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**Military public affairs practitioners' and civilian journalists'
perceptions of Army crisis communications**

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Military Public Affairs Practitioners'
and Civilian Journalists'
Perceptions of
Army Crisis Communications

Thesis submitted to
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Marshall University

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Introduction

Public relations is at the heart of an organization's relaying of messages to its internal and external audiences. Communication with key audiences allows the organization to release important information, answer questions, address fears and misconceptions, maintain or change the organization's image, influence public opinion and address crises affecting the organization. The Army, like any large organization, must communicate effectively with its publics - legislators, service members, government representatives, the media, and the general public from which it draws its members.

Experts recommend a four-step process for conducting public relations programs (Hiebert, 174). An organization should first conduct research, both primary and secondary, to provide a basis for planning its communications. The organization must then write its communications plan, identifying key audiences and media resources, developing goals and outlining the strategy and desired outcome. Next the organization executes its communications plan. The final step of the process is to evaluate the results of the communication to determine whether the desired objectives were achieved. The Army, like many organizations, follows this

process in conducting its public relations, but quite often neglects the final step of evaluation by presuming the objectives were accomplished (Ford, 8).

Of all communications, an organization's crisis communication strategies are often very critical in ensuring the very survival of the organization. During a crisis, public sentiment can turn against the organization, thereby causing its demise. Effective communication during a crisis is critical in preventing rumors, providing facts, reassuring key audiences and maintaining the trust of an organization's internal and external publics. During its existence, the Army has had to deal with many crises, ranging from addressing social issues to communicating during times of war.

Background and Problem Statement

In recent years, the Army has had to deal with several crises related to deployments for military operations and the inappropriate, and sometimes illegal, behavior of soldiers.

After the Gulf War ended in 1992, soldiers who served in Southwest Asia began experiencing unexplained illnesses such as rashes, joint pain, respiratory problems, headaches and chemical sensitivity (Pexton, 1). The media collectively labeled this range of illnesses as Gulf War Syndrome. The Pentagon launched an investigation into the illnesses, trying to find a cause (Pexton, 1). The investigation continues

because officials have not yet found a definitive cause for the illnesses experienced by Gulf War veterans.

The mere revelation of the illnesses did not constitute a crisis, but revelations of possible soldier exposure to chemical weapons and allegations of a Pentagon cover-up turned the situation into a crisis requiring appropriate attention. Doctors examining sick soldiers claimed the myriad of symptoms mirrored those of exposure to low levels of nerve gas (Pexton, 2). The Pentagon denied that any soldiers had been exposed to chemicals during their service in Southwest Asia.

In 1996, investigation of intelligence documents revealed that engineer soldiers had been sent on a mission to destroy an ammunition bunker that was known to contain chemical weapons (Pexton, 1). The destruction of that bunker released the chemicals into the air. The total number of soldiers affected by that release is still unknown but is estimated to be as high as 25,000 (Pexton, 1).

In February 1997, further investigation into documentation concerning knowledge of the chemicals revealed that several sets of important logs and computer disks have disappeared (Pexton, 3). The disappearance of these items has led to allegations of a cover-up by the military in an attempt to deny any responsibility for the illnesses even though soldiers were knowingly sent into harm's way. The Pentagon is still investigating the situation and has launched an

independent Inspector General inquiry into the disappearance of the logs and disks (Pexton, 3). This crisis, which has lasted for four years, is still in the news media, as more and more details of the investigation are released.

Another crisis striking at the heart of the Army occurred in December 1995. A soldier stationed in the 82d Airborne Division, at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, brutally killed two civilians in the town outside the post by shooting them as they walked down the street (Harrison, 5). The investigation into the murders revealed a possible racial motive in the killings. The soldier was white, and the victims were black. Prosecutors alleged that the soldier killed the couple as part of an initiation rite into a skinhead group (Galvin, 5). In addition to the racial motive for the killings, rumors began circulating about widespread white supremacist activities at Fort Bragg and in the surrounding community. During that same period, red swastikas were painted on the barracks doors of black soldiers.

The Army launched an investigation throughout its organization to determine whether racism and white supremacist activities were prevalent (Maze, 3). The investigation found that while a small percentage of soldiers still hold racist beliefs, they typically do not act on them because of military regulations that prohibit such behavior (Maze, 3). The

investigation failed to find any evidence of widespread white supremacist activity in the Army (Vistica, 23).

The latest crisis to hit the Army occurred in November 1996, when an Army press conference revealed that soldiers at several military training posts were being investigated for sexual harassment and misconduct (Vistica, 1). The investigation had begun in September at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, and the more serious charges involved multiple counts of rape and sodomy. A similar but unrelated investigation was ongoing at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

As part of the investigation, the Army designated a national telephone hotline for victims of sexual harassment so investigators could determine how widespread the problem was (Vistica, 1). In addition, the commander of Aberdeen Proving Ground initiated interviews with all female trainees who had been stationed at the post within the past few years to determine if they had received the same harassing treatment.

In February 1997, the sexual harassment scandal reached new heights when allegations were made against the Army's senior enlisted soldier, Sergeant Major of the Army Gene McKinney (Vistica, 2). He was removed from his position, and a military court martial is pending.

In addition to taking steps to determine how widespread sexual harassment is within the ranks, the Army also initiated a chain teaching program for all soldiers at all levels of the

organization (Long, 1). The program is designed to educate soldiers about what constitutes sexual harassment, proper reporting procedures, the investigation process and punishments given for such offenses.

A review of editorials collected by the Army Public Affairs office concerning this latest Army crisis found writers crediting the Army for coming forward with the problem rather than waiting for it to be released by the media. They also make comparisons to the Navy's handling of the Tailhook scandal in 1991, applauding the Army for its release of information and active investigation process. The Army continues to handle this ongoing crisis as new allegations emerge and the active investigations develop each day.

In the course of conducting investigations, certain information is not releasable until charges have been preferred against the individual being investigated. This allows the organization to conduct a proper investigation without compromising the rights of the individual or the investigation itself. In the media's quest to obtain all of the information, this type of limitation may be perceived by the media as an attempt to hide information from the public.

Purpose

This series of Army scandals raises the question of what type of gap exists between the perceptions of civilian journalists and Army public affairs personnel concerning the

Army's crisis communications. Because the Army has not conducted evaluative research on this issue, this question remains unanswered.

The purpose of this study is to determine the difference in perceptions between members of the Pentagon Press Pool and Army Public Affairs practitioners concerning how forthright the Army is in its crisis communications. The study will accomplish this goal by comparing differences in perceptions between these two groups concerning the Army's handling of the latest sexual harassment/misconduct crisis and its handling of two previous crises concerning Gulf War Illnesses and racism in the Army. The utilization of these three crisis examples, occurring over a period of four years, allows for significant comparisons because the Army appeared to change its manner of conducting public relations during this period, moving from the public information model to integrating aspects of two-way symmetric communication.

The study will serve as a miniature communications audit of the Army's crisis communications in these three situations. It will determine how the Army views its crisis communications, how journalists view the Army's crisis communications, and what type of gap exists between those views.

Significance

In its crisis communications, the Army merely presumes that its message is being received in the manner intended, unless negative publicity reveals contradictory information. The Army does not routinely evaluate its crisis communications to ensure established objectives are being met (Ford, 8).

This study will mark the first in-depth evaluation of the Army's crisis communications. It will provide the Army with a glimpse of how journalists perceive its communications and whether they believe the Army is being open in its handling of the crisis or attempting to hide information.

The results of this study will help the Army in its working relationship with the media and in determining communications plans in future crises.

Theoretical Framework

In studying the Army's crisis communications, one public relations theory and one mass communication theory can be applied.

Grunig and Hunt's Four Public Relations Models

James Grunig and Todd Hunt developed four models of public relations: press agent/publicity model, public information model, two-way asymmetric model, and two-way symmetric model. Of these four models, two -- the public information model and the two-way symmetric model -- can be applied to the Army's practice of public relations.

Grunig and Hunt maintain that government agencies, nonprofit associations and some businesses use the public information model for the one-way dissemination of information (22). Organizations that use this model have an active press relations program that offers news about the organization to the media (26).

The Army has an active public relations program with the use of its Public Affairs Officers (PAOs). Historically, much of the Army's communication has been directed at just getting the information out to the public. Stephen Hess, who spent time observing government press offices, said that communications seem "...to be devoted to gathering material that has been requested by reporters...and distributing information that is neither controversial nor especially self-serving" (Hess, 108). This description fits the public information model.

Grunig and Hunt's two-way symmetric model can also be applied to regulated businesses and agencies (22). The model describes two-way communication aimed at generating mutual understanding (22). This model is most used by organizations that wish to demonstrate socially responsible behavior (26).

The Army appears to be moving toward a greater use of the two-way symmetric model of public relations. Since the controversy over the military's exclusion of the media during operations in Grenada, the Army has attempted to repair its

relationship with the media and promote mutual understanding of each organization's mission (Ford, 8). New Army initiatives, such as requiring commanders to meet with local and regional newspaper editorial boards, demonstrate the characteristics of the two-way symmetric model (Ford, 7). Yet while the Army has demonstrated some of the characteristics of the two-way symmetric model, it still does not conduct "...formal evaluative and formative research, an integral component of the two-way symmetric model" (Ford, 8).

It appears that the Army realizes the importance of not just generating information, but understanding as well. This may explain the Army's combination of the public information and two-way symmetric models in conducting its public relations. However, until the Army has a more formal research program as part of its public relations, its operation cannot be characterized as a two-way symmetric model of public relations.

Media System Dependency Theory

The media system dependency theory draws upon the central issues in each of the five social paradigms relating to the organization of society: structural functionalism, social evolution, social conflict model, cognitive approach and symbolic interactionism.

The theory states that "the media system is assumed to be an important part of the social fabric of modern society, and

it is seen to have relationships with individuals, groups, organizations, and other social systems" (DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, 303). The key aspect of the relationship, as the theory's name suggests, is dependency.

The relationship, and whether dependency is one-sided or mutual, lies in the balance of goals and resources. The media system is seen as an information system with control over three resources - information gathering or creating, information processing, and information dissemination (DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, 303).

The relationship between the military and the media system is one of mutual dependency. The military relies on the media's information dissemination resource to get its message out to the general public from which it draws its members and support. The media, conversely, rely upon the military for information in order to be able to perform its function of information gathering. Because the military is a closed organization, the media have no other resource from which to draw that type of information.

This relationship of mutual dependency can often be adversarial in nature and can affect the perceptions each group has of the other. The Army's failure to release information or delay in releasing information because of military policy, can be viewed by the media as deceptive. Similarly, if information is portrayed by the media in a

negative way, the military can view it as an attack on the organization.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following research questions will guide the conduct of this study:

1. How different are journalists' and Army public affairs practitioners' perceptions of how forthright the Army has been in dealing with the recent sexual harassment/misconduct crisis?

2. How do journalists and Army public affairs practitioners view the Army's handling of the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis as compared to its handling of past crises concerning the Gulf War Illnesses and racism in the Army?

For this study, the operational definition of forthright is an open, honest and sincere approach to the release of information as opposed to denying a problem exists and hiding information from the media.

The following hypotheses provide the framework for conducting this study:

H1. Army Public Affairs practitioners, when compared with civilian journalists, will perceive the Army as being more forthright in each of the three crisis examples.

H2. Civilian journalists will view the Army's handling of the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis as more forthright than its handling of the crisis concerning Gulf War Illnesses.

H3. Civilian journalists will view the Army's handling of the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis as more forthright than its handling of the crisis concerning racism in the Army.

H4. Army Public Affairs practitioners will view the Army's handling of the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis as more forthright than its handling of the crisis concerning Gulf War Illnesses.

H5. Army Public Affairs practitioners will view the Army as being equally forthright in handling the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis and the crisis concerning racism in the Army.

The Army seemed generally pleased with its handling of the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis and more willing to pat itself on the back than in past crises. One wonders whether the journalists covering the story were as willing to give such praise.

The hypotheses were developed by reviewing literature related to each of the crises and judging whether the writings appeared to be less or more negative with each successive crisis.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Little quantitative information exists regarding crisis communications because it is a relatively new topic. Much of the crisis communications literature is in the form of case studies, theoretical applications, or how-to articles. In the trend toward more balance between qualitative and quantitative research, researchers are now beginning to apply quantitative methods to the study of crisis communications.

Relationship Between the Populations

Ford Study

In 1987, Betty Kathleen Ford, a graduate student at the University of Maryland, used a survey to conduct a quantitative study of the relationship between Department of Defense Public Affairs Officers and the Pentagon Press Corps.

Ford's survey instrument contained 17 questions, using a combination of Likert scales and semantic differential adjective pairs. It was designed to measure each population's attitude toward the other, both personally and professionally. Ford's focus was to test the premise that "familiarity leads to tolerance" (Ford, 2).

The survey was administered to a census of the 69 members of the Press Corps and 128 military and civilian members of the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) (Ford,

49). Ford mailed the survey, accompanied by a cover letter and stamped reply envelope, on December 1, 1986, with a requested return date of December 15, 1986. Her response rate for the survey was 50 percent (Ford, 50).

Ford's survey found no significant differences in Press Corps responses based on sex, income, age, race and education. Similarly, there were no significant differences in the responses of public affairs personnel based on sex, race, age, education, grade or branch of service (Ford, 59). Civilian public affairs respondents' attitudes toward the Press Corps were significantly different on the factor of prior military service. Civilians who had not served in the military gave significantly higher ratings of Press Corps members than those who had served in the military (Ford, 61).

Press Corps members representing the newspaper medium rated the civilian public affairs personnel significantly lower than did Press Corps representatives from other media (Ford, 62). Such a trend was not found in their answers relating to military public affairs personnel.

On semantic differential questions, respondents tended to rate their own group better than the others. However, the Press Corps rated itself lower on trustworthiness than the military public affairs personnel (Ford, 64). Only seven percent of the Press Corps and three percent of the civilians viewed the military as being objective (Ford, 64). Military

public affairs personnel consistently gave themselves high ratings. The civilian public affairs personnel consistently rated themselves identically with the military public affairs personnel on all traits except objectivity (Ford, 67). The Press Corps' rating of both the civilian and military public affairs personnel was the lowest in the study (Ford, 67).

Correlation analysis of the data revealed that the longer a person was a member of the Press Corps, the more negative their opinion of the military public affairs personnel (Ford, 72). The same correlation appeared in the length of time military personnel worked in public affairs and their opinions of the Press Corps. However, the longer civilian personnel worked in public affairs, the more positive their opinions were of the Press Corps personnel (Ford, 73).

This study reveals some of the existing attitudes in the often adversarial relationship between the media and the military that could influence the opinions and perceptions of the populations in this study.

Steele Study

In July 1997, Captain Richard Steele conducted a case study on the attitudes of military public affairs officers and military correspondents toward improving the military/media relationship through education. Steele conducted in-depth interviews with 33 people via phone and electronic mail.

The study was based on several open-ended questions designed to elicit the interviewee's perceptions about the nature of the military/media relationship and whether educating correspondents might improve the relationship. The questions asked during the interviews were:

1. Do journalists assigned to cover the military have the experience necessary to cover the next conflict? Are their news organizations supportive of training and education efforts? If not, why?

2. What initiatives have the media and/or the military undertaken to better educate military correspondents and how successful have these efforts been? What problems have been encountered?

3. Have any steps been taken to form the independent media/military relations office recommended in the Freedom Forum study? If so, what is the status and what are the problems encountered? If not, why?

4. What can be done in the future to educate journalists about the military and better prepare them to cover military operations?

Steele found that military correspondents often have varied levels of experience. The number of years experience as a military correspondent varied as well as the type of experience. Some correspondents may have spent little time reporting on the military, but their experiences prepared them

well for the next conflict. Others may have extensive experience covering the Pentagon, but were not well-prepared to cover the next conflict.

Steele's study also found that news organizations prefer to keep experienced reporters in Washington to maintain their contacts while sending inexperienced military reporters to cover a conflict. He concluded that military reporters generally do not have the experience necessary to cover the next conflict.

Most news organizations do not support training and education efforts, according to Steele's research. The primary reasons for the lack of support were "(1) the cost involved, (2) the editorial requirements of the medium, (3) the time required, and (4) the newsworthiness of the event."

Steele found much of the lack of training support centered around money issues. Increasing chain ownership has resulted in staff and budget reductions. Media organizations are more concerned about the bottom line and less concerned about educating their reporters.

Recommendations in the Freedom Forum report on the military/media relationship have been only partially implemented. Interviewees noted the military had taken steps to educate members about the importance of public affairs and freedom of the press. Generally, though, this education takes place at very senior levels and well after when it is needed.

They noted, however, that the media have not made any type of organized effort to educate military correspondents.

Steele's study found no evidence of any steps toward creating an office of media/military relations that was recommended in the Freedom Forum report. "Most interviewees for this study thought that it was a good idea but were doubtful that it would ever become a reality" (Steele, 78).

When asked about education for journalists, interviewees overwhelmingly believe military correspondents need to be with troops during training and real-world deployments. This type of training leads to a better understanding of military life and culture and makes the journalist a better reporter.

Steele concludes that training both the military and the media would allow them to develop common frames of reference that could alleviate potential conflicts. To develop a strong relationship based on mutual trust and respect, both sides must make the effort to understand the other.

Crisis Communications Studies

Coombs and Holladay Study

W. Timothy Coombs and Sherry J. Holladay conducted an experiment to examine how three factors - crisis type, organization performance history and crisis response, were associated with the image of an organization.

The researchers identified four basic crisis types: accidents-unintentional and internal, transgressions-

intentional and internal, faux pas-unintentional and external, and terrorism-intentional and from an external source (Coombs and Holladay, 284). The study examined the effectiveness of the symbolic approach to crisis communications, in which communication strategies are emphasized in an attempt to protect organizational images, during accident and transgression crises.

The researchers manipulated the type of crisis and the organization's performance history, using a one-time accident, repeated accidents, a one-time transgression, and repeated transgressions as the four crisis types in the experiment (Coombs and Holladay, 285).

The experiment was conducted on 116 undergraduate students enrolled in communication courses at a Midwestern university (287). Coombs and Holladay hypothesized distancing was an appropriate response for a one-time accident while a remedial response, promising retribution, was more appropriate for the other three types of crises (286).

Respondents' perceptions of the organizations were measured with a 10-question Likert-scale instrument adapted from McCroskey's measure of character (Coombs and Holladay, 288).

Results from the experiment indicated that respondents "rated transgressions as more intentional and accidents as less preventable" (Coombs and Holladay, 289). Matching the

specific recommended crisis response to the appropriate crisis yielded a more positive image for the organization, while no response and mismatched responses yielded much more negative images (Coombs and Holladay, 293).

How an organization responds to a crisis is crucial in determining how much damage will be inflicted. The media, as a public, will evaluate the Army's responses to each crisis and make a judgment. Those judgments may affect the perceptions being evaluated in this study. Also, the judgments made by the media might be passed on to the general public.

Cupp Study

In 1985, Rae Lynn Cupp, from the University of Maryland, examined crisis communications at chemical companies in West Virginia. The study tried to determine which of the four public relations models were used by the companies and how decisions were made during a crisis situation.

Cupp administered a Likert scale questionnaire consisting of 36 questions to public relations representatives of nine chemical companies employing at least 150 personnel in West Virginia (Cupp, 42). In addition to the questionnaire, respondents were given a Prototypic Projective Protocol (PPP) Test containing two crisis scenarios to be completed (Cupp, 43). The PPP test was used to determine the use of the behavioral molecule, a segmented matrix which represents the

ideal components for managing behaviors, and response to the crisis situation.

Cupp found that six of the nine companies practiced a two-way model of public relations, symmetric or asymmetric. None of the companies used the full behavioral molecule and three companies used six or seven of the nine segments of the molecule in the decision making process (Cupp, 81).

She concluded that the chemical companies practiced little professional public relations at the plant level. In order to improve public relations and create a proactive environment for crisis management, the companies must have professional public relations personnel at that level and practice a two-way symmetric model of public relations to establish a cooperative environment with their publics (Cupp, i).

Cupp's study recommends use of the same two-way symmetric public relations model that the Army appears to be adopting. She states the two-way communication models create an environment that allows the organization to be proactive rather than reactive in crisis management.

Trevino and Ball Study

Linda Klebe Trevino and Gail A. Ball conducted an experiment in 1988 to determine how punishment of unethical behavior influenced observers' expectations, justice evaluations and emotional responses.

Trevino and Ball maintain that observers' reactions to punishment are often as important as the reaction of the person being punished because punishment takes place in a social context (751). Observers are affected in three ways by seeing the punishment of others. Observed punishment influences their expectations of future management responses, judgment about the fairness of punishment distribution and emotional responses within the organization based on their justice evaluation.

The experiment was conducted with 75 students from an organizational behavior course taught at a large university. Each student was placed in a created office environment in a laboratory. The experiment was an in-basket exercise. Participants were told to role play the position of a national sales manager for a company in financial trouble. They were to go through the in-box material and make decisions based on the information provided (Trevino and Ball, 755). The in-boxes contained an organization chart, newsletter, and 13 letters, memos or phone messages. Three different in-boxes were distributed, each representing a different punishment condition for two unethical occurrences in the company; appropriate punishment, harsh punishment, and no punishment (Trevino and Ball, 755). After completing the in-boxes, students filled out a brief questionnaire.

The experiment results showed that students were able to correctly recall the punishment given in each of the situations a majority of the time. In evaluating the severity of the punishment, respondents indicated that management's response was most just in the harsh punishment condition and least just in the no punishment condition (Trevino and Ball, 760). A measurement of emotional responses revealed that students reacted differently to the two types of unethical behavior. In reaction to the punishment for sexual harassment, positive emotions were most positive in the harsh punishment condition and least positive in the no punishment condition. Conversely, negative emotions were most negative in the no punishment condition and least negative in the harsh punishment condition (Trevino and Ball, 760). In reaction to the punishment for substandard wiring, emotional responses leveled off between the appropriate and harsh punishment conditions (Trevino and Ball, 761).

As the public, including the media, watches how the Army punishes offenders in crisis situations involving unethical behavior, it may affect the perceptions being evaluated in this study. Respondents' reactions to the punishment they see given in the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis and the racism crisis may affect the perceptions they exhibit in the survey.

Case Studies

Navy Tailhook Crisis

Michelle T. Violante conducted an analysis of the formal written reports from the Navy in response to its 1991 Tailhook crisis. The Army's handling of the recent sexual harassment/misconduct crisis is often compared to that incident, with the Army receiving credit for having learned from the Navy's mistakes.

Violante examined the Tailhook report on the basis of Ware and Linkugel's apologia strategy of self-defense and looked for inconsistencies in the Navy culture as described in the report.

She concluded that the Navy used limited apologia strategies, and in releasing the report to the public, failed to meet the expectations for self-defense (Violante, 72).

Violante states the Navy used the two apologia strategies of differentiation and delimited admittance. Initially, the Navy attempted to differentiate itself from the association conducting the Tailhook convention. This attempt to distance itself from the situation failed when the Navy admitted that the Tailhook incidents had occurred. The Navy then tried delimited admittance, to admit the wrongdoing and emphasize the steps taken to address the cultural problem (Violante, 73).

In examining the Navy culture, Violante notes that the organization contradicts itself. It espouses a zero tolerance policy for sexual harassment, yet these types of acts had been occurring unpunished for years and had actually become accepted as part of the culture. Violante states that the report itself contradicts the zero tolerance policy in the language used and statements made (Violante, 76).

The Navy did not intend to release the Tailhook report to the public, but media and public pressure forced the issue. The Navy failed to adapt its message to the public and merely blacked out the names of the individuals in the report (Violante, 70). In releasing the report as written for an internal audience, the Navy failed to meet the public's expectations for an apology.

Dow Corning Breast Implant Crisis

Susan L. Brinson and William L. Benoit examined the strategies used by Dow Corning in the face of its breast implant crisis in 1991 to restore the company's image. They then evaluated the actions to determine the company's effectiveness.

Brinson and Benoit concluded that Dow Corning conducted three phases of image restoration: strategies of denial; reduction of offensiveness; and mortification and correction (Brinson and Benoit, 31).

The first phase occurred from July to September 1991 when Dow Corning practiced simple denial by publicly denying the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) claim that breast implants were unsafe (Brinson and Benoit, 31).

The second phase occurred from September 1991 to February 1992, with Dow Corning practicing denial and reducing offensiveness of the event. During this phase, Dow Corning's image was attacked in three ways: safety of the breast implants continued to be questioned; information given to implant recipients on a hotline was attacked as untruthful; and the FDA received internal Dow Corning documents and alleged that Dow Corning knew the implants were unsafe and manufactured them anyway (Brinson and Benoit, 32). During all of these attacks on its image, Dow Corning responded with denial minimization, bolstering, and by attacking its accusers (Brinson and Benoit, 32).

Phase three occurred from February 1992 to March 1994 when Dow Corning agreed to pay \$2 billion to resolve legal claims against the company from the breast implant recipients. During this phase, Dow Corning practiced mortification, corrective action, denial and bolstering (Brinson and Benoit, 35). Dow Corning conducted mortification by admitting wrongdoing in its handling of the controversy but still denied that the implants were unsafe. As part of the mortification strategy, the two most senior company executives were

replaced. The company took corrective action by issuing warnings to doctors and implant recipients about the dangers of massaging the implants and announcing that it would no longer manufacture the silicone implants (Brinson and Benoit, 36). Simultaneously, the company tried to bolster its image by taking a more compassionate stance with recipients whose complaints were previously minimized, promising to sponsor new studies of the implants, and adopting a more conciliatory position in working with the FDA (Brinson and Benoit, 37).

Brinson and Benoit concluded that the image restoration campaign was unsuccessful in phases one and two because Dow Corning was not forthcoming initially. The company achieved limited success during phase three in lessening the FDA and media attacks by changing its strategies (Brinson and Benoit, 39).

The image restoration strategies an organization uses during a crisis help to determine success or failure. Media evaluation of the strategies employed by the Army during each of its crises will affect the perceptions they indicate in this study. The Dow Corning case study stresses the importance of being forthright in dealing with a crisis, a major component of the evaluations in this study.

Summary

Each of the studies demonstrates a dependent relationship between the media and another organization. In each case, the

organization was dependent on the media to get its message out to its publics, and the media were dependent on the organization for information. If one party of the mutually dependent relationship did not receive the perceived necessary response, conflict resulted.

The literature review suggests that there are a number of factors that affect perceptions related to crisis communications. These factors can include timeliness, the public relations model used by the organization, punishment given to those exhibiting inappropriate behavior, and the type of crisis being addressed. Any one or combination of these factors can affect the way an organization's handling of a crisis, including communications, is perceived. Any or all of these factors have the capability to affect the perceptions of both populations in this study.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Quantitative Method

The research method chosen for conducting this study was survey research. Of all the quantitative methods available, a survey allowed collection of the desired data in the easiest, fastest and least expensive manner.

Wimmer and Dominick outline four basic methods for conducting surveys: "mail survey, telephone survey, personal interview, and group administration" (151). Due to the location of the populations being tested and the anticipated difficulty in reaching respondents by phone, this survey combined personal contact and the mail. Efforts were made to hand deliver as many survey packets as possible to the respondents June 2, 1997. The survey packets included a cover letter, survey and stamped reply envelope. Those survey packets that could not be hand delivered were mailed to the respondents. The self-administered questionnaire allowed respondents to complete the survey instrument at their convenience and return it in the enclosed stamped envelope.

Two follow-ups were conducted July 1, 1997 and August 5, 1997, using a combination of telephone and electronic mail, to boost the return rate from members of the Pentagon Press Pool.

Populations

The survey was administered to two populations, the Pentagon Press Pool and Army Public Affairs practitioners stationed at the Pentagon. Survey responses for these two populations were then compared for statistically significant differences.

For the purposes of this study, the operational definition of the Pentagon Press Pool was those members of the journalism profession whose names appear on the press list maintained by the Department of Defense Public Affairs Office. The list names all journalists from wire services, news services, television, radio, news magazines, newspapers and other print media who report on military affairs. The survey population, which excluded journalists who work for government media, totaled 35.

For the purposes of this study, the operational definition of Army Public Affairs practitioners stationed at the Pentagon was those Army officers and civilians working in the Department of the Army Public Affairs Office at the Pentagon. The total number of personnel in this population was 41.

Because the two populations were very small, the survey was administered to a census of both populations rather than to a random sample.

The Cover Letter

Each survey distributed was accompanied by a cover letter that addressed potential questions the respondents may have about the survey.

The cover letter explained to respondents who the researcher was, why the survey was being conducted, how respondents were selected, how long the survey would take, how the information would be used, whether or not respondents would be identified, how to return the survey and by what date. A copy of the cover letter is in Appendix A.

The Survey Questionnaire

The survey instrument was divided into six sections. Each section was designed to obtain specific information about the respondent's opinion of Army crisis communications. A copy of the survey instrument is in Appendix B.

The first three sections used Likert Scale questions to determine the respondent's opinion of how forthright the Army has been in each of the past three crises it has handled. The sections address the crisis situations chronologically. The first section addresses the most recent Army crisis of sexual harassment/misconduct. The second section addresses the Army crisis of perceived racism following the brutal murder of an African-American couple by a Caucasian soldier stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, which occurred in 1995. The third section addresses the Army crisis of Gulf War Illnesses,

unexplained illnesses afflicting Desert Storm veterans, which began in 1992.

The fourth section of the survey instrument uses Likert Scale questions to obtain the respondent's overall, general impression of the Army's handling of crisis situations.

The fifth section uses Likert Scale questions to determine the respondent's opinion of how each of the three most recent Army crises was handled when compared with each other. This section allowed the respondent to compare how the Army handled each crisis in relation to the others.

The final section requested demographic information. Until this point in the survey, all questions asked of the two populations were identical. The demographic questions were slightly different to assess different aspects of each profession such as number of years as a journalist or Army officer, amount of time in the current position, primary medium represented, rank, whether the journalists ever served in the military and whether the officers participated in the Gulf War.

Survey Return Rate

Seventy-six surveys were distributed, 41 to Army public affairs practitioners and 35 to members of the Pentagon Press Pool. Overall, 42 surveys were returned for a response rate of 55 percent. One survey was not useable because it was incomplete. Of the two populations being compared, military

public affairs practitioners had a return rate of 58 percent, while Pentagon Press Pool members had a return rate of 51 percent.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to build a profile of each population based on demographic information and specific answers relating to the Army's handling of each of the three crises. Mean scores were calculated for each of the Likert scale questions to demonstrate overall opinions in each area.

Analysis of variance was then used to compare the mean scores of the two populations' perceptions of how forthright the Army has been in dealing with each of the three crises and determine whether a significant difference existed. In addition to checking for significance between the populations, analysis of variance was also used to look for significant differences in the answers based on gender, age, race, and prior military service by the journalists.

Hypotheses/Question Correlation

The questions in the survey are designed to elicit responses that either support or reject each of the hypotheses in this study.

Hypothesis one -- *Army Public Affairs practitioners, when compared with civilian journalists, will perceive the Army as*

being more forthright in each of the three crisis examples:
questions 1-12 apply.

Hypothesis two -- Civilian journalists will view the Army's handling of the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis as more forthright than its handling of the crisis concerning Gulf War Illnesses: **questions 1-4, 9-12, and 19 apply.**

Hypothesis three -- Civilian journalists will view the Army's handling of the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis as more forthright than its handling of the crisis concerning racism in the Army: **questions 1-8 and 17 apply.**

Hypothesis four -- Army Public Affairs practitioners will view the Army's handling of the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis as more forthright than its handling of the crisis concerning Gulf War Illnesses: **questions 1-4, 9-12, and 19 apply.**

Hypothesis five -- Army Public Affairs practitioners will view the Army as being equally forthright in handling the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis and the crisis concerning racism in the Army: **questions 1-8 and 17 apply.**

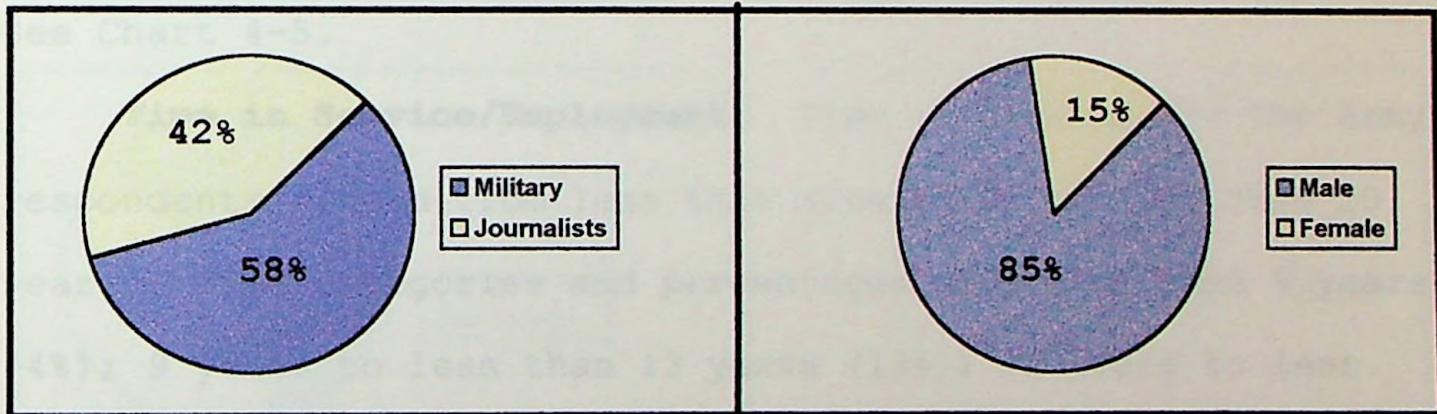
Questions 13-16 have a general application to all five hypothesis. The questions allow a comparison of attitudes about specific crises with attitudes about overall crisis communications.

CHAPTER IV Findings

Respondents' Demographics

Populations. A total of 41 people responded to the survey. Of those respondents, 58% were Army military and civilian public affairs practitioners, and 42% were civilian journalists in the Pentagon Press Pool. See Chart 4-1.

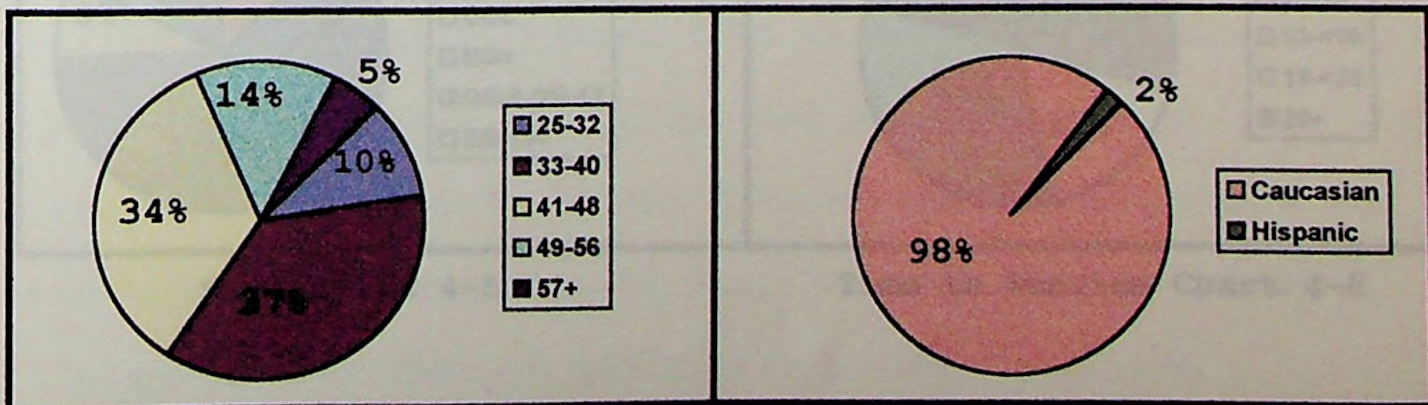
Gender. Of the 41 respondents, 85% were male and 15% were female. See Chart 4-2.



Population Chart 4-1

Gender Chart 4-2

Age. The age range of respondents was 25 to 57+ years old. The age categories and percentages were 25-32 years old (10%); 33-40 years old (37%); 41-48 years old (34%); 49-56 years old (14%); and 57+ years old (5%). See Chart 4-3.



Age Chart 4-3

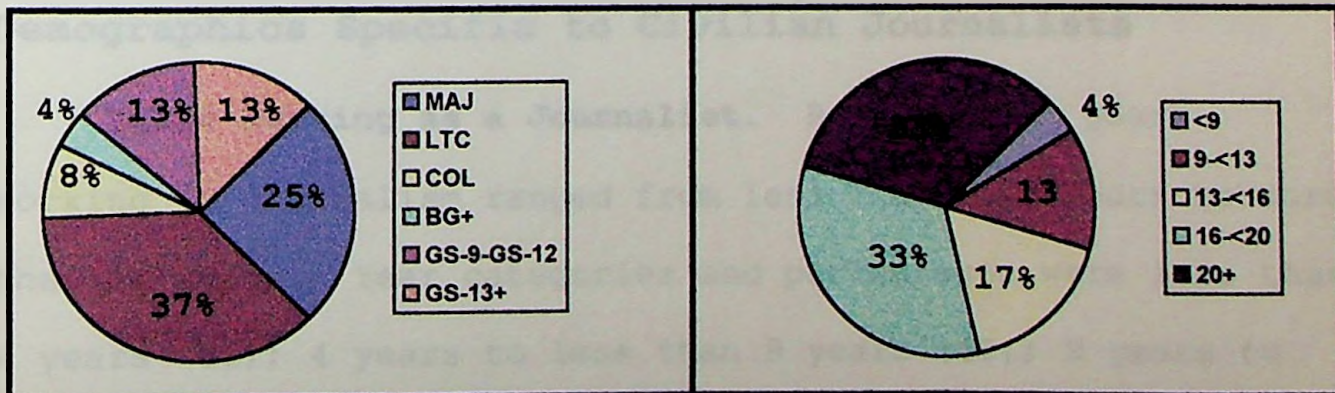
Race Chart 4-4

Race. Respondents were asked to put themselves in one of five race categories. Of the 41 responding, 98% were Caucasian and 2% were Hispanic. See Chart 4-4.

Specific to the Military

Rank. The 24 Army respondents ranged in rank from Major to Brigadier General for military members and GS-9 to GS-13+ for civilian members. Rank categories and percentages were Major (25%); Lieutenant Colonel (37%); Colonel (8%); Brigadier General (4%); GS-9 to GS-12 (13%); and GS-13 or higher (13%). See Chart 4-5.

Time in Service/Employment. Time in service for the Army respondents ranged from less than nine years to more than 20 years. Time categories and percentages were less than 9 years (4%); 9 years to less than 13 years (13%); 13 years to less than 16 years (17%); 16 years to less than 20 years (33%); and 20 years or more (33%). See Chart 4-6.

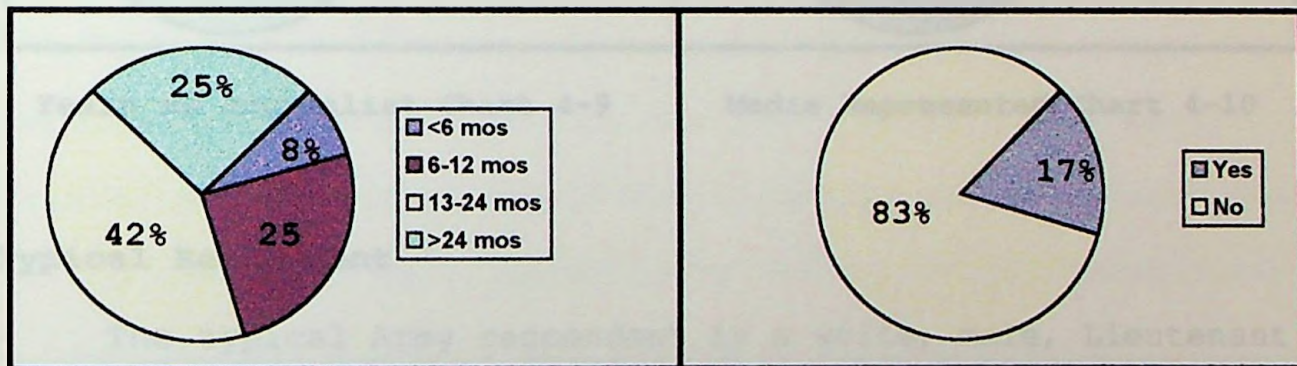


Rank Chart 4-5

Time in Service Chart 4-6

Time in Current Public Affairs Position. Respondents' time working in their current public affairs position ranged from less than six months to more than 24 months. Time in position categories and percentages were less than 6 months (8%); 6 to 12 months (25%); 13 to 24 months (42%); and more than 24 months (25%). See Chart 4-7.

Gulf War Service. Of the 24 Army respondents, 17% had deployed to Southwest Asia during the Gulf War and 83% had not. See Chart 4-8.



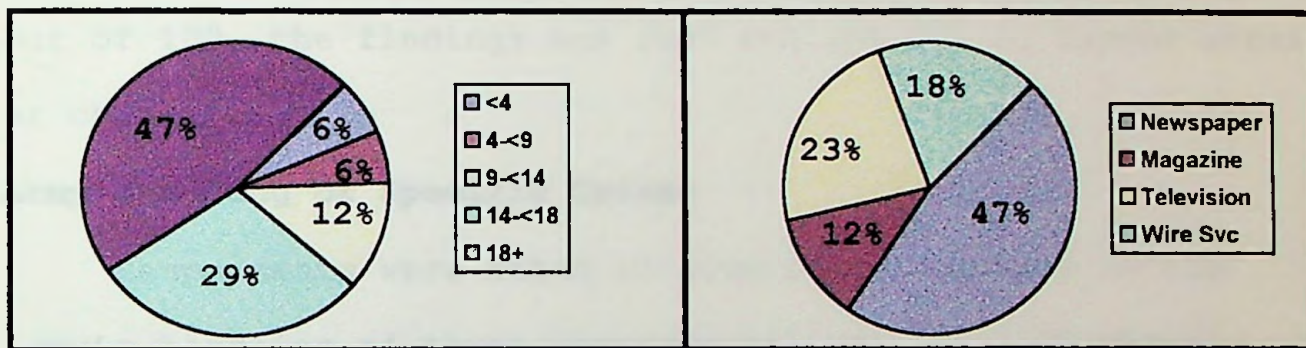
Time in Position Chart 4-7

Gulf War Service Chart 4-8

Demographics Specific to Civilian Journalists

Years Working as a Journalist. Respondents' years working in journalism ranged from less than four years to more than 18 years. Year categories and percentages were less than 4 years (6%); 4 years to less than 9 years (6%); 9 years to less than 14 years (12%); 14 years to less than 18 years (29%); and more than 18 years (47%). See Chart 4-9.

Media Represented. The 17 civilian respondents represented a wide range of media. Media categories and percentages were Newspaper (47%); Magazine (12%); Television (23%); and Wire Service (18%). No representatives from radio responded to the survey. See Chart 4-10.



Years as Journalist Chart 4-9

Media Represented Chart 4-10

Typical Respondent

The typical Army respondent is a white, male, Lieutenant Colonel, age 33 to 40, with more than 16 years of service in the Army.

The typical civilian journalist respondent is a white, male, print journalist, age 33 to 40, with more than 18 years working in the profession.

Findings

The statistical analysis for this research was provided by a statistical software package, called SPSS, designed to analyze social science research data.

When descriptive statistics were used to analyze responses to questions, scale mean scores were used. In analyzing interval level data, a one-way ANOVA was used to determine whether a statistically significant difference existed between groups of mean scores. In all tests, the significance level was set at $\leq .05$. This means that 95 times out of 100, the findings are real and not due to random error or chance.

Army Handling of Specific Crises

Respondents were asked to give their opinions on the Army's handling of three separate crises: the 1996 sexual harassment/misconduct crisis, the 1995 racism in the Army crisis, and the ongoing Gulf War illnesses crisis. Responses to the questions were scaled using the following Likert scale:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Sexual Harassment/Misconduct Crisis

Questions one through four asked respondents for their opinions on the Army's handling of the 1996 sexual harassment/misconduct crisis. In Question 1, when asked their opinion of the statement, "The Army has been forthright in dealing with the recent sexual harassment/misconduct crisis," the mean score for all respondents was 3.93. In Question 2, when asked their opinion of the statement, "The Army appears to willingly

provide information about the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis to the media," the mean score for all respondents was 3.88. In Question 3, when asked their opinion of the statement, "The Army denied a problem existed when news of the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis broke," the mean score for all respondents was 2.12. In Question 4, when asked their opinion of the statement, "The Army is hiding information related to the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis from the media," the mean score for all respondents was 2.24.

Army respondents agreed with statements that the Army had been forthright and willing to provide information to the media during the crisis (Q1 and Q2). They disagreed with statements that the Army denied a problem existed or hid information from the media (Q3 and Q4). Civilian journalist respondents remained mostly neutral on all four statements. The difference in mean scores of Army and civilian respondents is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1
Difference in Mean Scores

Sexual Harassment	Overall Mean	Military Mean	Journalist Mean
Question 1	3.93	4.33	3.35
Question 2	3.88	4.29	3.29
Question 3	2.12	1.75	2.65
Question 4	2.24	1.63	3.12

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference between the

answers of Army respondents and the answers of civilian journalist respondents. Table 2 is a summary of the ANOVA comparison for Questions 1 through 4. Analysis of variance was also conducted to determine if there was a significant difference in answers on the basis of gender, age, race or prior military service, but none was found.

Table 2
ANOVA - Sexual Harassment/Misconduct Crisis

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Question 1	Between Groups	9.565	1	9.565	11.230	.002
	Within Groups	33.216	39	.852		
Question 2	Between Groups	9.902	1	9.902	14.580	.000
	Within Groups	26.488	39	.679		
Question 3	Between Groups	8.008	1	8.008	9.083	.005
	Within Groups	34.382	39	.882		
Question 4	Between Groups	22.171	1	22.171	36.968	.000
	Within Groups	23.390	39	.600		

Significance = <.05

The significance values indicate that the difference between Army public affairs personnel answers and civilian journalist answers in questions 1 to 4 are very highly significant.

Racism in the Army Crisis

Questions 5 through 8 asked respondents for their opinions on the Army's handling of the 1995 racism in the Army crisis. In Question 5, when asked their opinion of the statement, "The Army was forthright in dealing with the 1995 racism in the Army crisis," the mean score for all respondents was 3.78. In Question 6, when asked their opinion of the statement, "The Army appeared to willingly provide information about the 1995 racism crisis to the media," the mean score for

all respondents was 3.61. In Question 7, when asked their opinion of the statement, "The Army denied a problem existed when news of the racism crisis broke," the mean score for all respondents was 2.54. In Question 8, when asked their opinion of the statement, "The Army hid information related to the 1995 racism crisis from the media," the mean score for all respondents was 2.27.

Army respondents agreed that the Army was forthright when dealing with the crisis (Q5) and willingly provided information (Q6), but civilian journalists only slightly agreed. Army respondents disagreed that the Army denied a problem existed (Q7) or hid information from the media (Q8), but civilian journalists only slightly disagreed. The difference in mean scores of Army and civilian respondents is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3
Difference in Mean Scores

Racism in the Army	Overall Mean	Military Mean	Journalist Mean
Question 5	3.93	4.04	3.41
Question 6	3.88	3.79	3.35
Question 7	2.12	2.33	2.82
Question 8	2.24	2.00	2.65

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference between the answers of Army respondents and the answers of civilian journalist respondents. Table 4 is a summary of the ANOVA

comparison for Questions 5 through 8. Analysis of variance was also conducted to determine if there was a significant difference in answers on the basis of gender, age, race or prior military service, but none was found.

Table 4
ANOVA - Racism in the Army

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Question 5	Between Groups	3.948	1	3.948	6.141	.018
	Within Groups	25.076	39	.643		
Question 6	Between Groups	1.915	1	1.915	2.683	.109
	Within Groups	27.841	39	.714		
Question 7	Between Groups	2.391	1	2.391	2.343	.134
	Within Groups	39.804	39	1.021		
Question 8	Between Groups	4.166	1	4.166	7.426	.010
	Within Groups	21.882	39	.561		

Significance = <.05

The significance values for Questions 5 and 8 indicate that differences in the answers of Army public affairs personnel and civilian journalists in questions 5 and 8 were highly significant. No significant difference was found in questions 6 and 7.

Gulf War Illnesses Crisis

Questions 9 through 12 asked respondents for their opinions on the Army's handling of the ongoing Gulf War Illnesses crisis. In Question 9, when asked their opinion of the statement, "The Army has been forthright in dealing with the ongoing Gulf War Illnesses crisis," the mean score for all respondents was 3.12. In Question 10, when asked their opinion of the statement, "The Army appears to willingly provide information about the Gulf War Illnesses crisis to the media," the mean score for all respondents was 3.24. In

Question 11, when asked their opinion of the statement, "The Army denied a problem existed when news of Gulf War Illnesses crisis broke," the mean score for all respondents was 2.61. In Question 12, when asked their opinion of the statement, "The Army is hiding information related to the ongoing Gulf War illnesses crisis from the media," the mean score for all respondents was 3.12.

Army respondents slightly agreed that the Army was forthright and willing to provide information to the media during the Gulf War Illnesses crisis (Q9 and Q10). They were almost neutral on whether or not the Army denied a problem existed (Q11), and they disagreed that the Army hid information relating to the crisis from the media (Q12). Civilian journalist respondents slightly disagreed that the Army was forthright about the Gulf War Illnesses crisis or willing to provide information to the media (Q9 and Q10). They slightly agreed that the Army denied a problem existed and hid information from the media (Q11 and Q12). The difference in mean scores of Army and civilian respondents is illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5
Difference in Mean Scores

Gulf War Illnesses	Overall Mean	Military Mean	Journalist Mean
Question 9	3.12	3.42	2.71
Question 10	3.24	3.38	2.65
Question 11	2.61	2.92	3.71
Question 12	3.12	2.08	3.35

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference between the answers of Army respondents and the answers of civilian journalist respondents. Significance values indicate a very highly significant difference in answers regarding whether the Army hid information (Q12). Highly significant differences existed for Question 10 and 11 with regard to the Army willingly providing information (Q10) and Army denial of a problem (Q11). A significant difference in answers was found for Question 9 concerning the Army being forthright during the crisis. Table 6 is a summary of the ANOVA comparison for Questions 9 through 12.

Table 6
ANOVA - Gulf War Illnesses

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Question 9	Between Groups	5.027	1	5.027	4.981	.031
	Within Groups	39.363	39	1.009		
Question 10	Between Groups	5.273	1	5.273	6.138	.018
	Within Groups	33.507	39	.859		
Question 11	Between Groups	6.198	1	6.198	7.246	.010
	Within Groups	33.363	39	.855		
Question 12	Between Groups	16.040	1	16.040	21.052	.000
	Within Groups	29.716	39	.762		

Significance = <.05

The significance values indicate that differences in the answers of Army public affairs personnel and civilian journalists were very highly significant in Question 12, highly significant in Questions 10 and 11, and significant in Question 9.

Analysis of variance was also conducted to determine if there was a significant difference in answers on the basis of gender, age, race or prior military service, but none was found. An ANOVA to determine if there was significant difference in answers on the basis of Gulf War service found significance on Question 11 about whether the Army hid information. Gulf War veterans expressed a greater belief that the Army did hide information concerning Gulf War illnesses. Table 7 is a summary of the ANOVA comparisons based on Gulf War service.

Table 7
ANOVA - GWI & Gulf War Service

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Question 9	Between Groups	.533	1	.533	.551	.466
	Within Groups	21.300	22	.968		
Question 10	Between Groups	7.500	1	7.500	.094	.762
	Within Groups	17.550	22	.798		
Question 11	Between Groups	4.033	1	4.033	5.616	.027
	Within Groups	15.800	22	.718		
Question 12	Between Groups	3.333	1	3.333	.062	.805
	Within Groups	11.800	22	.536		

Significance = <.05

Army's Crisis Communications Overall

Questions 13 through 16 asked respondents to give their opinions on the Army's handling of crisis communications overall. Responses to the questions were scaled using the following Likert scale:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

In Question 13, when asked their opinion of the statement, "The Army quickly responds in communicating during a crisis," the mean score for all respondents was 3.00. In Question 14, when asked their opinion of the statement, "The Army is forthright in dealing with the media during a crisis," the mean score for all respondents was 2.59. In Question 15, when asked their opinion of the statement, "The Army hides crisis information from the media," the mean score for all respondents was 3.44. In Question 16, when asked their opinion of the statement, "The Army denies problems when confronted with a crisis," the mean score for all respondents was 2.78.

Army respondents agreed that the Army was quick to respond and forthright with the media when dealing with a crisis (Q13 and Q14). They disagreed that the Army hides information or denies problems when confronted with a crisis (Q15 and Q16). Civilian journalist respondents slightly disagreed that the Army was quick to respond and forthright with the media during a crisis (Q13 and Q14). They were neutral on whether the Army hides information (Q15) but slightly agreed that the Army denies problems when confronted with a crisis (Q16). The difference in mean scores of Army and civilian respondents is illustrated in Table 8.

Table 8
Difference in Mean Scores

Overall Crisis Communications	Overall Mean	Military Mean	Journalist Mean
Question 13	3.00	3.213	2.71
Question 14	2.59	3.83	2.88
Question 15	3.44	2.25	3.06
Question 16	2.78	2.42	3.29

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference between the answers of Army respondents and the answers of civilian journalist respondents. Table 9 is a summary of the ANOVA comparisons for Questions 13 through 16.

Table 9
ANOVA - Overall Crisis Communications

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Question 13	Between Groups	2.512	1	2.512	2.154	.150
	Within Groups	45.488	39	1.166		
Question 14	Between Groups	9.000	1	9.000	12.952	.001
	Within Groups	27.098	39	.695		
Question 15	Between Groups	6.510	1	6.510	8.624	.006
	Within Groups	29.441	39	.755		
Question 16	Between Groups	7.662	1	7.662	11.781	.001
	Within Groups	25.363	39	.650		

Significance = <.05

The significance values indicate that differences between the answers of Army public affairs personnel and civilian journalists was very highly significant for Questions 14 to 16. No significance was found for Question 13.

Analysis of variance was also conducted to determine if there was a significant difference in answers on the basis of gender, age, race or prior military service. No significance was found in age, race or prior military service. However,

the analysis of variance did find significance based on gender for Questions 14 and 16 related to forthrightness and denial of problems. Table 10 is a summary of the ANOVA comparison based on gender.

The significance values indicate that the answers of men and women were significant in Question 14 about forthrightness and highly significant in Question 16 about denial of problems. Women generally view the Army as being more forthright than men and less likely to deny a problem exists.

Table 10
ANOVA - Overall & Gender

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Question 13	Between Groups	.781	1	.781	.645	.427
	Within Groups	47.219	39	1.211		
Question 14	Between Groups	3.721	1	3.721	4.483	.041
	Within Groups	32.376	39	.830		
Question 15	Between Groups	.446	1	.446	.490	.488
	Within Groups	35.505	39	.910		
Question 16	Between Groups	4.282	1	4.282	5.809	.021
	Within Groups	28.743	39	.737		

Significance = <.05

Comparison of Crisis Situations

Questions 17 through 19 asked respondents to compare how forthright the Army was, in their opinion, in each of the three previously mentioned crises. Responses to the questions were scaled using the following Likert scale:

Much Less Forthright	Less Forthright	About the Same	More Forthright	Much More Forthright
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

In Question 17, when asked to compare the recent sexual harassment/misconduct crisis to the 1995 racism in the Army

crisis, the mean score for all respondents was 3.59. In Question 18, when asked to compare the 1995 racism in the Army crisis with the ongoing Gulf War Illnesses crisis, the mean score for all respondents was 3.61. In Question 19, when asked to compare the recent sexual harassment/misconduct crisis with the ongoing Gulf War Illnesses crisis, the mean score for all respondents was 4.05.

For Questions 17 through 19 no significant difference was found in the answers given by military and civilian journalist respondents despite significantly different answers throughout the rest of the survey. Respondents believe the Army, in handling the sexual harassment/ misconduct crisis, was slightly more forthright than it was in the racism crisis (Q17) and more forthright than it was in the Gulf War Illnesses crisis (Q19). Respondents also felt the Army was slightly more forthright in handling the racism crisis than it was in handling the Gulf War Illnesses crisis (Q18). The difference in mean scores of Army and civilian respondents is illustrated in Table 11.

Table 11
Difference in Mean Scores

Comparing Crisis Situations	Overall Mean	Military Mean	Journalist Mean
Question 17	3.59	3.67	3.47
Question 18	3.61	3.75	3.41
Question 19	4.05	4.17	3.88

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference between the answers of Army respondents and the answers of civilian journalist respondents. No significant difference existed. The two groups assigned nearly identical ratings when comparing the crises. Table 12 is a summary of the ANOVA.

Table 12
ANOVA - Comparison of Crises

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Question 17	Between Groups	.383	1	.383	.541	.466
	Within Groups	27.569	39	.707		
Question 18	Between Groups	1.138	1	1.138	1.963	.169
	Within Groups	22.618	39	.580		
Question 19	Between Groups	.804	1	.804	1.078	.306
	Within Groups	29.098	39	.746		

Significance = <.05

Analysis of variance was also conducted to see if there was a significant difference in answers on the basis of gender, age, race or prior military service, but none was found.

Hypotheses Results

Hypothesis 1, *Army Public Affairs practitioners, when compared with civilian journalists, will perceive the Army as being more forthright in each of the three crises, was supported (Questions 1-12).*

Hypothesis 2, *Civilian journalists will view the Army's handling of the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis as more forthright than its handling of the crisis concerning Gulf War Illnesses, was supported (Questions 1-4, 9-12, and 19).*

Hypothesis 3, *Civilian journalists will view the Army's handling of the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis as more forthright than its handling of the crisis concerning racism in the Army*, was supported (Questions 1-8 and 17).

Hypothesis 4, *Army Public Affairs practitioners will view the Army's handling of the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis as more forthright than its handling of the crisis concerning Gulf War Illnesses*, was supported (Questions 1-4, 9-12, and 19).

Hypothesis 5, *Army Public Affairs practitioners will view the Army as being equally forthright in handling the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis and the crisis concerning racism in the Army*, was rejected (Questions 1-8 and 17).

CHAPTER V

Discussion and Recommendations

Demographics

The selection of Army Public Affairs representatives and of civilian journalists in the Pentagon Press Pool as the two populations for this study was critical because the two groups interact on a daily basis in reporting Army affairs to the general public. They have a mutually dependent relationship. The Army relies on the journalists to get its story out, and the journalists rely on the Army to provide information. During a crisis, this relationship becomes even more critical, and even somewhat adversarial.

While the respondents in this study do not represent the larger professions of which they are a part, they very much represent the typical Army public affairs practitioner and the typical Pentagon correspondent.

Military officers must reach the rank of Major and Army civilians must be at least a GS-9 before being allowed to work in the Army's Office of Public Affairs. Similarly, civilian journalists must usually have worked at least several years in the field before being assigned to the Pentagon Press Pool. As the descriptive statistics show in the demographic portion of the previous chapter, study respondents are generally older and more experienced than the average Army officer or civilian journalist.

The gender composition of respondents is generally representative of the military, where women account for approximately 17% of the force. However, the figure is not representative of the journalism profession, where women now account for a much larger portion of those working in the discipline because of a recent influx.

The race composition of the study's respondents is not representative of the two populations or the larger professions of which they are a part. Both the military and the journalism profession have a much larger percentage of minorities.

Importance of Perceptions

The relationship between the Army and the media is based largely on perceptions. As Captain Steele noted in his study, lack of education for reporters about Army regulations, policies and organizational structure can contribute to misperceptions. Similarly, a lack of understanding on the part of the military about media roles, responsibilities and procedures can also contribute to misperceptions.

The perceptions of the populations in this study are particularly important because of the far-reaching impact they can have. The Army Public Affairs Office is the center of Army Public Affairs doctrine and policies. Negative military perceptions about the media at the Pentagon level could translate into restrictive policies concerning the release of

information, less emphasis on the importance of public affairs throughout all levels of the Army, and changes in the doctrine taught at the Defense Information School. Perceptions of journalists in the Pentagon Press Pool can have a significant impact on how news about the Army is reported throughout the nation. Negative perceptions about the military can affect the way press pool reporters write their stories. Stories written by wire service reporters, and the tone used, are picked up by newspapers all over the country. Network television reporting reaches into a significant number of homes across the country every day. Negative perceptions in either group have the potential to create a damaging cycle of negativity that could undo 30 years of work repairing the relationship between the military and the media after Vietnam.

This study sought to assess the perceptions of Army Public Affairs practitioners and Pentagon Press Pool members concerning the Army's crisis communications. The primary purpose of the study was to see how much of a gap existed between how well the Army thought it communicated and how well journalists thought the Army communicated.

Hypotheses Results

In assessing those perceptions, this study yielded some surprising results, especially with regard to the amount of negativity expressed by some of the civilian journalists.

Hypothesis one. *Army Public Affairs practitioners, when compared with civilian journalists, will perceive the Army as being more forthright in each of the three crisis examples,* was supported. Army representatives consistently rated themselves as more forthright in dealing with crisis situations than did the civilian journalists. In addition to rating themselves more forthright in each of the three crisis examples, they also rated themselves more forthright overall with crisis communications. One respondent stated, "In my 14 years as a PAO, I can think of no circumstance when the Army intentionally hid info or denied a problem."

However, while military respondents spoke very favorably about public affairs, they did not hold high regard for senior Army leadership or the political entities to which public affairs personnel must report. One respondent stated, "Unfortunately, the Army leadership prohibits Public Affairs from trying to keep information flowing and controlling the message during a crisis. This has happened with the sexual harassment issue. If the Army leadership would trust PAO to do its job without having to evaluate and approve our every move, I believe the Army would be much more effective in communicating during a crisis." A synopsis of military comments is in Appendix C.

Though the numbers assigned by journalists did not appear to be overly negative, they were significantly different from

those assigned by military respondents. However, despite numerical choices, the civilian journalists were very negative in the open comment portions of the survey. One respondent stated the Army was "uncooperative at best."

Civilian journalists also made a distinction in their comments between the performance of public affairs personnel and senior Army leadership. One respondent said, "Public affairs folks generally want to respond quickly and honestly. Command often has the opposite instinct." A synopsis of written comments from civilian journalists is in Appendix D.

Generally, the comments from civilian journalists show a genuine frustration with the dependency relationship that exists with the military. Because of the closed nature of the Army organization, journalists know they must depend on the Army for information and they are quite unhappy when they do not receive information they believe should be made public. Many journalists expressed a belief that the Army hides behind regulations and the Privacy Act to keep from releasing information.

Several written comments indicated very positive views of the current Chief of Public Affairs, Major General John G. Meyer. Because Major General Meyer is responsible for the public affairs doctrine and policies, perceptions of him as an individual are very important. An interview with him concerning his perceptions of the military and media

relationship and his vision for Army public affairs is in Appendix E.

Army representatives were expected to rate themselves as more forthright than civilian journalists. They are, after all, the ones releasing the information. However, the significant gap between the ratings of the two groups and the fact that it existed on 13 of the 16 questions related to specific crises and overall crisis communications was quite surprising. The two groups were expected to be much closer together on their evaluations because of the efforts made in recent years to develop a healthy working relationship between the military and the media. Many of the comments demonstrate a lack of knowledge, as studied by Captain Steele, about the military justice system and hierarchy of information. Many comments also show that a general mistrust of the military still exists in the media.

Hypothesis two. *Civilian journalists will view the Army's handling of the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis as more forthright than its handling of the crisis concerning Gulf War Illnesses*, was supported. Respondents were quick to note, however, that the responsibility for answering Gulf War Illnesses queries, though initially with the individual services, now rests solely with the Department of Defense (DOD). Question 19 pitted this study's oldest crisis situation against the newest crisis situation in terms of the

Army's forthrightness. Compared with Questions 17 and 18, civilian journalists indicated the Army was most forthright in its latest crisis concerning sexual harassment/misconduct. However, some journalists expressed skepticism over the reasons for the forthrightness. One respondent stated, "The Army has been somewhat forthright since the crisis broke. However, it consistently claims that it brought the Aberdeen case to the public (It did, but only because a TV news group was going to air the story that night)." Still, scores indicate that the journalists believe the Army's handling of crisis situations, though not perfect, has improved over time.

Hypothesis three. *Civilian journalists will view the Army's handling of the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis as more forthright than its handling of the crisis concerning racism in the Army*, was supported. Question 17 compared the Army's handling of its latest crisis concerning sexual harassment/misconduct with a crisis from 1995 concerning racism in the Army. Journalists once again rated the Army as being slightly more forthright, further bolstering indications that they believe the Army has gradually improved with each crisis handled. Ratings tended to place this comparison slightly closer to demonstrating about the same amount of forthrightness than the comparison with Gulf War Illnesses. This can be attributed to the fact that both the sexual harassment and racism crises were handled in very similar

ways. In each instance the Army launched an independent investigation to determine the extent of the problems throughout the organization. Following the investigations, the Army went public with the findings, marking a turning point toward the combination of a public information and two-way symmetric model of public relations for the organization. The Army continues to use this style in an attempt to generate not only information, but understanding as well. Some journalists, though, are skeptical of the use of panel investigations and see them as merely a smoke screen. One respondent stated, "To deflect a problem, the Army will dutifully establish a 'blue ribbon panel' made up of Army establishment types. It is no wonder there are never any changes."

Hypothesis four. *Army Public Affairs practitioners will view the Army's handling of the sexual harassment/ misconduct crisis as more forthright than its handling of the crisis concerning Gulf War Illnesses*, was supported. Military respondents, much like the civilian journalist respondents, indicated the Army was more forthright in its most recent crisis than it had been during the ongoing Gulf War Illnesses crisis, which initially surfaced in 1992. Respondents were also quick to point out the individual services can no longer respond to queries about Gulf War Illnesses. All responses must now come from the Department of Defense. Military

respondents expressed concern about the perception of inadequate handling of the crisis by DOD and the effect it will have on the Army. One respondent stated, "DOD has the lead now. Army has not been given the opportunity to direct the public affairs strategy for GWI. It was a poor strategy on DOD's part to issue blanket denials before conducting massive research effort into GWI documents. For this reason, DOD now has a 'credibility problem' on this issue." Military respondents' ratings show agreement with the civilian journalists that the Army has improved over time in responding to crises.

Hypothesis five. *Army Public Affairs practitioners will view the Army as being equally forthright in handling the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis and the crisis concerning racism in the Army*, was rejected. Military respondents rated the Army as being slightly more forthright in the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis. This again supports the military respondents' agreement with the civilian journalists that the Army has improved over time in its handling of crises. Given that both crises were handled in much the same manner, with the Army conducting independent investigations into the problems, military respondents were expected to rank them as equally forthright. However, interviews with Army Public Affairs practitioners while distributing the surveys

revealed that they felt the Army was much more proactive in the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis.

Non-Hypothesis Significance

The most significant aspect of the survey results is the major difference between the results for Questions 1 through 16 and the results of Question 17 through 19.

In Questions 1 through 16, when asked to rate the Army on forthrightness in dealing with specific crisis situations, differences in the mean scores for the two populations ranged from .7 to 1.5 on questions demonstrating statistical significance, which was at a highly significant level in most cases. However, when asked to compare the handling of the three crisis situations with each other, both populations almost mirrored each other, with no more than a .3 difference in the mean scores.

This demonstrates that despite all the differences in opinion about the Army's handling of specific crisis situations, the populations are in agreement that the Army, while far from perfect, has improved over time. One respondent stated, "There has been a big improvement since BG Meyer took over. I wouldn't say the Army's response in crisis is good. It's adequate and slowly getting better."

Considering that the respondents represent an older segment of the two professions, the negativity of some of the comments seems to suggest that old perceptions and feelings of

resentment still linger from the Vietnam era. Despite all of the hard work to build a healthy working relationship between the military and the media, these old feelings probably will not go away until the retirement of older members who experienced and remember Vietnam. The younger generation of officers and journalists did not experience the animosity between the military and the media during and after Vietnam. Accordingly, they are more willing to work together, building a relationship on mutual trust and respect. Yet despite their efforts, the older generation, now serving in senior leadership and management positions, remember the past vividly and tend to want to hold the younger generation back. This perception is apparent in many of the comments.

Recommendations

Some members of the survey population remarked that the views expressed by military members and journalists working at the Pentagon may be very different from those of the general military population and journalists working outside of Washington, DC. An expanded study involving Army public affairs officers throughout the Army and civilian journalists covering military affairs from outside the nation's capital could be done in an attempt to replicate these findings.

To account for negative perceptions present in older members of the population who experienced Vietnam, a similar study could be done in five or 10 years to see how much

opinions have changed as the older generation retires and the younger generation assumes senior leadership positions.

Just knowing that a significant gap exists should help the Army see areas needing the most improvement. This study, combined with that of Captain Steele, can help the military and the media see the steps that need to be taken in further cultivating a positive working relationship.

Appendix A Survey Cover Letter

June 2, 1997

Dear Journalism Professional:

I am writing to request your assistance in a project designed to assess the perceptions of Army crisis communications.

I am an Army officer pursuing a master's degree in Journalism and Mass Communications at Marshall University. I am in the process of completing my required thesis, and it is in this endeavor that I solicit your assistance.

My thesis is a quantitative study of the perceptions of Army crisis communications, both inside and outside of the organization. The study is based on a survey administered to two populations, the Pentagon Press Pool and Army public affairs officers stationed at the Pentagon. My goal is to measure the differences in perceptions between these two groups relating to the Army's responses to recent crises.

Because the number of journalists assigned to cover military affairs is relatively small, your responses to these questions are crucial to the success of this study.

The survey should take no more than 15 minutes of your time, and your anonymity is guaranteed. If you would like a copy of the survey results, please call me or send your name and address in a separate envelope to preserve the anonymity of your response.

Because timely execution of the survey is essential to the completion of my thesis, I would appreciate your response by 20 June 1997.

In advance, thank you for your input.

Sincerely,

Michelle L. Martin

6292 Division Road
Huntington, WV 25705-2442
(304) 733-2608

Appendix B Survey Instrument

- 1. Name
- 2. Address
- 3. Phone
- 4. Age
- 5. Education

1. The survey instrument is designed to measure the following variables:

- a. The survey instrument is designed to measure the following variables: (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)
- b. The survey instrument is designed to measure the following variables: (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)
- c. The survey instrument is designed to measure the following variables: (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)
- d. The survey instrument is designed to measure the following variables: (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

Demographic Data:

2. The survey instrument is designed to measure the following variables:

- a. The survey instrument is designed to measure the following variables: (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)
- b. The survey instrument is designed to measure the following variables: (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

SURVEY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF ARMY CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

Please pick a number from the scale below to show how much you agree or disagree with each statement as it relates to the Army's handling of each particular crisis and circle that number to the right of the item. For this study, the term forthright is defined as an open, honest and sincere approach to the release of information.

- SCALE**
- 1 Strongly Disagree
 - 2 Disagree
 - 3 Neutral
 - 4 Agree
 - 5 Strongly Agree

Section I - 1996 Sexual Harassment/Misconduct Crisis (relating to the current crisis involving drill sergeants at Aberdeen Proving Grounds and the Army's command sergeant major)

	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. The Army has been forthright in dealing with the recent sexual harassment/ misconduct crisis.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The Army has willingly provided information about the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis to the media.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The Army denied a problem existed when news of the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis broke.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The Army is hiding information related to the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis from the media.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments if any

Section II - 1995 Racism in the Army Crisis (related to the Army's investigation of racism and extremist activities after a white soldier killed a black couple at Fort Bragg and prosecutors claimed the killing was an initiation rite for a white supremacist group)

	SD	D	N	A	SA
5. The Army was forthright in dealing with the 1995 racism in the Army crisis.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The Army appeared to willingly provide information about the 1995 racism crisis to the media.	1	2	3	4	5

Section II - 1995 Racism in the Army Crisis (continued)

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7. The Army denied a problem existed when news of the racism crisis broke. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. The Army hid information related to the 1995 racism crisis from the media. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Comments if any

SCALE

- 1 Strongly Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neutral
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly Agree

Section III - Ongoing Gulf War Syndrome Crisis (related to unexplained illnesses Gulf War veterans claim are related to their service during Desert Shield/Storm)

- | | SD | D | N | A | SA |
|---|----|---|---|---|----|
| 9. The Army has been forthright in dealing with the ongoing Gulf War Syndrome crisis. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. The Army appeared to willingly provide information about the Gulf War Syndrome crisis to the media. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. The Army denied a problem existed when news of the Gulf War Syndrome crisis broke. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. The Army is hiding information related to the ongoing Gulf War Syndrome crisis from the media. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Comments if any

Section IV - General Overall Impression of Army Crisis Communications

Please pick a number from the scale below to show how much you agree or disagree with each statement as it relates to the Army's overall handling of communications during a crisis and circle that number to the right of the item.

SCALE

- 1 Strongly Disagree**
- 2 Disagree**
- 3 Neutral**
- 4 Agree**
- 5 Strongly Agree**

	SD	D	N	A	SA
13. The Army quickly responds in communicating during a crisis.	1	2	3	4	5
14. The Army is forthright in dealing with the media during a crisis.	1	2	3	4	5
15. The Army hides crisis information from the media.	1	2	3	4	5
16. The Army denies problems when confronted with a crisis.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments if any

Section V - Comparison of Crisis Situations

Please pick a number from the scale below to show how forthright you feel the Army was in dealing with each crisis situation when compared with another and circle that number to the right of the item.

SCALE

- 1 Much Less Forthright**
- 2 Less Forthright**
- 3 About the Same**
- 4 More Forthright**
- 5 Much More Forthright**

	MLF	LF	AS	MF	MMF
17. The recent sexual harassment/misconduct crisis as compared to the 1995 racism in the Army crisis.	1	2	3	4	5
18. The 1995 racism in the Army crisis as compared to the ongoing Gulf War Syndrome crisis.	1	2	3	4	5
19. The recent sexual harassment/misconduct crisis as compared to the ongoing Gulf War Syndrome crisis.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments if any

Section VI - Demographic Information

Directions: This information is strictly for creating a profile of respondents. Please select the correct description of you for each question and mark the appropriate space.

1. Sex: Male _____ Female _____

2. Age: 18-24 _____ 25-32 _____ 33-40 _____ 41-48 _____ 49-56 _____
 57+ _____

3. Race: Caucasian _____ African-American _____ Asian _____ Hispanic _____ Other _____

4. How many years have you been working as a journalist?
 less than 4 _____ at least 4 but less than 9 _____ at least 9 but less than 14 _____
 at least 14 but less than 18 _____ more than 18 _____

5. What type of medium do you represent?
 Newspaper _____ Magazine _____ Television _____ Wire Service _____ Radio _____
 Other _____

6. Have you ever served in the military? Yes _____ No _____

Thank you very much for your input!

Appendix C

Military Survey Comments

Sexual Harassment/Misconduct Crisis

- * The Army has not provided statistics on the number of sexual harassment cases Army-wide. This information should be readily available.
- * From the onset of the sexual misconduct crisis in November 1996, the Army has provided the media with as much info as possible without jeopardizing any ongoing investigations.
- * The Army appears determined to inform the American public of the problem and its intent to solve it and prosecute those found guilty to the fullest extent under the law.
- * The Army has been more open with the media and the American public about the sexual misconduct issue more than any other single issue in the past several decades.
- * The Army has generally been open and forthright on this issue. Unfortunately, it is forced to walk a fine line between openness and the need to protect the privacy rights of victims and accused.
- * Many Privacy Act considerations. Also, media doing alot of "fishing" - floating totally unsubstantiated rumors in an attempt to get official comment, thereby giving a facade of plausibility to the rumors.

* There is a perception that the Army's willingness to be forthright is related to the rank of the accused.

* The Army is losing credibility with how senior level cases are being handled. In addition, the longer the issue is played out in the media, the more damaging.

* We provided as much info as possible without violating the Privacy Act, while protecting both the accused and the victims.

* When the story first broke in November (by the Army), we were able to control the message because we came forward with the information. However, since then, we have let the media and outsiders (NAACP, SGM Hoster) control the message with no response from the Army. This has hurt us tremendously.

* The Army doesn't seem to mind coming clean with NCO misconduct cases; however, all of the rules seem to change when the allegations involve a general officer. This way of doing business sends a really negative message to the public, both internal and external.

* Tremendous initial response - open, honest, positive. Some isolated local pockets of resistance to maximum disclosure.

* This issue broke to Army leaders in August. However, we (the Army) sat on it for 3-4 months because of the presidential election. We shouldn't pat ourselves too hard on the back for coming forward - we simply beat the media to it.

Racism in the Army Crisis

- * I am not very familiar with this case.
- * The fact that the Army initiated a task force to investigate the nature and extent of the problem contradicts any idea of a cover-up.
- * Brought to closure quickly - smaller audience and message was clear - racism has no place in the Army.
- * Believe there was a perception that information was withheld, but perhaps it was a "collision" with the investigative process.

Gulf War Illnesses Crisis

- * The information that is becoming available is coming from outside sources, i.e. CIA. The Army wants to get to the bottom of this issue and help sick soldiers.
- * Over the past two years, the Army has played a very small role in the release of info pertaining to Gulf War Illnesses; DOD has been the main proponent for GWI info.
- * While most of the questions raised from the media were referred to Army Desk at DDI (DOD-level PA), those Army unique ones were answered promptly.
- * This is a bit difficult as GWI is a DOD issue. What info we get from DOD, we willingly pass on. The "choke point" is at the DOD level.

* This has been a DOD lead on the GWI issue. Army has received clear guidance to that effect, thus limiting our ability to discuss GWI with the media. This was a source of great concern for Army leadership -- that DOD had the lead but seemed slow to respond and almost ineffectual in dealing with the crisis.

* GWI became a crisis communication issue before DOD even recognized a problem existed -- they weren't listening.

* DOD has the lead now. Army has not been given the opportunity to direct the public affairs strategy for GWI. It was a poor strategy on DOD's part to issue blanket denials before conducting massive research effort into GWI documents. For this reason, DOD now has a "credibility problem" on this issue.

* Took too long to get information flowing to the public, giving the appearance that veterans' concerns were not taken seriously.

* DOD has not been very forthright about GWI. They only began giving information when they were backed into a corner by the media.

* From DOD level on down, we have done a poor job dealing with this issue. We didn't seem to take Gulf War Illness very seriously until recently. Now we're scrambling to find answers.

Overall Crisis Communications

- * Often, a reporter will accuse the Army of withholding info, when the info they want cannot be legally released -- such as certain personnel information protected under the Privacy Act. I've had a reporter tell me that his readers' right to know is more important than a soldier's right to privacy.
- * After 14 years as a PAO, I can think of no circumstance when the Army intentionally hid info or denied a problem. Sometimes the media want us to speculate or act prematurely just to meet their deadlines.
- * Army PA can only respond when told about a crisis. If they circle the wagons in the Secretary of the Army's office, we're the ones that catch hell from the media for "withholding info."
- * The institution has an inherent conservative approach to release of info. Public affairs professionals invariably push for more release sooner.
- * Hit and miss. Often the appropriate rapid response is held up by bureaucracy and indecision until it's too late - OBE.
- * Because of bureaucratic fumbling or the understandable need to gather and verify the facts before releasing them, it sometimes seems to the media that we are hiding the facts, at least temporarily.
- * Media don't want to believe any info should be off limits to their scrutiny, even info protected by the Privacy Act.

- * While not devious, the Army's PA apparatus is slow and cumbersome. It has difficulty responding to crisis, but this is a problem brought on by ambivalent, politically-correct, civilian, senior leaders, not public affairs officers.
- * The challenge is disclosing information in a timely manner.
- * The Army is sometimes slow to deal with a crisis. Leaders are hesitant to give written statements or go on camera.
- * Unfortunately, the Army leadership prohibits Public Affairs from trying to keep information flowing and controlling the message during a crisis. This has happened with the sexual harassment issue. If the Army leadership would trust PAO to do its job without having to evaluate and approve our every move, I believe the Army would be much more effective in communicating during a crisis.
- * This really isn't a black and white issue. I believe public affairs folks are honest and forthright when they can be and know about issues. Many times we can't talk or we don't know about the issues.
- * The PA folks know what to do. Leaders (not all) at many levels procrastinate and must be persuaded to do the right thing.
- * When the Army "decides" something is a crisis, I think we try to do the best job we can. I think in many cases,

"politics" plays too big of a role and because of that
bureaucracy, we sometimes lose focus on doing the "right
thing."

Appendix D Civilian Survey Comments

Sexual Harassment/Misconduct Crisis

- * They have been uncooperative at best.
- * Army started out well by releasing Aberdeen info just as the info started to leak, but the Army is no longer as proactive.
- * The Army has been somewhat forthright since the crisis broke. However, it consistently claims that it brought the Aberdeen case to the public (It did, but only because a TV news group was going to air the story that night).
- * Army public affairs in Washington is frequently unaware of sexual misconduct cases within different commands, so sometimes "the Army" withholds information. The Army still seems intent on portraying these cases as a few bad apples when there is a lot of evidence that this is a systemic problem which a lack of strong leadership allowed to get out of hand.
- * The Army is trying to be open, but protection of the institution is paramount.
- * The Army will only admit to things they are forced to in a court proceeding. There is never any media backgrounding. The Army would just as soon push the sexual harassment issue outside the beltway to the lowest common level of command (i.e. local news).

* They were forthcoming and embarrassed.

* The Army did well by institutional standards

Racism in the Army Crisis

* To deflect a problem, the Army will dutifully establish a "blue ribbon panel" made up of Army establishment types. It is no wonder there are never any changes.

* Seemed adequately covered - was not as widespread and overt a problem as the sexual misconduct crisis.

Gulf War Illnesses Crisis

* They blew it on this one. They have a problem and it's taken years for it to surface, even though it was probably not their fault.

* No longer hiding, but the problem really isn't the Army's. When the Army is asked for info, it provides. But this issue is much larger than just the Army.

* I believe the Army has been genuinely helpful and is honestly concerned. However, stories continue to break showing officials have withheld information.

* The Army is probably not intentionally hiding information about GWI, but it is almost certainly "overlooking" some information.

* This story is basically a DOD issue. I don't believe that DOD or the Army is hiding anything, in spite of the conspiracy mentality in Washington.

* I don't think the Army deliberately withheld anything, but the Army has a hard time dealing with uncertainty which creates the appearance of stonewalling.

* The Army so badly handled the Gulf War Syndrome problem that DOD took it over. DOD so poorly handled it that it was kicked to a presidential commission.

* They've been stonewalling for five years.

* There's as much press misconduct as DOD misconduct in the GWI issue.

Overall Crisis Communications

* Sometimes yes, sometimes no. Always downplays magnitude of the problem though.

* The Army eventually admits to problems, but it seldom does so on its own, or initially.

* The Army is the slowest of all the services to react to a crisis, and the result is that it often looks like the Army is covering up, when in fact all it's doing is trying to get its act together.

* They've improved, but they're not perfect.

* Public affairs folks generally want to respond quickly and honestly. Command often has the opposite instinct

* Like any large institution, the Army often hides behind rules and regulations when it comes to sensitive issues, providing convenient excuses to withhold data from the media.

* There are some public affairs officers who deny problems, but this is changing. More sophisticated commanding officers make a big difference.

* Public affairs in the Army is tell them (the reporters) very little and hide behind rules and regulations. The Army leadership hides behind political suits (civilians). The Army does not invest trust and confidence in its PAOs, especial local PAOs. As a result, they are normally out of the loop.

* Often acts stupid at the Pentagon level. More candid at lower levels

* There has been a big improvement since BG Meyer took over. I wouldn't say the Army's response in crisis is good. It's adequate and slowly getting better.

* Dramatic improvement in recent months.

Comparison of Crisis Situations

* There is a new attitude among PAOs since the Gulf War.

Appendix E

Interview With Major General Meyer

The following is a transcript of an interview with Major General John G. Meyer, Chief of Army Public Affairs, conducted through electronic mail on July 1, 1997.

Question: What was your impression of public affairs early in your career? Did you have to deal with the media at all in your career?

MG Meyer: My impression of Army public affairs early in my career was that I needed to avoid the media. It was too risky to take a chance because of my distrust for them. As I advanced in my career, yes, I did have to deal with the media, and I think a maturation process helped. When I became a general officer and commander of the Community and Family Support Center, I had a fair amount of contact with the media -- some pleasant and some not-so-pleasant.

Question: How do those early impressions differ from what you know now about public affairs?

MG Meyer: Those early impressions differ greatly from what I see now. I totally realize now that the Army has to work with the media in all venues. I totally understand how important it is to develop a relationship with the media and to do your homework first so you are aware of the type of publication,

etc., they may be. I am much more cognizant of the difficulty of having "good stories" "sold" to the media.

Question: How did you prepare for the sexual harassment/misconduct crisis which broke within days of you being assigned as the Chief of Army Public Affairs?

MG Meyer: My preparation time for handling the sexual misconduct/harassment crisis consisted of half a day. It was on the afternoon of my first day that Bob Gaylord, my deputy, apprised me of the Aberdeen Proving Ground situation. It was on the afternoon of the second day that the decision was made with senior leader involvement, to go forward and announce our sexual misconduct challenge. Bottom line -- preparation time was 0. Baptism by fire, in my particular situation has served me well. I don't think I would be as far along as I am in the public affairs arena had it not been for the baptism by fire approach that I was faced with.

Question: Looking back, is there anything you would've done differently in handling the sexual misconduct crisis?

MG Meyer: I don't think we would have done too much differently, looking back at it now, than if we had had time to prepare. Overall, I totally believe we did the right thing by announcing the challenge versus the challenge being discovered by some media. There were a few instances where I think we could have been more proactive and a few instances where I should have called editors and TV producers and voiced

my objection sooner. Overall, we were a target rich environment and it was our turn in the barrel.

Question: Does the Army follow the four-step approach to public relations (research, planning, communication, evaluation)?

MG Meyer: The Army attempts to follow the four-step approach, but when you're in a "prolonged close-in fight," it is very difficult to go through each step methodically. What we need to do is get the sexual misconduct/harassment crisis behind us, beef up the Plans & Policy Division (which I have done), and I think by the end of the summer we should be on more of an even keel to follow the four-step approach and get in a more proactive mode with the media.

Question: What is your impression of the relationship between Army Public Affairs and the journalists in the Pentagon Press Pool? Does your office try to build solid, working relationships with the media before a crisis can occur?

MG Meyer: I think the relationship between Army Public Affairs and the journalists in the Pentagon Press Pool has improved. I think they think we are more open and are trying to be more forthcoming and more professional. I know that was not always their opinion, but with the arrival of COL John Smith and others, relationships have been renewed. And yes, I totally agree that solid relationships with the media before the crisis occurs is very helpful. In my case, I did not know

these folks, so I had to build relationships as the crisis unfolded.

Question: Do you feel the Army does a good job of telling its story to the public?

MG Meyer: Again, it is very difficult for the Army to communicate positive stories to the media in a crisis communication situation. You also have to realize that the real sensing of Americans is not "inside the Beltway." We did a short study and took one week in time about six weeks ago. We collected all of the major negative Army stories in the Early Bird for one week. At the same time, I had the MACOMs send in all the positive stories occurring at their installations in the local papers. It was amazing --all of the good news that's out there about the Army versus what you read in the East Coast major media. Yes, the Army can and will do better at getting its message out to the public. We are just about to finalize a strategic communication plan for the entire Army that will allow senior leaders and PAOs to speak with one voice, highlighting major messages and events.

Question: What do you feel is most important in dealing with the media?

MG Meyer: In dealing with the media, items that are important follow:

Relationships - yes, established in advance if at all possible.

Timeliness - very important but I have found you will never satisfy the media in this arena. The Army can and will do better, but I don't think we will ever satisfy their perceived need.

Truthfulness - understood, don't ever violate this.

Access - very important to get them timely and necessary access to senior leaders.

Game plan - important to have well thought out, proactive, futuristic game plans in place.

Question: What changes would you like to see in the way the Army conducts public affairs?

MG Meyer: Changes I would like to see in the way the Army conducts public affairs follow:

1. We must change the culture. The Army culture by senior leaders is to avoid the media. We need to be more proactive, more open and take prudent risk.

2. We must better develop our officer corps. OPMS XXI is the answer and I think the CSA will approve that course of action in a few months.

3. Technology -- we must get into the 21st century as soon as possible, and what we're doing in Bosnia should be an example of how we can do that.

4. Increase our professional development for our civilians.

5. Increase the responsibility for our noncommissioned officers.

6. One of my chief responsibilities will be to "market" Army Public Affairs to the Army senior leadership. I am convinced that if a senior leader has a good public affairs officer, everything works fine. Any variance from that causes problems on all fronts.

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