, after rigorous efforts to identify, disclose, and manage potential biases, some readers may yet fault the credibility of this study's results – especially in light of the exceptionally good fit that resulted between my research questions and the study's results. While I was elated to find that data fit so well, I realized such results could lead to claims that I allowed ego involvement to contaminate my findings. Ego involvement could, indeed, explain how data fit research questions so precisely. According to Meyer (2001), “ego involvement in understanding happens when people let the human side of them dictate their findings” (¶ 7). This is often the case with “members of a researched group” (¶ 7). Thus, my involvement in NATO's peace-implementation operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1995 to 1996 and a sub-conscious need to justify the outcome of public relations programs that I formerly managed could have influenced my analysis and interpretation of data in this study.

In retrospect, exercising reflexivity and creating critical distance helped me to avoid the influence of ego involvement during my study. However, I could also have employed other researchers to assist with the data analysis phase of my study. Incorporating a team approach to data analysis would have strengthened credibility of results and provided a stronger case for rejecting claims of ego involvement.

I concluded, however, that a good fit between data and research questions was not necessarily the result of researcher bias. It is plausible that this study's sound research methods and accurate description, analysis, and interpretation of data revealed empirical

evidence of excellent public relations in the case of NATO's operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. I offer the following warrants for this claim.

First, I managed potential biases by carefully creating critical distance between interview participants and me. I was diligent in disclosing my role as a researcher and identifying the purposes of this study. I gave participants voice, I remained open to their perspectives, and I provided opportunity for new discoveries. Even while interpreting participants' responses, I resisted imposing my selective judgment on their descriptions of experiences in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Second, I used three different interview methods: long, elite, and focus group. Long and elite interviews were similar in terms of protocol; however, these two interview methods were vastly different in terms of participants. Long interviews were conducted with public relations managers. Elite interviews were conducted with senior leaders – members of NATO's dominant coalition – who made decisions based on advice from public relations managers. By probing each of these organizational levels I was able to achieve co-orientation and determine how managers and senior officials thought of each other and interacted to plan and conduct NATO's public relations activities. Focus group discussions added breadth to the deep understanding achieved during one-on-one interviews. Breadth revealed dimensions of ethics, culture, and law not observed during long or elite interviews. Still, despite differences in interview methods, data obtained from long, elite, and focus group interviews were strikingly consistent.

Third, strong evidence of matching themes or patterns in data, which I discussed in Chapters IV and V, supported the credibility of findings. These patterns were revealed early in the interview schedule, after approximately six long interviews. Patterns were

also consistent across organizational levels and cultural boundaries. Patterns were similar among public relations managers and senior leaders and did not vary between nationality and other demographic differences. Additional interviews – including elite and focus group interviews – confirmed that data saturation or redundancy was achieved.

Fourth, following Wolcott's (1995) advice, I established a reliable "paper trail" (p. 127), which consisted of transcripts, observer comments, memoranda, and other records of interviews. This paper trail could be used by other researchers to replicate or extend this research study and develop their own interpretations.

Fifth, the length of this study was more than sufficient to collect, analyze, and interpret data – and produce credible results. Wolcott (1995) established three months as the minimum period for field research (p. 110) and one year as the ideal period (p. 77). I began interviews in 2000 and concluded interviews in 2005. This span of fieldwork allowed my qualitative research to develop over time and benefit from cumulative comparison of data that were collected as interviewing progressed. Valuable insights were gained from scholarly critiques of papers that reported initial results of this research. These insights were used to improve research design and add to credibility of the final results. The iterative nature of this process and strength of the cumulative comparison approach to data collection and analysis thereby minimized the effects of ego involvement or other potential biases.

Finally, I am satisfied with the results of this research effort. I accept that others may come to their own conclusions about my findings. Scholarly dialogue over differences in interpretation of these results can only contribute value to this research program and add more to the public relations body of knowledge.

Implications

In the introduction to this research, I explained how I would apply Marshall and Rossman's (1999) framework to determine how this study was significant. This study has generated several implications that are of significant value to public relations theory, to public relations practice, and to society.

Implications for Theory

This study began as an exploratory study that sought to understand and describe how NATO, a multinational, political-military organization, applied principles of the excellence theory in public relations. As I continued to collect, analyze, and interpret data, new theoretical questions – and answers – became apparent, as often is the case with qualitative research. Taking advantage of the iterative, continuous nature of qualitative methodology, I sought to understand how this multinational organization used coercion in strategic public relations management. From this investigation emerged new understanding of excellence in public relations. This understanding revealed how the multinational NATO alliance used coercion within a framework of symmetrical communication to manage lethal conflict, establish or restore relationships, and achieve excellent public relations outcomes with ethical intent. Finally, this study identified a theoretical framework for moral reasoning that helps leaders and managers avoid relativism while incorporating ethics into decisions about communication and public relations. Hence, this study evolved from an exploratory study of excellence principles to an explanatory study that advances an ethical principle of excellence and extends the excellence theory to international conflict situations.

What do these results imply for the public relations body of knowledge? First, these findings explain how public relations managers and senior leaders *can* include coercive communication in a symmetrical model of communication. This integrated, coercive-collaborative model of communication (similar to the mixed-motive communication continuum) has normative and positive value in managing asymmetrical conflict situations in which one or more parties demonstrate no willingness to cooperate. This represents a major theoretical leap forward from previous perspectives of the excellence theory that viewed communication primarily as a symmetrical model. This coercive-collaborative communication model of excellence in public relations still values the establishment and maintenance of long-term, symmetrical relationships. Moreover, this extension of the excellence theory demonstrates how symmetrical outcomes can be achieved through *ethical* application of short-term coercive as well as collaborative communication tactics.

Second, these findings respond to criticism of the excellence theory as a normative theory that has limited application to practice. For instance, advocates of contingency theory have claimed that adherence to a symmetrical model of communication renders the excellence theory inadequate to help organizations manage asymmetrical situations. However, other scholars have rejected contingency approaches to public relations, citing the risk of ethical relativism. The findings of this study bridge the theoretical gap between excellence and contingency theories. The integrative approach to coercive and collaborative communication can help manage a wide range of contingencies; and the proposed ethical framework for moral reasoning can help overcome problems of relativism. Furthermore, this approach can be carried out while

remaining within the behavioral molecule of strategic public relations management and the basic principles of the excellence theory.

Third, this study contributed to development of a global theory in public relations. Findings that NATO applied nine generic principles of public relations provided strong support for development of global theory. Furthermore, this study identified several external, environmental variables described by a global theory that influence the application of public relations in multinational, multicultural organizations.

Finally, this study has contributed to a deeper theoretical understanding of organizational culture. The multicultural setting of this study revealed the existence of an organizational constellation of cultures that represents how divided cultures operate in multinational alliances and coalitions. This discovery is especially significant to research that combines the study of communication and culture in a multinational context.

Implications for Practice

This study's findings have several implications for public relations practitioners. This instrumental case study focused on a single organization: NATO. However, the implications of this study apply to any multinational organization that faces conflict. Whether an organization is political, governmental, non-governmental, military, public or private, these findings apply to senior leaders and managers who make ethical decisions about communication as a means to build strategic relationships and reduce costs associated with regulation, litigation, and pressure group campaigns.

First, results demonstrated that senior leaders and public relations practitioners in NATO depend on an informal sense of personal intuition to guide ethical decisions about communication practices. This study produced a formal model that combines a moral-

reasoning process with a strategic public relations management process. This model provides a reliable means to incorporate ethics into decision-making, which helps to justify selection of communication choices – including coercion in conflict situations.

Second, research results demonstrated how subcultures in multinational alliances form, interact with, and shape organizational worldview and communication. This study and others have demonstrated the powerful cultural influence of senior leaders and public relations managers who formulate and distribute communication strategy throughout an organization. Hence these results have important implications for practitioners who manage global communication activities in multinational organizations.

Third, interview participants expressed concerns over a possible merger of military public relations and psychological operations into a single function. This merger, as it was described by participants, appeared to be similar to the debate over integrated marketing communication in the private sector, which combines public relations with marketing (see Hutton, 2001). This study focused on public relations management and did not attempt to explore in depth this allegation or other organizational communication functions. However, such mergers of public relations with other communication functions like marketing or psychological operations could damage the credibility and efficacy of public relations. Hence, the proposed model of ethical communication and lessons learned about NATO's application of excellence principles could represent important considerations for any organization planning such a merger.

Implications for Society

Perhaps this study's most significant contribution is the way in which it demonstrated how political-military organizations like NATO can contribute to society

by managing international conflict in an ethical manner. Testimony from participants in this study has shown how ethical, excellent approaches to communication and public relations management can help to deter violent conflict, manage conflict, reduce costs to an organization, and – most significantly – preserve human life. Given the current international security situation and international efforts to combat terrorism, I believe it is essential to develop ethical and pragmatic communication strategies that organizational leaders and communication practitioners can use to manage asymmetrical threats to societies around the world.

Future Research

Building on this study of NATO, I would like to move from a single, instrumental study to a collective case study of several multinational organizations. Studies of similar alliances – the United Nations or the Organization of American States, for example – could contribute to development of a global theory of public relations. Furthermore, results of a collective study might help to generalize further about the excellence theory in public relations by demonstrating in a variety of multinational organizations how excellence principles are conceptualized and applied.

I also intend to continue research efforts that contribute to the development of an ethical theory of public relations. The coalescent argumentation approach by Gilbert (1997) shows promise as a framework for symmetrical communication strategies that incorporate persuasion and coercion as short-term tactics. Also, more study is needed to extend my proposed model for justifying communication choices across cultures.

The way in which NATO's multinational, political-military alliance incorporated subcultures also offers fertile ground for future studies. I believe there is a lack of public

relations research in multicultural, multinational organizational communication. Given the powerful influence of globalization on our society, more knowledge of how divided organizational cultures influence communication is needed. This knowledge could contribute significantly to development of global public relations theory and suggest ethical communication practices that apply to most regions of the world.

Finally, the reported debate over U.S. military efforts to combine public affairs and psychological operations functions is worthy of attention. Already, reports of U.S. government efforts to establish an office of strategic influence and the placement of military public affairs under a U.S. information operations office in Iraq have brought into question the credibility of military public relations. Such initiatives, which seem to violate principles of the excellence theory in public relations, could have long-term consequences for the credibility of public relations practice in all professional sectors. It may prove valuable to conduct a study of how the behavior of combined public affairs-information operations departments is associated with principles of the excellence theory; or how a model of just communication might be used to examine the ethical nature of information activities that mix public relations with propaganda activities.

Finally, after more than four years of study, I still have left largely untouched a virtual treasure chest of historical, organizational documents that describe NATO's management of public relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1995 to 1996. Since access to IFOR's natural setting is limited, textual analysis of IFOR documents may provide additional access to data and insight into the strategic communication behavior of this organization. Van Dyke (2003a) used historical-critical method to analyze how NATO rhetorically constructed IFOR's identity. This study helped to explain how NATO

developed and carried out IFOR's public relations strategy. In this study, I incorporated a strategic approach to historical-critical analysis proposed by Medhurst, Ivie, Wander, and Scott (1997), who noted, "A strategic approach ... is predicated upon a realist view of the world; not the world as it ought to be or as we might wish it to be, but the world as it currently exists with its varying political systems, governmental philosophies, economic assumptions, power relationships, and dominant personalities" (p. 19). Future studies of this type could provide even greater understanding of the strategic intent behind NATO's management of public relations in Balkan peace operations.

Concluding Remarks

I have explained how NATO strategically managed public relations programs that supported peace operations in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1995 to 1996. This explanation has provided a deeper understanding than existed before of how NATO leaders and public relations managers chose communication tactics and strategy.

The understanding produced by this study has helped me to achieve my purpose. I have proposed and tested a model of ethical communication that scholars and practitioners could use to justify decisions about public relations and communication. This model extends the excellence theory and contributes to development of a global theory in public relations. These results fill important theoretical gaps and provide useful applications for practitioners.

Moreover, results of this study have answered important personal questions – answers that could also be of use to readers of this study. I began this study with a general assumption, based on personal experience and anecdotal evidence, that NATO had achieved excellent outcomes through the IFOR's public relations programs in

Bosnia-Herzegovina. At least, if the number of lives saved by NATO's peace operations in that country were any measure, IFOR's public relations programs certainly met the goals of NATO's communication goals. This study provided *empirical* evidence that IFOR did apply the excellence theory and achieve excellent communication outcomes.

However, I still did not understand how IFOR might have applied principles of the excellence theory to their public relations programs without knowledge of the excellence theory. In one of the last meetings with my advisor, before I submitted this dissertation to my committee, Dr. James E. Grunig answered the latter question. During our meeting, he reminded me, "People don't have to know about a theory to behave in a manner consistent with that theory" (J. Grunig, personal communication, May 2, 2005). His sage advice seems to have been exemplified by a comment from one of this study's long-interview participants.

As I concluded my interview with this Canadian public affairs officer who served in Bosnia-Herzegovina, I asked him if there was anything else he would like to say. His answer seemed to reflect general principles of the excellence theory and capture the essence of successful communication in multinational, multicultural organizations. His reply also seemed to emerge from his own personal convictions, perhaps from his cultural roots, influenced by his upbringing and education – and even more by his deeply moving experiences in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Regardless, without expert knowledge of the excellence theory, he demonstrated here how IFOR acted in accordance with the excellence theory, which helped this coalition succeed in their public relations mission, and helped save lives:

I do think that the ... examination of the cultural factors and influences, of IFOR

particularly, are worth... real scrutiny.... I don't see that experience duplicated. And you know, through the combination of the factors that we discussed before. You know, as an example of excellence in PI ... when you look at some of the academic theoretical constructs, you could make the case that ... the IFOR experience fits that, but I think that through an understanding of the communications theory, it underplays ... the real ... strengths [of IFOR public relations]: one's *values* and *ethics* and *culture* [italics added]... factor[s] worthy of further exploration.

This concludes my dissertation – and the scholarly journey that moved me from “the realms of subjectivity, historical passions, and emotional relationships” (Crane, 2000, p. xi) to a scientific understanding of what happened with IFOR's public relations programs in Bosnia-Herzegovina ... and why this is important.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE -- PUBLIC RELATIONS PRINCIPLES

LONG INTERVIEWS

Pre-brief

My name is Mark Van Dyke and I am a Ph.D. student in the Communication Department at the University of Maryland. I am collecting information for a research project related to the roles, responsibilities, and activities of public relations (public information) practitioners in the NATO alliance and IFOR coalition. I also am interested in how NATO's and IFOR's public relations programs might compare to the theory of excellence in public relations. The information I obtain from this interview will be incorporated in my research report and may be quoted for academic purposes. This information also may be used in professional articles, conference papers, or other publications in the future. However, your name will not be associated with any of these direct quotations. I will record this interview on audiotape in order to ensure accuracy when I later review and analyze your responses. Do you have any questions before I proceed?

Consent

1. Do I have your permission to conduct and audio record this interview? (For face-to-face interviews, obtain signature. For telephone interviews, read informed consent form and state date and time.)

Interview

2. Please tell me your first name and current position, duties, and responsibilities.
3. What kinds of experience have you had with public relations. (Number of years? Types of organizations? Positions held?)
4. What about experience in alliances/coalitions? (Number of months or years? Type of organization? Position held?)
5. In your experience, how would you describe the types of public relations programs that you have worked with and what has been your role in these programs? (What were some of the functions and activities that best describe these public relations programs and roles?)
6. Tell me about the public relations/information departments you have been part of. (Was it a separate function? Integrated with other information activities? How did you communicate with your publics? Other? How so?)

7. Who is/was the senior person in your PR/PI department? (Please describe.)
8. Who does/did this person report to? Please describe the relationship that you/senior PR person have/had with the senior management in this organization? What type of influence did you/he/she have? Please explain. How many times did you/she/he meet?
9. How would you describe the levels of professional knowledge and training in management and public relations/information in the department?
10. Within this alliance/coalition organization, how would you describe the view held by the senior leaders and others of public relations/information? Did you and your bosses share an understanding of PR/PI? How was your organization structured? What is/was the communications “climate” within the organization? Do/Did leaders have an “open door” or “closed door”?
11. What kinds of audiences or publics influence/influenced your organization? What type of environment does this organization operate within?
12. How would you rate the overall results and effects of this public relations/information program? How do you believe this program influences/influenced the organization and its goals?
13. How would you characterize morale and job satisfaction in the public relations department? Organization? To what would you attribute this level of morale? How would you describe the organizational climate for equal opportunity/diversity?
14. Is there anything you would like to add?

Debrief

This concludes the interview. Thank you for your participation. Again, the purpose of my study is to evaluate the roles, responsibilities, and activities of public relations (public information) practitioners in NATO and IFOR, and to determine how public relations theory might apply. Your participation in this study and the information you have provided has been very useful. Please contact my advisor, Dr. James E. Grunig, or me, using information on the copy of the consent form that has been provided to you, if you have questions or comments about this study.

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APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE – ETHICS & MORAL REASONING

ELITE INTERVIEWS

Pre-brief

My name is Mark Van Dyke and I am a Ph.D. student in the Department of Communication at the University of Maryland. I am collecting information for a research project related to the roles, responsibilities, and activities of public relations (public information) practitioners in the NATO alliance and IFOR coalition. I also am interested in how senior leaders and public relations managers in multinational alliances and coalitions make decisions about communication and public relations strategies. I may incorporate information and quotes from this interview in my research report, but only for academic purposes. I also may use this information in professional articles, conference papers, or other publications in the future. However, your name will not be associated with any direct quotations. I will record this interview on audiotape in order to ensure accuracy when I later review and analyze your responses. Do you have any questions before I proceed?

Consent

1. Do I have your permission to conduct and audio record this interview? (For face-to-face interviews, obtain signature. For telephone interviews, read informed consent form and state date and time.)

Interview

2. For the record, please state your first name, current position, duties, and responsibilities.

2a. Just out of curiosity, where did you grow up?

3. What kinds of experience have you had with public relations. (Number of years? Types of organizations? Positions held?)

3a. *Probe:* If you don't consider yourself to be a public relations specialist, have you supervised public relations managers or programs?

3b. *Probe:* If so, in what capacity?

3c. *Probe:* How would you describe the kinds of public relations practiced by your organization and how is/was public relations valuable to your organization?

4. Please talk about your experience in NATO, IFOR, or other alliances or coalitions like them. (Where? Number of months or years? Type of organization? Position held?)

5. In your past or present position with NATO/IFOR (or other alliance/coalition), to what extent did you consider, select, or authorize choices of communication or public relations strategies or tactics associated with your organization?

5a. *Probe:* How would you describe your responsibilities in this regard (e.g., considering, selecting, or authorizing these strategies or tactics)?

5b. *Probe:* How did these decisions depend on other members of your alliance or coalition? In other words, to what extent did you coordinate decisions between your organization and other members of your alliance or coalition?

6. Please describe the type of communication or public relations strategies and tactics you most often approved or relied on to communicate with your organization's public audiences.

6a. *Probe:* By strategies I mean a general approach to communication; by tactics I mean the specific methods or activities you used to communicate.

6b. *Probe:* Why did you choose these strategies or tactics?

6c. *Probe:* Who were your primary audiences; and what relationship did you have with those audiences?

6d. *Probe:* How did you normally communicate with them?

7. *Probe:* How did your audiences communicate with or respond to you and your organization?

7a. *Probe:* How important was having feedback from these audiences to you or your organization?

7b. *Probe:* What kinds of relationships did you have with these audiences?

7c. *Probe:* How did the type of relationship you had with each audience (e.g., friendly or hostile, important or unimportant) affect the communication strategy or tactics you used to communicate with them?

8. Please describe the process you used to identify and select different strategies and tactics you might use to communicate with your various audiences.

8a. *Probe:* How did these options relate to or support the overall strategy, goals, and objectives of your organization?

8b. *Probe:* To what extent did ethical considerations influence your choice of communication strategies and tactics?

8c. *Probe:* How did you make ethical decisions in your organization; and which staff members contributed to those decisions?

9. To what extent did conflict situations, as opposed to peaceful situations, affect your choice of communication strategies and tactics?

9a. *Probe:* What other factors influenced your choice of communication strategies and tactics?

9b. *Probe:* Could you provide an example?

10. If you had to deter or stop someone from taking an action you wouldn't want them to take, how would you communicate with them? Please give your first choice, second choice, third choice of communicating, etc.

10a. *Probe*: Again, how would you select and decide on these options?
10b. *Probe*: What factors influence your choice?
10c. *Probe*: Please give me your opinion about the pros and cons of using coercive communication (like threats) as opposed to other forms of communication like dialogue, negotiation, and collaboration?

11. To what extent did you require approval from higher authority to use aggressive forms of communication like threats (or even psychological operations)?

11a. *Probe*: What *kind* of authority did you need to communicate in this way?

11b. *Probe*: How might you have been restricted in using these kinds of communication with certain audiences – friend or foe?

11c. *Probe*: What other limits did you have on communicating in this way?

11d. *Probe*: How important was it for you to disclose the intent of these communications before using them against an audience?

12. Please explain how you evaluated the outcomes of your various public relations and communication programs or identify lessons learned?

12c. *Probe*: When you conducted evaluations of this kind, did you place greater weight on the goals you achieved or on the means used to achieve those goals? In other words, were you most interested in achieving goals or doing the right thing? Explain.

12b. *Probe*: How would you compare the importance of achieving your organization's strategic goals to maintaining good relationships with your publics?

13. What lessons have you learned from your own experiences with public relations?

14. Is there anything you would like to add?

Debrief

This concludes the interview. Thank you for your participation. Again, the purpose of my study is to evaluate the roles, responsibilities, and activities of public relations (public information) practitioners in NATO and IFOR, and to determine how the theories of public relations and moral reasoning might apply. Your participation in this study and the information you have provided has been very useful. Please contact my advisor, Dr. James E. Grunig, or me, using information on the copy of the consent form that has been provided to you, if you have questions or comments about this study.

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APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE – ETHICS & MORAL REASONING

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

Consent

Prior to beginning, have participants complete consent forms and initial a sign-in sheet.

Pre-brief

Hello, everyone, and thank you for agreeing to participate today. My name is Mark Van Dyke from the University of Maryland, and I will moderate our discussion. Information collected from this discussion will support a study that examines how senior leaders and public relations managers in multinational alliances and coalitions make decisions about communication and public relations strategies. Let me begin by reviewing a few things before beginning introductions.

I am very interested in your ideas and opinions, and there are no right or wrong answers, so please participate actively in our discussion. I may incorporate information and quotes I obtain from this interview in my research report, professional articles, conference papers, or other publications in the future. However, this information is being conducted on background, which means I will not associate your name with any direct quotations. I hope these rules will help you feel comfortable and allow you to speak candidly about a variety of topics today. If you are uncomfortable about these rules, please let me know at this time. [Pause, check participants.]

Moving along, I want to concentrate on what you have to say in our discussion, so I am audio taping our discussion and taking brief notes. I will get the details I need from the audiotapes and notes later. Since we are recording, it will be very important for everyone to speak clearly and at least as loudly as I am speaking now.

I have many questions to cover and I'd like to hear from each of you. I may interrupt you at some point to move on to another topic. If I must cut you off, please don't take offense. I will try to come back to you later on. I'm simply trying to manage our discussion so that we can finish within two hours and not waste any of your time.

Does anyone have questions before we begin? Great, I'll turn on my tape recorder, and then we will start with introductions.

[TURN ON TAPE RECORDER]

1. Beginning here [select participant], please tell us your first name *only*, where you grew up, and where you live and work now.

Discussion

Okay, great. I want to start with general terms that relate to our discussion. Let's begin with *public relations*, which the U.S. military and many other nations refer to as public affairs or public information. In my study, I refer to this term as public relations. During our discussion, feel free to use the term you are most familiar with.

2. How would you define public relations?

2a. *Probe*: Please describe how you or the alliance or coalition organization you were associated with practiced public relations.

2b. *Probe*: How was public relations of value to these organizations?

3. In alliances or coalitions, how important is it for public relations managers to be responsible for considering, selecting, or authorizing choices of communication or public relations strategies and tactics?

3a. *Probe*: Please give some examples: How would you describe some of your experiences in this regard?

3b. *Probe*: To what extent should decisions about alliance or coalition public relations strategies be coordinated with other organizations?

4. Please describe the type of alliance or coalition communication or public relations strategies and tactics most often used to communicate with public audiences.

4a. *Probe*: By strategies I mean a general approach to communication; by tactics I mean the specific methods or activities you used to communicate.

4b. *Probe*: How are these strategies or tactics chosen?

4c. *Probe*: Who were your primary audiences; and what relationship did you have with those audiences?

4d. *Probe*: How did you normally communicate with them?

5. *Probe*: How did your audiences communicate with or respond to you and your organization?

5a. *Probe*: How important was having feedback from these audiences to your or your organization?

5b. *Probe*: What kinds of relationships did you have with these audiences?

5c. *Probe*: How did the type of relationship you had with each audience (e.g., friendly or hostile, important or unimportant) affect the communication strategy or tactics you used to communicate with them?

6. Please describe the process you used to identify and select different strategies and tactics you might use to communicate with your various audiences.

6a. *Probe*: How did these options relate to or support the overall strategy, goals, and objectives of your organization?

6b. *Probe*: To what extent did ethical considerations influence your choice of communication strategies and tactics?

6c. *Probe*: How did you make ethical decisions in your organization; and which staff members contributed to those decisions?

7. To what extent did conflict situations, as opposed to peaceful situations, affect your choice of communication strategies and tactics?

7a. *Probe:* What other factors influenced your choice of communication strategies and tactics?

7b. *Probe:* Could you provide an example?

8. If you had to deter or stop someone from taking an action you wouldn't want them to take, how would you communicate with them? Please give your first choice, second choice, third choice of communicating, etc.

8a. *Probe:* What factors influenced your choice?

8b. *Probe:* Please give me your opinion about the pros and cons of threatening publics as opposed to having a dialogue with them?

9. To what extent did you require approval from higher authority to use aggressive forms of communication like threats (or even psychological operations)?

9a. *Probe:* What *kind* of authority did you need to communicate in this way?

9b. *Probe:* How might you have been restricted in using these kinds of communication with certain audiences – friend or foe?

9d. *Probe:* How important was it for you to disclose the intent of these communications before using them against an audience?

10. Please explain how you evaluated the outcomes of your various public relations and communication programs or identify lessons learned?

10a. *Probe:* When you conducted evaluations of this kind, did you place greater weight on the goals you achieved or on the means used to achieve those goals? In other words, were you most interested in achieving goals or doing the right thing? Explain.

10b. *Probe:* How would you compare the importance of achieving your organization's strategic goals to maintaining good relationships with your publics?

11. Before we conclude our discussion, I want to take a moment for you to look at a model for moral reasoning that is being developed to help senior leaders and public relations managers make ethical choices when selecting public relations and communication strategies. [PASS OUT COPIES.] Take a few minutes to read this over and then I want to ask for your reaction. [Allow time for participants to review the model.]

Alright, I would like you to offer your initial reaction to this model. Could this model be useful in selecting certain kinds of aggressive communication strategies – yet remain ethical – in, let's say, a conflict situation? Why or why not?

12. That's all the time we have for our discussion. Before I end, is there anything you would like to add that we haven't already discussed?

[If yes, continue discussion. If no, continue to debriefing.]

Debrief

This concludes the discussion. Please give me the copies of the model I provided you. The model is still under development and I don't want to release copies until my study has been completed. [COLLECT COPIES.]

Thank you for participating. Your contributions will be very valuable to my research. Again, the purpose of my study is to evaluate the roles, responsibilities, and activities of public relations (public information) practitioners in NATO and IFOR, and to determine how the theories of public relations and moral reasoning might apply. Your participation in this study and the information you have provided has been very useful. Please contact my advisor, Dr. James Grunig, or me, using information on the copy of the consent form that has been provided to you, if you have questions or comments about this study. Thank you again. Our discussion is adjourned. Please help yourself to refreshments on the way out.

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APPENDIX D

SCREENING GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

ETHICS & MORAL REASONING

This is Mark Van Dyke, from the University of Maryland, and I'm returning your **[call/e-mail]** about the research project and discussion group that you volunteered for. Is this a convenient time to talk?

- **[If no:]** When could I call back to discuss your possible role in a discussion group?
- **[If person wants to press for brief details now:]** I'm sorry, but I need about five minutes to obtain information from you that will help determine your eligibility for participation in a discussion group and to explain procedures for the discussion group. Do you have five minutes now?
 - **[If no:]** When could I call back? Also, before we hang up, I need to confirm your phone number [e.g., this one and/or a cell phone or other phone] and an e-mail address that I can use to communicate with you.

[If yes, I have time to talk now:] First, thank you for your interest. I'm a doctoral student, working on my dissertation research with Dr. Jim Grunig, who is my advisor and a professor in communication at the University of Maryland. I want to bring people together for discussions about how senior leaders and public relations managers in multinational alliances and coalitions make ethical decisions about communication and public relations strategies. Each discussion group will last up to two hours. You would participate in only one discussion group. Participants will be provided with a light meal during discussions. Discussions will be conducted on background and participants in this project will remain confidential. By this I mean that you only need to use your first name or a nickname during discussions and I will not associate your name with any direct quotations that I may publish in my study. Participation in this project also is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without penalty. Does that sound okay?

- **[If no:]** Thank you, anyway, for your time. We appreciate your interest. Goodbye.

Good. Second, I'd like to ask you a few simple questions to obtain information that will help us to organize discussion groups.

1. Do you have current or previous experience working in a senior leadership or public relations management position in multinational, political-military alliances or coalitions? How about experience with teaching or applying ethics to decision-making?

- [If no, reply:] I'm sorry; due to the nature of our research we are seeking participants who have this type of experience. Thank you for your time, but I am afraid you cannot participate in this particular study. If you wish, I can write down your first name and a way to contact you, in case you might be eligible to participate in a future study. [Write info down.] Thanks again, goodbye.

[If yes, continue.]

2. Where are you employed now and what are your duties?
3. How many years of experience do you have working with public relations? Ethics? In what capacities (types of organizations, positions held, etc.)?

[At this point, assess the English ability of the prospective participant?]

POOR ____ **[If poor:]** I should inform you that English will be the only language spoken during these discussion groups. All participants must be able to express their views clearly and quickly in the discussions. We also must be able to obtain detailed information and understand each participant during discussions. Perhaps it would be best if I take your name and a way to contact you, in case we schedule future groups in which other languages will be spoken. **[Write info down.]** Thank you very much for your time. Goodbye.

GOOD ____ **[If good, continue.]**

4. What is your rank or title and FIRST NAME, or how do you prefer to be addressed?

Thank you. We'll be using only first names or ranks and titles during this project to ensure that participants remain confidential.

5. What is the best way to contact you to set up a time and date for the discussion group? [Telephone, E-mail, etc.:] _____

6. When is the best time to try and contact you?

7. We are planning groups for weekdays and weekends during morning, lunchtime, and evening hours. In the next month, how many of these general times and days will you be available for a discussion group? Please allow three hours for your participation in this group. This time would include getting to and from the group. **[Check all that apply:]**

- a. Which days of the week are best for you?

Weekday ____ [If weekday, which days of week are best?]

Weekend ____ [If weekend, is Saturday or Sunday best?]

b. On these days, which times are best?

Morning _____ [During what times?]

Lunch _____ [During what times?]

Evenings _____ [During what times?]

Okay, I just have a couple more questions to help place you in the appropriate discussion group. What do you consider to be your ethnicity? _____

8. [CHECK FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS] I have one question about your experience in public relations management. I will ask the question and then give you a set of possible answers to choose from.

In your professional experience, how often would you say you have been in situations where you were responsible for selecting, carrying out, or approving public relations/public affairs decisions?

Would you say:

Often _____

A few times _____

Rarely _____

Never _____

9. [CHECK FOR ETHICS] I have one question about your experience in the practice or teaching of ethics. I will ask the question and then give you a set of possible answers to choose from.

In your professional experience, how often would you say you have been in situations where you were responsible for teaching or applying ethics in decision-making?

Would you say:

Often _____

A few times _____

Rarely _____

Never _____

[Identify gender:] MALE _____ FEMALE _____

[If can't tell, ask:] This next question seems silly, but I am required to ask everyone their gender. Are you a male or female? MALE: _____ FEMALE: _____

10. Will you be able to get to the discussion group [identify location] on your own or with the assistance of someone else?

- **[If no:]** I'm sorry, but participants in these discussion groups must arrange for their own transportation to and from discussions. However, I will keep your first name and contact point on file in case you are able to join us for future groups. Thank you for your interest.

[If yes, continue.]

11. Do you need directions to the discussion group?

- **[If yes:]** Provide general/specific directions and contact information.
Telephone:
Web:
Or give general directions:

[If no, proceed to final paragraph:]

Those are all the questions I have for you. Do you have any questions for me?

- **[If yes, try to answer questions without revealing nature of research.]**

[If no:] Well, thank you for your time. I will be back in touch with you in the next week or so to confirm a time and date for your discussion group. In the meantime, feel free to contact me by telephone at [GIVE NUMBER] or by e-mail [GIVE E-MAIL]. I should add that e-mail is probably the best way to contact me.

APPENDIX E

CODING SCHEME FOR INTERVIEWS AND TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

PRINCIPLES OF EXCELLENCE THEORY

Themes: Characteristics of Public Relations Excellence

I. Program Level

I₁ Managed Strategically

II. Department Level

II₂ Single or integrated PR department

II₃ Separate function from marketing

II₄ Direct reporting relationship to senior management

II₅ Two-way symmetrical model

II₆ Senior PR person in managerial role

II₇ Potential for Excellence in PR, as indicated by:
Knowledge of symmetrical model
Knowledge of managerial role
Academic training in PR
Professionalism

II₈ Equal opportunity for men and women in PR

III. Organizational Level

III₉ Worldview of PR reflects two-way symmetrical model

III₁₀ PR director has power in or with the dominant coalition

III₁₁ Participative rather than authoritarian organizational culture

III₁₂ Symmetrical system of internal communication

III₁₃ Organic rather than mechanical organizational structure

III₁₄ Turbulent, complex environment with pressure from activist groups

IV. Effects of PR Program

IV₁₅ Programs meet communication objectives

IV₁₆ Reduces costs of regulation, pressure, and litigation

IV₁₇ Job satisfaction is high among employees

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Civil Affairs (CA): According to the U.S. Marine Corps (2000), civil affairs “encompass the relationship between military forces, civil authorities, and people in a friendly country or area” (pp. 1.8-1.9). Civil affairs experts usually focus their information efforts on establishing acceptance and support for military activities among a foreign civilian community, and promoting civil-military cooperation.

Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC): Sometimes referred to as civil affairs in the United States, this term was defined by Combelles-Siegel (1998) as “the means by which allied commanders establish and maintain formal relations with the national authorities, populations, international, and non-governmental organizations in their area of interest” (p. 191).

Combined: This term describes military operations, activities, organizations, agencies, or other aspects of military affairs that involve the participation of two or more allied nations (see Federation of American Scientists, 2005).

Information Campaign (IC): This is an “official NATO term for the multimedia campaign designed to influence the attitudes of people in [Bosnia-Herzegovina] and shape their behavior in favor of IFOR troops and operations” (p. 191). This campaign was originally designed as a psychological operations effort, “but political sensitivities toward the term ‘PSYOP’ [among NATO nations] prevented the use of the term” (p. 191).

Information Operations (IO): Defined by the U.S. Department of Defense as “actions taken to affect adversary information and information systems while defending one’s own information and information systems” (U.S. Air Force, 1999, p. 38).

Integrated Information Campaign (IIC): A NATO term similar to Information Campaign used in Bosnia-Herzegovina to describe the coordination of separate information functions like public relations, CIMIC, and PSYOPS.

Joint: This term describes military operations, activities, organizations, or other aspects of military affairs that involve the participation of more than one service from one nation (see Federation of American Scientists, 2005).

Political Advisor (POLAD): The NATO term used to describe a senior political advisor assigned to the staff of a military commander. The POLAD, usually a senior diplomat from NATO headquarters' political structure or a nation's foreign affairs branch, reports directly to the military commander and provides advice and counsel on political and diplomatic affairs.

Public Affairs Officer (PAO): The term used to describe a U.S. military, public relations specialist (commissioned officer, non-commissioned officer, petty officer, or civilian) who has responsibility for managing public relations activities such as media relations, internal relations, community relations, planning, and evaluation. Senior PAOs usually serve as advisors to executive-level U.S. military and civilian leaders.

Public Information Officer (PIO): Defined by Combelles-Siegel (1998) as an "officer in charge of conducting media relations (and to a much lesser extend command information). The PIO is equivalent to a U.S. Public Affairs Officer" (p. 192).

Public Relations (PR): Defined by J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) as "the *management of communication between an organization and its publics*" (p. 6).

Psychological Operations (PSYOPS): These activities are “planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to *influence* their motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately, the behavior of foreign governments, groups, and individuals” (U.S. Marine Corps, 2000, p. 1.8). The U.S. Marine Corps has differentiated between military psychological operations, civil affairs, and public affairs. The Marines declared that these concepts differ in both their intent and in their intended audiences. According to the Marine Corps, “Where the intent of PSYOPS and CA is to *influence* the target audience, the intent of public affairs is only to *inform* and educate” (p. 1.9). Furthermore, “Although public affairs does influence people, any such influence is a by-product – the result or effect of people being informed – rather than the design or intent of the communication” (p. 1.9). Finally, the Marines noted, “PSYOPS and CA involve forms of communication directed primarily at foreign audiences. Public affairs may involve communication at either foreign or domestic audiences, or both” (p. 1.9).

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