Literature Review

The practice of transparency or candor resonates as much within military circles as civilian ones and is influenced by the areas of organizational image, reputation management, crisis communication, apologia, and source credibility.

Organizational Image

While organizational image is a powerful communication tool found today in corporations and organizations, there is not enough research to fully explain the concept as it relates to current businesses and institutions. The evolution of purely academic treatments of image is dated. The external and internal influences that affect an organization's image are driven heavily by financial decisions made at the top levels of an organization.

As the idea of identity evolves within organizations, research is undertaken to determine what comprises identity. Lee (1971) investigated organizational identification patterns of professional scientists and concluded identification may be different to each individual. In general terms, identification implies some degree of belongingness, loyalty, or shared characteristics. Lee (1971) acknowledged that concepts of identification are interwoven and cannot be analyzed as separate phenomena.

The study of organizational image by Leister and MacLachlan (1975) looked for influences outside of the organization (exogenous) and inside the organization (endogenous). They found a distinction between image and attitude. An image is something possessed by an object and thus an attitude is possessed by an individual with respect to that object (Leister, 1975). Dutton and Dukerich (1991) found a distinct difference between reputation and image, and further defined reputation as the actual attributes outsiders ascribe to an organization. Organizational image appears to be the attributes members believe people outside the organization use to distinguish it from like or similar organizations.

van Rekom (1997) highlights the importance corporate identity has in corporate communication. The study is based upon the works of Albert and Whitten (1985) and outlines the concept of corporate identity in order to support and be useful for corporate communications. van Rekom (1997) concludes managers concerned about corporate image cannot downplay the importance of organization identity. Researches argue external influences cause organizations to change their image in order to be seen as more adaptable and dynamic. The time may be approaching where image and identity are truly seen as being the same. The corporate community continues to add substantial data to the

body of work that links organizational image to public trust as well as organizational effectiveness.

Reputation Management

Merriam Webster (1997) defines reputation as an overall quality or character. The most common concern of reputation management scholars is how to measure it. Still, no widely accepted tools exist. Public relations practitioners have tried to define who is ultimately responsible for reputation. Research has found that organizations large and small survive crises better if they have public reputations for honesty and candor. Corporate reputation is a valuable intangible asset for most businesses, but it isn't measured or consciously managed (Nakra, 2000). As Hutton, Goodman, Alexander and Genest(2001) noted, attempting to manage one's reputation is akin to managing one's popularity.

Several measures have been developed to gauge corporate reputation, but have yet to be systematically utilized in the context of corporate reputation management (Nakra, 2000). These measures include the customer satisfaction index, customer franchise and loyalty, and employee beliefs and attitudes. Where crisis management requires a plan of action immediately after an emergency, reputation management procedures function proactively.

Hutton et al (2001) again noted in a study of *Fortune* 500 companies that strong corporate reputations were the result of focused non customer relationship management. Stakeholders develop expectations as to how the firm will act in a given situation as part of their assessment of the firm. These reputational expectations offer both benefits and challenges for the firm. Positive reputations (based on past positively evaluated actions and history and/or actions of a retaliatory nature, as in a reputation for active and vigorous defense of a market or product) can serve as an asset or resource for the organization. The negative consequences of reputation expectations can serve to eliminate an organization's voice in an unfolding issue where past actions were not well received Mahon and Wartick (2003).

Media likewise play an important role in the organizational communication process, even though the organization exercises little influence over it. This alone shows the need for openness when dealing with media representatives who are trying to explain often complex matters to their viewing or reading public. Mahon and Wartick (2003) suggest the media role in underscoring organizational reputation cannot be overestimated. Yet, many stakeholders do not have direct experience with organizations, and rely on third parties for information. Saxton (1998) posits corporate reputation emanates from all activities

and communications intentionally and unintentionally undertaken in the marketplace, such as advertising, promotion, direct marketing, and personal selling, as well as trade, public, and community relations.

Most research has focused on the interaction and utility of reputation in assisting an organization to improve its competitive position and in reputation as an asset that can be used in a defensive manner that allows an organization to preserve its market position and/or its relationships with customers when attacked (Mahon & Wartick, 2003). This has been called the reservoir of goodwill hypothesis, which suggests firms with positive reputations, when faced with sudden economic or political shocks, will receive some benefit of doubt from the community (Jones, Jones, & Little, 2000; Bostdorff, & Vibbert, 1994).

Lyon and Cameron (1998) determined positive reputations allow not only for implementation of current organizational agendas, but also for the pursuit of future goals. This has been described as the halo effect, and assumes a generally positive attitude toward an organization lends the varying levels of immunity.

Crisis communication

Prior to a crisis, an organization needs to cultivate positive relationships with the media and other important

publics (Benson, 1988). In the case of crisis events, the foundation that may prevent an organization from suffering severe negative outcome is the foundation of positive opinion about the organization held by groups of people whose behavior may affect the organization's operation (Sturges, 1994). Prior relationships may result in fairer reporting of crisis events and in more objective interpretations of one's decisions and actions in a crisis situation (Benson, 1988).

It is believed that organizations with a history of positive performance and good deeds should find it easier to maintain a positive image during a crisis. This belief is based in image cultivation, in which an organization builds its image credits with positive performance. When a crisis hits, these credits are used to offset the reputational damage generated by the crisis (Birch, 1994; Druckenmiller, 1993; Siomkos, & Shrivastava, 1993). Conversely, an organization with a history of poor performance, such as repeated crises or questionable practices, will see the image damage amplified rather than offset. The poor performance history leads the public to be more critical because the crisis is part of a negative pattern of behavior. (Coombs & Holladay, 1996; Griffin, Babin, & Attaway, 1991).

Theory in crisis communication is rooted in attitude, which is an individual's predisposition to behave in a particular way

in response to given phenomena in his perceptual world (McCroskey, 1968). An attitude always has a frame of reference or focus that may be on a person, group, policy, or product (McCroskey, 1968).

One of the key objectives of crisis management is damage control (Burson, 1985). The intent is to prevent drastic negative changes in relations with environmental components. Planning only for damage control, however, results in activities that may be too late to secure positive relationships important to the organization (Sturges, 1994). The real work of influencing relationships should be done long before a crisis arises when issues, although important to the public, are still visible (Sturges, 1994). The foundation that may prevent an organization from suffering severe negative outcome is the foundation of positive opinion about the organization held by groups of people whose behavior may affect the organization's operation (Sturges, 1994).

Communication during a crisis may have two primary objectives, appeasement of third party interveners (Barton, 1993; Ressler, 1982) and informing employees and others about the situation (Sturges, 1994). If information flowing through the media is inaccurate, inappropriate, counterproductive, or hostile, it serves to reinforce negative opinions during the time lapse stage of normal development (Sturges, 1994). Such

reinforcement tends to influence developing group opinions and normalization in directions not desired by the organization.

In 1998, Coombs further defined crisis communications strategies as having seven categories ranging from the organization attacking the accuser to offering a full apology. In defining structures for crisis response strategies and matching those strategies to a crisis situation, three crisis situation elements believed to affect perceptions of crisis responsibility were identified, attribution dimensions, performance history, and crisis damage (Coombs, 1998).

In the area of attribution dimension, research suggested an external control attribution dimension was unrelated to either crisis responsibility or organizational image. Performance history, conversely, does intensify perceptions of crisis responsibility and image damage for the current crisis. According to Coombs (1998), accidents create minimal perceptions of personal control and that if an organization cannot control a serious accident, it too is a victim. Transgression crisis types showed some effect for image damage but no change in responsibility as crisis damage worsened.

In 2002, situation crisis communication theory, which addresses the variables, assumptions, and relationships that should be considered in selecting a crisis response strategy was developed and tested to further advance crisis communications

theory (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) is based on previous research matching crisis response strategies to crisis situation. The central focus of SCCT is how to manage organizational reputation during a crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). Considering the relationship between crisis responsibility and organizational reputation is vital in applying SCCT as it requires crisis managers to use even more accommodative strategies as crisis responsibility increases (Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

In assessing crises, Coombs and Holladay (2002) were able to reduce 13 crisis types into three crisis clusters: victim, accidental, and preventable. Within the victim cluster are types of crises that produce minimal attributions of crisis responsibility, such as natural disasters, rumors, workplace violence, and product tampering. Within the accidental cluster are crises that have moderate attributions of crisis responsibility and include crises such as mega damage, technical breakdown accidents, and recalls. The preventable cluster is comprised of those actions purposefully placing stakeholders at risk by knowingly engaging in inappropriate actions, or human error that might be avoided. Also include are crisis producing strong attributions of responsibility and includes human breakdown accidents, organizational misdeed, management misconduct, and organizational misdeed with and without injury

(Coombs & Holladay, 2002). Developing crisis clusters helps crisis managers because similar crises can be managed in similar fashions (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993).

Apologia

Apologia is the speech of self defense (Ware & Linkugel, 1973). One of the first individuals to study apologia from a case study perspective was Rosenfield (1968), who analyzed speeches by Nixon and Truman, 1952 and 1953 respectively, which were defensive in nature, in an effort to discern the makeup of broadcast, apologetic discourse of the time. Rosenfield (1968) found that these examples of apologia were composed of four facets: situation, evidence in the form of factual information, previously used arguments as justification for the case presented, and attacks on the accuser(s). Rosenfield's (1968) critical analysis was the forerunner of apologia criticism in the twentieth century and was foundational to the analysis of its form and style. Additionally, Rosenfield's (1968) research of broadcast apologia contributed to future research by recommending studies into motives, strategies, and tactics used by speakers.

Fisher (1970) examined apologia in terms of exigency, or the situation that motivated the speaker. Fisher (1970) categorized a speaker's motives into four types, affirmation, concerned with giving birth to an image; reaffirmation,

concerned with revitalizing an image; purification, concerned with correcting an image; and subversion, concerned with undermining an image. Fisher's (1970) relativistic perspective of communication laid the groundwork for the scholarly study of apologia, not based on the communicator's intent, but on the function of adapting ideas to audiences and vice versa. Fisher (1970) noted that in addition to the rhetorical critic considering the communicative motives, descriptions of discourse strategies and tactics would benefit the study of communication theory.

Kruse (1981) asserted that apologia is provoked by an external event; is a response to character attacks; can be attributed only to the challenged person's credibility; and is pertinent only to humanity.

Apologia, as a concept, has theoretically manifested itself in organizational communication's subcategories of reputation and crisis management. Benoit (1995, 1996), Benoit and Brinson (1994), and Benoit and Czerwinski (1997) is one of the leading academics of image repair theory and perhaps the most published in the field. He has analyzed the image repair strategies of Tylenol (Benoit & Lindsey, 1987), AT&T (Benoit & Brinson, 1994), Wal-Mart (Benoit & Dorries, 1996), and USAir (Benoit, 1997) as well as the Supreme Court in light of many of its decisions. Benoit (1995, 1997) developed the Theory of Image Restoration

Strategies and the Theory of Image Repair Discourse. His latter theoretical contributions group image restoration strategies into five categories that are hybrids of previous scholarly advances in apologia (Benoit, 1997). He categorizes strategies as denial, composed of simple denial and shifting blame; evasion of responsibility, which is achieved through provocation, defeasibility, and claims of accidents and good intentions; reducing offensiveness of an event, realized by bolstering, minimizing, differentiation, transcendence, attacking the accuser and compensation; and corrective action and mortification in regards to incidents (Benoit, 1997).

Source credibility

Source credibility is a major approach to persuasion in communications studies, extending through nearly five decades of research. Source credibility derives from Aristotle's notion of ethos, detailed in *The Art of Rhetoric* (1991). Aristotle identified three main rhetorical styles dealing with the art of persuasion: ethos (credibility), logos (logic), and pathos (emotion). Ethos is the persuasive appeal, the credibility of the speaker's character, expressed in both cognitive and affective terms.

Follow on research confirmed underlying motivators to message acceptance, the dimensions of source credibility, though the number and variety of actual factors has yet to be

institutionalized. Berlo, Lemert, & Mertz (1969-1970) isolated

three new dimensions: safety, qualification, and dynamism in

their research. A fourth factor, sociability, was also tested in

their Michigan State University studies. Berlo et al (1969-1970)

attempted to clarify the concept of what factors determine

source credibility, with safety relating to trustworthiness, and

qualification relating to expertness. Likewise, Whitehead (1968)

conceptualized source credibility as a composition of four

factors: competence, trustworthiness, dynamism, and objectivity.

The identification of factors depended on scales of measurement

utilized. But for however much research has focused on the

interplay between these factors, this research determined source

credibility to be comprised of the factors of expertness,

character, and sociability.

Many of the studies being conducted in recent years

concerning source credibility investigate the moderating effects

of message framing. That is, whether the message is framed

positively or negatively. A positively framed message emphasizes

a thing's advantages, or potential gains, while a negatively

framed message emphasizes potential losses, in light of not

capitalizing on a thing's advantages (Zhang & Buda, 1999).

In the expanding realm of corporate credibility, versus a

singular source, endorser or spokesperson credibility has been

determined to be the extent to which the endorser is perceived

to be an expert in the topic of the communication, and trusted to give an objective opinion regarding it (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000). Based on this research, a dual credibility model was derived from Lutz and MacKenzie's dual mediation hypothesis (Lafferty et al, 2002), and suggests a direct relationship between message recipient attitude, advertised brand (or topic), and purchaser intent. Lafferty, Goldsmith and Newell (2002) likewise determine that corporate credibility is an aspect of corporate image, which is the totality of impressions in the consumer's mind about a corporation.

Organizational trust is yet another notion of the influence of credibility, but unlike other theories and research noted here, organizational trust concerns itself with internal trust of an organization. Shockely-Zalabak, Ellis, and Winograd (2000) determined organizational trust to be important to the various organizational activities such as goal setting, performance appraisal, and cooperative behaviors within the organization. Five dimensions comprise Shockely-Zalabak et al's (2000) organizational trust model: competence, openness, concern, reliability, and identification. This element of internal trust, when capitalized on, can have a direct impact on external trust of an organization. Ramifications of positively framed organizational messages concerning internal satisfaction, posses the potential to positively influence external message

recipients based on Chebat et al's (2001) notions of external
forces influencing source credibility.

Research question and hypothesis

This study was designed to measure the effect of candor
during a crisis on a military organization's credibility with
the public and follows similar projects that measured the
consequence of transparency on the part of corporations faced
with adversity.

While 82 percent of the American public currently has
confidence in the military (Gallup, 2003, as reported by
Everett), this study sought to determine whether transparency
provides more or less credibility. In particular, the study was
designed to measure credibility in the wake of a negative news
event, and measure if a military organization can use disclosure
as a tool to maintain, enhance, and improve its likeability and
character while also increasing public attitude toward the trust
and expert appeal it gives to a military organization.

While differing levels of disclosure may be employed by the
military, the level of crisis may also assist it in retaining
image, character and respectability to help steer it through the
crisis. Together, the hypothesis and research question attempt
to more fully explain how increased levels of disclosure help a
military organization under crisis.

H1: Increasing levels of disclosure by the military in potential crisis situations contribute to:

a. More positive attitudes toward the military.

b. Perceptions of greater expertness, character, and sociability of military spokespersons.

c. Greater perception of trust of the military.

RQ1: In addition to full disclosure, does an apology by the military further enhance organizational image.