

Running head: DUCK, DUCK, OOPS!

Duck, Duck, Oops!

A Content Analysis of the Crisis Surrounding Phil Robertson

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This project is dedicated to my parents- Catherine and Martin Malinda.

Thank you for all the sacrifices you made to get me to this point in my life. All your love and support helped me through many dark times of self-doubt and discouragement. Dad,

I know you were proud of me and I wish you were still here. Rest in peace.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to apply Benoit's theory of image restoration to apologetic discourse offered by those involved in the crisis surrounding Phil Robertson following his January 2014, *GQ Magazine* interview. This content analysis applied the theoretical framework to a collection of news segments, articles, and letters that contained apologetic discourse and analyzed them to identify the strategies of image restoration used.

The results indicated that the most prevalent strategy used was transcendence- placing the act that caused offense in a different context. Robertson and those involved in his image restoration directed the audience's attention to higher moral values when they insisted that he was merely answering questions based on his personal beliefs that are strongly rooted in his faith. This was the theme of apologia that was issued. Robertson did not intend to offend the audience when he quoted the Bible. He was doing what he does regularly: sharing his faith.

Keywords: Crisis Management, Image Restoration, Phil Robertson, Duck Dynasty

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Phil Robertson takes pride in his ability to live off the land and provide for his family as evidenced by his statement “uptown living, you’ve got to call 911. Where I am, I am 911” in a *Duck Dynasty* episode outtake. Robertson was born and raised in Vivian, Louisiana. He was an All-Star in football, baseball, and track and attended Louisiana Tech where he played quarterback on a football scholarship. After receiving his Bachelor’s degree in physical education and his Master’s degree in education, he spent several years teaching and later came to the conclusion that his time would be better spent in the woods (A&E, 2014).

Robertson married Kay (Miss Kay) when they were 16 years old and they have four sons: Alan, Jason (Jase), Willie, and Jeptha (Jep). His passion for hunting enabled him to experiment with a variety of duck calls on the market and he was never satisfied. He decided to craft an instrument that produces the exact sound of a duck. Robertson was successful and in 1972, he whittled the first Duck Commander call. In the first year, Robertson sold \$8,000 worth of the duck calls and received a patent. In 1973, he formed the Duck Commander Company. The Robertson family and their duck call company worked together to produce *Duckmen* videos and DVDs and in 2009 premiered a reality television show on the Outdoor Channel (Alter, 2013). It is because of this show that the Robertson family was found by a producer who contacted them about starring in their own reality show (Robertson, Robertson & Schlabach, 2012).

The reality show was meant to be a serious “behind-the-scenes look at the family of hunters” (Alter, 2013, p. 5), but the A&E producers discovered how close-knit and funny the Robertson family was and went with that angle. They named the show *Duck Dynasty*. The show addresses many aspects of life, family and faith that are not typical of reality television. The show is semi-scripted and has become the biggest reality television hit in the history of cable television, reportedly earning the family a \$200,000-an-episode paycheck. It’s a funny, family-friendly show with “skits that we come up with,” as Robertson describes the writing process (Collier, 2013). There is a plethora of products and merchandise including school supplies, shoes, jewelry and eyewear that have followed the success of the television show.

All this success and happiness was not a standard in the Robertson home. When his children were young, Robertson managed a bar, and his alcoholism drove him to kick his wife and children out of the house (Robertson, Robertson & Schlabach, 2012). He found his faith and gave up his partying ways and managed to get his family back. The business started small, and Robertson traveled store to store to try to get them to sell his duck calls. More than 40 years later, his small company has grown into a multi-million dollar one (Duck Commander, 2014).

An interview conducted by Drew Magary in the January 2014 issue of *GQ Magazine* put Robertson in the limelight when he made offensive comments. Some chose to speak out against the alleged homophobic and racist comments while others supported them. These comments damaged his image, and Robertson, his family, the A&E Network and the Christian community took steps to restore it. Phil Robertson hurt his image during an interview with *GQ Magazine* when he made comments that offended certain

people. Consequently, the comments hurt A&E Network's image and that of the Robertson family as well.

“What the Duck” by Drew Magary

Phil Robertson values life. It is evident when he insisted on reminding Magary to watch out for the huge crossbow that he was holding. He continued to describe how animals are a glorious gift from God and how blowing their heads off is part of His plan for human beings. Robertson immediately started off by glorifying God and showing interest in another person's well-being, and graphically describing hunting, which is typical Phil Robertson language (Magary, 2014).

Robertson gestured to the surrounding wilderness. “The Almighty gave us this. Genesis 9 is where the animals went wild, and God gave them wildness. After the flood, that's when he made animals wild. Up until that time, everybody was vegetarian. After the flood, he said, ‘I'm giving you everything now. Animals are wild.’” Magary described Robertson as welcoming and gracious, and as a man who preaches the gospel of the outdoors and, practices what he preaches. Robertson shared his thoughts on modern immorality, like this one:

It seems like, to me, a vagina—as a man—would be more desirable than a man's anus. That's just me. I'm just thinking: There's more there! She's got more to offer. I mean, come on, dudes! You know what I'm saying? But hey, sin: It's not logical, my man. It's just not logical (Magary 2014).

During Robertson's darkest days, in the early 1970s, he had to flee the state of Arkansas after he badly beat up a bar owner and the guy's wife. When asked to repeat the story, Robertson said he puts everything behind him and was literally born again. He was

not afraid to share his misdeeds, or his views on immorality, but he did not want to bring up things he put behind him. When asked about his plans after *Duck Dynasty*, Robertson shared that when the show runs its course and the production trucks drive off the Robertson property for good, there will be nothing keeping him from his greater mission. He could step back if he felt like it, given that he's now a very wealthy man. He could stay in the woods and live out the rest of his days hunting. The rest of the interview features the growth of his business and his family, as well as other comments that were perceived as offensive by certain audiences, and can be found in its entirety on the *GQ* website (<http://www.gq.com/entertainment/television/201401/duck-dynasty-phil-robertson?currentPage=3>).

Everyone has made an apology at one point in life, whether they are sorry for something they did, did not do, will do, or will not do. Apologies are part of toddler's speech development as well. We all learn to take steps, communicatively or behaviorally, to pardon our behavior in order to have others think favorably of us. Death is the great equalizer, but it doesn't matter who we are or where we are from, we all desire to have people view us in a positive light. Celebrities, corporations, politicians, everybody has to apologize when their behavior has been perceived as wrong. Human beings are relationship-oriented, and one way we sustain these relationships is by communicating with techniques that help us build and maintain our reputations in our eyes, as well as in other's. It is this, then, that makes us desire to engage in "patterns of communicative behavior designed to reduce, redress, or avoid damage to their reputation (or face or image) from perceived wrong-doing" (Benoit, 1995a, vii). Communicative strategies that serve to restore image deserves serious study because image damage is inescapable. It

serves as an important function in society; hence, this study is focused on the crisis surrounding Phil Robertson.

The researcher thought it valuable to analyze the crisis management rhetorically by way of image restoration strategies used by those who are primarily involved: Phil Robertson, his family (the Duck Dynasty cast) the A&E Network, and the Christian community. In this project, the Christian community was represented by The Faith Driven Consumers Organization. The organization supports those whose faith, or worldview that is driven by the Bible, is significant enough in their lives to be a major factor in everyday decisions. In order to study an artifact such as this, one must first understand the person(s) involved, the crisis, and the theoretical framework. The comments that Phil Robertson made during his interview, answering questions based on his faith, worldview and upbringing, initiated a response from individuals and groups that felt attacked and offended. The researcher analyzed the interview, with special attention being paid to the comments that Robertson made. The comments that were perceived as offensive were released as a preview to the interview as a whole, and the image restoration attempts that were made following those comments were analyzed.

The theoretical framework used in this study is William Benoit's image restoration theory, which was applied to the restoration attempts made by Phil Robertson, his family, the A&E Network and the Christian community. Benoit's theory of image restoration strategies starts with two assumptions. First, "communication is a goal-oriented activity" (Benoit, 1995a, p. 63). Human beings all have goals, and in order to attain those goals, some form of communication has to take place. Second, "the maintenance of a favorable image is a primary goal of communication" (Benoit, 1995a, p.

63). A good reputation is the key to building good relationships, but maintaining a good reputation takes work. Consequently, one goal of communication is to help build, maintain, and restore image or face. Once an event has occurred and image has been compromised, certain communicative steps can be made in order to restore image. In his book, *Accounts, Excuses and Apologies: A Theory of Image Restoration Strategies*, Benoit (1995a) gives his theoretical framework, that this study used, by outlining five general rhetorical options that one can use to restore his or her image: denial, evading responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification. Additionally, three of these strategies, denial, evasion of responsibility and reducing offensiveness have further subdivisions.

Benoit (1995a) explains that image restoration theory tends to be descriptive rather than prescriptive. Treatment of image focuses on identifying options, rather than recommending what options to use; however, Dardis and Haigh (2009) tested image restoration strategies in a crisis situation and proposed a paradigm shift from the realm of the retrospective and descriptive nature of image restoration theory to that of inference and prescription. This would give clear guidelines regarding what strategy to use in a crisis situation.

The researcher used the following questions to guide this study:

(RQ1) In what ways did Phil Robertson attempt to restore his image after facing negative backlash for comments made in his interview with *GQ Magazine*?

(RQ2) What restorative strategies did the A&E Network attempt to make to restore its image as a company and the *Duck Dynasty* television show?

(RQ3) How did Phil Robertson's family, part of the *Duck Dynasty* cast, attempt to repair the image of the *Duck Dynasty* show, and that of their patriarch?

(RQ4) How did the Christian community react and try to restore Robertson's image?

Chapter two discusses the literature related to this study with attention on image restoration strategies used in crises. Chapter three describes and discusses methodology used to analyze the data, and chapter four presents the results. Chapter five explains the findings presented in chapter four and includes limitations, suggestions for further research and conclusions.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review discusses the theory of image restoration. It references other studies that have used image restoration theory as a lens to view crises where image restoration strategies were used to restore damaged reputations. Theories that deal with opposition and reality television studies are also discussed. This review of literature begins with the explication of image restoration strategies. The rhetorical communicative recommendations for apology outlined by Benoit are fivefold: denial, evading responsibility, reducing offensiveness of the event, corrective action and mortification. This theory borrows from earlier work done and this chapter begins with early self-defense discourse.

Rosenfield's Analog

Rosenfield (1968) analyzed Nixon's Checkers speech and Harry S. Truman's reaction to allegations of harboring traitorous communists in his administration. This was the first theoretical advance in image restoration, namely Rosenfield's Analog. Nixon's speech was in defense of the charges that claimed he maintained a campaign slush fund, while Truman's speech addressed allegations made by Senator Joseph R. McCarthy in his Enemies from Within speech. Rosenfield found four similarities in the two discourses that he identified as constants in the apologetic equation (1968, p. 449) the first is a brief, intense controversy; the second is an attack on the opponent; the third is a concentration of data in the middle of the speech; and the fourth is a recycling of arguments from past speeches. Rosenfield's Analog is a good basic descriptor of apologetic rhetoric, but Benoit and other scholars criticized it. The first step (a brief, intense controversy)

describes the situation rather than the communicative discourse, the second encourages attacking the opponent, and the third and fourth give no suggestions for repair.

Ware and Linkugel on Apologia

Ware and Linkugel (1973) proposed the theory of apologia when Rosenfield's theory fell into disuse. They suggested four rhetorical strategies to restore one's image: denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence. Self-defense speeches could use denial or bolstering, coupled with either differentiation or transcendence, which would establish four potential postures (or stances): absolute, vindictive, explanative and justificative. Denial and differentiation couple to form the absolute stance, while denial and transcendence forms vindictive stance. The explanative stance is the pairing of bolstering and differentiation, and the justificative stance is the pairing of bolstering and transcendence. Ware and Linkugel consequently argued that communicative image restoration may contain one or more of the four strategies (denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence), and self-defense would rely heavily on persuasive tactics.

Kenneth Burke on Purification

Another approach that helped shape Benoit's rhetorical discourse on image restoration was Kenneth Burke's writings on purification. Guilt is the primary motive in Burke's theory of dramatism. Benoit interprets Burke's guilt as "a representation of an undesirable state of affairs, an unpleasant feeling, which occurs when expectations concerning behavior are violated, as they inevitably are" (1995a, p. 18). When attacks occur, steps are taken to remove the guilt, which helps restore image, and Burke identified them as victimage (scapegoating) and mortification (admission of guilt and

request for forgiveness). Victimhood is the transference of the accused burden of guilt to another person (Burke, 1973, p. 39). The rhetor is the absolved and, hence, reputation cleansed. The alternative, mortification, is the acceptance of wrong-doing. Burke theorized that a heartfelt apology and request for forgiveness of wrong-doing can purge an individual's guilt.

Ryan's Kategoria and Apologia

Another theory that helped Benoit formulate his theory was Ryan's speech set analysis (1982). When considering image restoration discourse, one must consider the defense (apologia) and the attack (kategoria). Ryan proposed to "treat accusation and apology as a speech set" when critics analyze defense (p. 254). A complete understanding of the accusation and apology is imperative if a critic is to understand image restoration. It is important to analyze defense in light of the attack.

The above approaches, Rosenfield's apologia, Ware and Linkugel's apologia, Kenneth Burke's purification, and Ryan's kategoria and apologia, contributed to Benoit's image restoration theory. This section discusses the typology of strategies. The theory, as mentioned in the beginning of this paper, is founded on two key assumptions. The first is that "communication is a goal-directed activity," and the second, that "maintaining a positive reputation is one of the central goals of communication" (1995a, p. 63). Benoit noted that "an attack on one's image, face, or reputation is comprised of two components: an act occurred which is undesirable, and you are responsible for that act" (p. 71). Benoit organized the rhetorical communicative image restoration strategies into five distinct categories, three of which had subcategories.

Typology of Image Restoration Strategies

The first strategy is denial. The first subcategory is the “I didn’t do it”. Benoit (1995a, p. 75) illustrates that when faced with an attack, the individual can “simply deny the undesirable action” (75). It is clear, that when caught in face threatening situations, whether guilty or not, the individual can choose to deny the accusations. This denial can be “supplemented with explanations of apparently damaging facts or lack of supporting evidence” (75). The victim can choose to deny and ask for proof of guilt of the accusations against him. However, when an individual chooses the “I didn’t do it” strategy one wonders, “Well, if you didn’t do it, who did?” (75). Benoit suggests that the individual can shift the blame, the second subcategory of denial. Benoit (1995a, p. 76) deduces, this strategy works for two reasons; it provides a target for any ill will the audience may feel and it answers the “Who did it?” question.

The second strategy is evading responsibility, of which there are four subcategories. Benoit observes that those who cannot deny the wrongful act can “evade or reduce their apparent responsibility for it” (76). The first strategy for evading responsibility is provocation. The individual can blame another for provoking the wrongful response. Here, the other person is to blame, and the individual who was accused merely becomes a victim responding to an attack. The second strategy for evading responsibility is defeasibility. That is, to claim that there is no “information about or control over important factors in the situation” (76). The individual can simply request detailed information about the wrongdoing or blame circumstances beyond his control, such as the proverbial “dog ate my homework” tale. The third strategy is accident, by which the individual can “make an excuse” (76) and claim that there was a

slight mishap, and because human beings are inherently flawed, others should be less likely to fault the accused. The fourth strategy is good intentions; the individual claims that he acted the way he did because his motives were pure. Here, Benoit (1995a) points out that the accused does not deny the act but rather says that the act in question was performed because of “good, rather than evil, intentions” (77).

The third strategy is reducing offensiveness of the event, of which there are six categories. The first is bolstering, by which the accused can magnify good qualities in order to “strengthen the audience’s positive affects” (77). The second is the accuser can “attempt to minimize the amount of negative affect associated with the offensive act” (77). The individual tries to convince the audience that the negative event that damaged his or her reputation was not that bad. The third is differentiation, which Benoit asserts compares the act with other “similar but less desirable actions” so that the audience can make a comparison between the two and decide to pick the lesser of two evils. The fourth is transcendence, by which the individual can paint the negative effect in a different context, and the negative effect seems trivial. If an individual is put in jail for theft, perhaps the audience is less likely to think of the wrongful act as harshly if the reason was that he or she needed to feed his or her child. The accused will “direct attention to higher values” that justify his behavior (1995a, p. 78). The fifth is to attack the accuser by reducing credibility. Benoit also explains that an accuser may also be the victim of the damaging event. The accused, then, can “create the impression that the victim deserved what befell him or her” (1995a, p. 78). The final route is compensation. As Benoit puts it, “compensation functions as a bribe” (1995a, p. 78). He adds that none of the above

strategies involve denial of the offensive act committed, nor do they involve reducing the responsibility for the act.

The fourth strategy one can use to repair image is corrective action. According to Benoit (1995a) this strategy takes two forms: “restoring the situation to the state of affairs before the objectionable action and/or promising to mend ones ways and make changes to prevent the recurrence of the undesirable act” (p. 79). The last strategy is mortification, admitting to committing the offensive act and to ask for forgiveness. “Admitting guilt and express regret” as Benoit put it (1995a, p. 79). He also mentioned that coupling this strategy with future corrective actions would work better. If an individual were to admit guilt, give a heartfelt apology, and propose future preventative measures, that individual would restore image more effectively.

Audience

Benoit (1995a) also explains the importance of the audience when making rhetorical restorative attempts. This is important to note because the audience’s perception of the actor’s attempts to restore image is what defines successful restoration. In the model proposed in the article *Collapsing and Integrating Concepts of “Public” and “Image” into a New Theory* by Mary Anne Moffitt (1994), an organization is obligated to target its message to individuals, as well as to audiences or publics. She defines the individual as the actor. The actor becomes the rhetor when he tries to restore his image. She further explains that how the audience reacts to the rhetor’s apology is not necessarily the actual perception of the rhetor. In his analysis of the audience, Benoit (1995a) also identifies “at least two audiences for a given restoration attempt” (p. 82). The actor faces the external audience, those who the apologist is most concerned about

when it comes to restoring his image. First, the actor tries to restore his reputation with the accuser. The actor engages in behavior that the accuser (the audience) perceives as wrongdoing then he attempts to restore image by directly addressing the accuser. For example, if Timothy criticizes Sarah, Sarah may want to restore Timothy's perception of her, and only be concerned with Timothy's perception. Timothy is the primary audience. Second, the rhetor faces the secondary audience. For example, if Andrea yells at Adam in front of coworkers, then Andrea seeks to save face in front of them. The rhetor seeks to restore her image in front of Adam and her coworkers as opposed to just the primary accuser, Adam. The final form of audience is the third-party audience. The rhetor seeks to restore his image to individuals aware of the accusations and not the accuser. This is evident in situations concerning organizations that need to restore image. If a protester accuses an organization of misusing profits, a company spokesperson can make attempts to restore the reputation, having the customers in mind as opposed to the protester, the primary accuser. Another example is if a media story exposes concerns about the kind of meat products being used in a restaurant chain. The actor, a spokesman who represents the restaurant, attempts to restore the restaurant's image to customers without caring about the perception of the primary accuser, the media.

Image Restoration Related Studies

Image restoration has been used to analyze restoration techniques employed by individuals, groups and companies when image is damaged. This section will focus on those studies. Benoit (1995b) analyzes Sears' attempts to recover after being accused with fraud. The attack is analyzed and the restoration discourse is applied to Sears' attempt to restore their tarnished reputation after Jim Conran of the California

Department of Consumer Affairs accused Sears' auto repair centers of overcharging their customers. Could Sears customers really "Count on Sears?" Benoit (1995b) argues that "the most serious accusation was that Sears had violated the trust that it had built for over one hundred years" (p. 94). There were "immediate and negative consequences that demanded response" (Benoit, 1995b, p. 95). An analysis of this accusation is presented that argues that the accusations were persuasive, while Sears' initial response was weak. Attacks against Sears were well developed, as Conran was a credible source that employed statistics and concrete examples. He also employed testimony from Sears' mechanics. Sears attempted corrective action and that was too late. Sears chose to rely on an outside attorney, fostering the impression that upper management was unconcerned. Later, an open letter to Sears' customers was written and ran in fifteen newspapers, and the chairman held a press conference to repair image. Sears employed denial, differentiation, bolstering, good intentions, and minimization throughout the repair efforts. Benoit finds that bolstering is more effective if it relates directly to the accuser's charges. In the first open letter, the chairman mentioned that Sears' policy is accepted and practiced and reminded the audience that Sears has been providing satisfactory service for over 60 years.

Actor Hugh Grant had an unfortunate brush with the law. His career was on the rise until he was arrested. Grant used scheduled talk shows as a platform to try to repair his image. In the article *Hugh Grant's Image Restoration Discourse: An Actor Apologizes* by Benoit (1997a), he focuses on the image repair of celebrities and whether the strategies used differ from the strategies used by politicians or corporations. Several important differences exist between the situation facing entertainers, politicians and

corporations that wish to restore an image. Hugh Grant is an illustration of how mortification can help repair a damaged reputation (Benoit, 1997a). It is more risky for some rhetor's (politicians, corporate officials) to engage in mortification because mortification means admitting guilt. While anyone can be subject to a lawsuit, this risk is probably higher for corporations than for most individuals. Corporations are not subject to the same accusations as people.

Benoit and Brinson (2000) analyze Queen Elizabeth's image repair discourse when she appeared insensitive to the Britons following Princess Diana's death. The Royal Family's initial public response to Diana's death was simple and muted, just as one would expect British Royals to be. However, Britons responded with an enormous public demonstration of grief that was soon mixed with increasing anger directed toward the Queen and her family. According to Benoit and Brinson (2000), the Queen's speech included denying the accusations, bolstering her and the Royals, and briefly offering an excuse for their behavior. The Queen's discourse enacted the four image repair strategies: denial and bolstering were the primary and predominate ones, while defeasibility and transcendence were the secondary minor strategies. Simple denial that the Queen did not care about Princess Diana's death was the first restoration strategy used. Bolstering was evident when she explained that she was helping Princess Diana's children deal with the terrible loss and hence may have seemed preoccupied. The Queen pointed out that she did not respond with her feelings about the incident because she did not know how (defeasibility), and she used transcendence when she directed attention to the world's perception of the British people and not her subjects's reaction to her response to the tragedy.

In their article *AT&T: Apologies are not Enough*, Benoit and Brinson (1994) analyze the American telephone company AT&T. The company suffered a threat to their reputation when they experienced a long distance interruption that blocked more than five million calls into and out of New York on September 17, 1991. AT&T's defense went through three stages: mortification, plans for correcting the problem, and bolstering (Benoit & Brinson, 1994). The first component of this discourse was mortification. Chairman Robert E. Allen began his message by accepting responsibility for the disruption. The apologist accepted responsibility, acknowledged the suffering of the victims without attempting to diminish the undesirable consequences they suffered, and directly apologized for the offensive act (1994). AT&T revealed plans to correct the problem by suggesting fixes to mechanical difficulties at the switching plant from the ground up that presumably would prevent potential problems that might occur. The third strategy used was bolstering. Allen reinforced the positive image that AT&T had before the incident by reminding consumers that the company has built systems to the highest standards and that it is a world-class company.

The image restoration strategies employed by Tonya Harding, an American Olympic figure skater, were analyzed by Benoit and Hanczor (1994). Harding emerged as one of the most notorious figures because of her attack on former teammate Nancy Kerrigan. A critical analysis of her 1994 interview on *Eye-to-Eye with Connie Chung* revealed that Harding primarily used bolstering, denial, and attacking one's accuser, although defeasibility also appeared in her discourse (Benoit & Hanczor, 1994).

A paper presented at the International Communication Association Annual Conference entitled *When Celebrities Are Attacked: A Case Study of the Theory of Image*

Restoration Discourse reported the investigation of the sexual scandal involving David Letterman and his female staffers (Carveth & Ferraris, 2011). He became more popular after the scandal, and so did the show, and this was because of the strategy he used to restore his image. He employed mortification, and people related to the fact that a man made a mistake and was going to pay for it. There was a sense of understanding. He addressed the crisis quickly and took responsibility.

Benoit and Nill (1998) analyze the discourse of Judge Clarence Thomas. His nomination to replace Justice Thurgood Marshall on the United States Supreme Court was a controversial political event, in large measure because of Professor Anita Hill's accusations of sexual harassment. Thomas employed three image restoration strategies: denial, bolstering, and attacking his accusers. The first two strategies responded to charges of sexual harassment and the last strategy accused Senators opposing Thomas. Len-Ríos and Benoit (2004) analyze United States Congressman Gary Condit's image repair strategies following the disappearance of a Washington intern, Chandra Levy. Suspicions arose about his relationship with Levy, whether he was involved in her disappearance, and how fully he cooperated with the police investigation. Condit broke his silence by releasing an explanatory letter to his constituents and appearing on a nationwide broadcast. Analysis of his open letter using an image repair theory framework revealed that Condit's lack of candor, unpersuasive denials, and failure to shoulder responsibility for any mistakes were not an impressive form of image restoration.

In his article *Crisis Communication, Image Restoration, and Battling Stereotypes of Terror and Wars: Media Strategies for Attracting Tourism to Middle Eastern Countries*, Avraham (2013) seeks to uncover the strategies of Middle Eastern marketers

to restore a positive image to bring back tourism after crises in the past. This qualitative content analysis of advertisements, press interviews, tourism websites and reports about marketing reveals that marketers of Middle Eastern countries used three types of strategies: source, messages, and audience. These strategies deal with tourism crises, negative images, and stereotypes of violence. Dealing with the image problem will continue to be a challenge for Middle East country officials and marketers until the region stabilizes and its regional conflicts are resolved.

Dardis and Haigh (2009) conducted a study to test all of the image restoration strategies within a single crisis situation. They conducted an experimental study to provide the first empirical test of Benoit's five image restoration strategies against each other within the context of a single crisis situation. They found that the implementation of different strategies affect individuals' perceptions of a company in a crisis situation. The study demonstrates that the "reduce offensiveness strategy was most effective on all dependent measures, though not statistically greater than all other strategy types in all situations" (p. 118). However, this strategy "consistently outperformed the denial and evade responsibility strategies across most reputation-based variables" (p. 118).

Rosenfield (1968) performed a case study in speech criticism. The qualitative study analyzes public addresses that had an element of restoring images by making apologies. This study was conducted to add to communicative apologetic discourse by showing the relationship between speeches and to highlight the relative artistic merit of apologetic discourse. In their article *Merrill Lynch: Corporate Apologia and Business Fraud*, Hearit and Brown (2004) qualitatively examined the apologetic crisis management discourse proffered by Merrill Lynch to restore its reputation. In April 2001,

New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer accused Merrill Lynch of fraud. This created a public relations crisis for the firm and this crisis was caused by the disclosure of damaging emails in which analysts referred to stocks that they were selling as “a piece of junk” or “trash” (p. 459). The strategy the firm used was denial. Even with the evidence of emails, they claimed that said emails were misunderstood. The company finally apologized; however, they did not admit to being responsible for their actions. The firm “appeared to be sorry that the emails were brought to light instead of sorry for the deception” (p. 464). The firm chose to use a chief executive who was about to leave the firm to be their scapegoat on whom blame was cast.

Kennedy and Benoit (1997) critically analyze speaker Newt Gingrich’s self defense discourse following the multi-million dollar book deal controversy. Gingrich used five major rhetorical strategies to deal with allegations: “denial, good intentions, bolstering, attacking accusers, and corrective action” (p. 212). The quantitative evaluation showed that Gingrich failed “to deal with allegations adequately, employed inconsistent arguments, and developed strategies poorly” (p. 212).

Blaney, Benoit, and Brazeal (2002) apply image restoration to Bridgestone-Firestone’s recovery efforts after the recall of 6.5 million tires that were experiencing issues after which a federal investigation blamed the tires for allegedly causing 101 deaths. Their essay, *Blowout!: Firestone’s Image Restoration Campaign*, analyzes the rhetorical effectiveness of the image repair discourse using Benoit’s image restoration theory as the theoretical framework. The case study shows that denial and hiding incriminating data were common responses to Firestone’s defective tires. The phenomenon was known as tread separation (a breakdown in binding of tires causing a

blowout). The company concealed this defect from customers and admitted to the problems after the reports of death. Had “corrective action been implemented immediately, it seems likely that many deaths and injuries could have been avoided” (p. 389). In his qualitative article, *Another Visit to the Theory of Image Restoration Strategies*, Benoit (2000) makes clarifications to his image restoration theory. He makes distinctions between image repair and image restoration to give readers a better understanding. Restoration implies that the individual or group attempts to get back to their initial state, while repair implies that attempts may fail. Individuals seek to repair image and use the strategies that will work best even though the efforts may fail.

Brinson and Benoit (1999) examined Texaco and their image restoration efforts after a secret tape of an executive meeting surfaced that revealed racist comments. The chair of Texaco used certain restoration strategies: “bolstering, corrective action, mortification, and shifting the blame” (p. 483). Peter Bijur, chair of Texaco, delivered a speech to members of the oil industry four months after the crisis. The image restoration strategies he took were very effective at getting the company out of the spotlight. Benoit and Drew (1997) investigated the rhetoric of apologetic speech designed to restore damaged reputation and conclude that mortification and corrective action were perceived as more effective and appropriate by audiences than other strategies. This means the audience is more receptive to speeches that are tailored to accept responsibility for wrongful acts and follow up by offering steps to correct the problem. They could be coupled together to make restorative attempts more effective as Benoit would suggest.

Crisis Management

It is important to note that crisis situations vary and so do the strategies used to respond to them. A study by Coombs (1995) creates guidelines for the use of appropriate crisis-response strategies. The findings suggest that “response strategies should seek to protect the organizational image” (p. 454). He notes that this is done by “modifying public perceptions of the responsibility for the crisis or impressions of the organization itself” (p. 454). In his article *West Pharmaceutical's Explosion: Structuring Crisis Discourse Knowledge*, Coombs (2004) chose data from various texts on crises. These data were collected and analyzed to create the Crisis Communication Standards. This is a set of guidelines for crisis managers looking to protect their reputation. Crisis response strategies were divided into three categories: instructional strategies that include warnings and directions on how to act, adjustment strategies that include expressing concern for individuals who were wronged, and finally, reputational protection, by which crisis managers select the most appropriate crisis response strategy that suits the threat made to the reputation. When crisis occurs, restorative communication has to be employed under stress. Coombs (2004) demonstrates that crisis managers can make errors due to the stressful situation and hence should use the Crisis Communication Standards presented in his study. Similarly, The article *Image Repair Discourse and Crisis Communication* by Benoit (1997b) describes the theory of image restoration discourse as an approach for understanding corporate crisis situations. The primary goal of his research was to help design messages during crises by “critics or educators to critically evaluate messages produced during crises” (p. 177). The article extends beyond the analysis of image

restoration after the event occurs and instead applies image restoration theory during the crisis.

In 2004, Dunne conducted a study on the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) following the child sex abuse scandals. She argues that, while being an institution of religion, the Church handled the crisis like a large bureaucratic private institution. The difference lies in the clientele. She notes that client-dependent organizations deal directly with and depend on continued public consumerism and references the hospitality industry; whereas, the “relationship of client-independent organizations with their clientele is often mediated through layers of protective bureaucracy” (p. 492). Such organizations use apologia in their restorative work, unlike client-dependent organizations that use apology. Courtright and Hearit (2002) explain that client-independent organizations use apologia (understanding the wrongful acts in a different context, hence using justification), while client-dependent organizations use apology (admitting guilt and seeking to reconcile).

Identity Management Theories

Other theories are concerned with image restoration. These theories build a premise on the idea that individuals seek to avoid being perceived as anything other than what they intend to be perceived. It is about showing the best features and human beings are concerned about how they look to others. Identity management theories can shine a light into how human beings manage their identities in social contexts. Face management was based on the assumption that “face is central to the coordinated and continued flow of interaction” (Baldwin, Perry & Moffitt, 2004, p. 108). In the 1950s and 1960s, Erving Goffman wanted to explain how we manage our identities in personal relationships. He

referred to human interactions as performances and individuals as actors (Goffman, 1973). His theory also includes the perception of the audience. Actors put on performances to their audience; hence audience perceptions are imperative to face and facework. He defines face as our “public self-image that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced during any social interaction” (p. 108). Individuals engage in facework because face can be damaged. Goffman illustrates that preventative facework is when individuals try to avoid face loss, and if face is damaged they engage in corrective facework to restore it. This concept is similar to Benoit’s image restoration theory because Goffman suggest apologies as a method of corrective facework, and corrective facework is similar to the corrective action strategy suggested by Benoit (1995a).

Goffman’s theory of face is extended by Brown and Levinson (1987), who propose politeness theory as a way to explain facework. They argue that individuals have positive and negative face needs. Positive face need refers to “the desire to be valued and included by others whom we care about, as well as the desire to appear competent” (Baldwin, Perry & Moffitt, 2004, p. 108). In contrast, negative face needs refer to “the desire to be free from imposition, constraint, or intrusion” (p. 108). Politeness theory has an element of image repair, in terms of wanting to avoid image damage.

An important factor to consider when analyzing facework is culture. Politeness theory has been criticized for its lack of cross-cultural considerations. John Oetzel (2009) shows interest in culturally diverse groups because there are clear cultural differences that exist in society, and these differences definitely have an effect on communication.

Having culturally diverse individuals to consider when communicating adds to the concept of facework. Oetzel examines the difference in face concerns and proposed three

clusters: self-face as the concern for one's own image, other face as the concern of another individual's image, and he identifies mutual face as the concern about the association of self and other. Individuals belonging to different cultural groups manage the three clusters of face in different ways. This insight is relevant to this study because of differences in culture that exist between Phil Robertson and the target audience of *GQ Magazine*. The magazine has been a "premier men's magazine" for over 50 years (GQ Media Kit, 2014). It covers topics ranging from men's style, entertainment, life, women and more. The statement "He's so *GQ*" is a colloquial term synonymous with style; however, the tagline "Look Sharp. Live Smart" means much more than being outwardly fashionable. It means being cultured and having tastes in a plethora of interests, such as politics, literature, film, art, food, travel and music. According to the 2014 GQ Media Kit, the demographics of readers include median age (35.3), college educated (75%), and male (71%). The marital status of readers is 66% single and 34% married. The viewership of *Duck Dynasty* is different, according to 2013 Nielsen ratings that reported the age range between 18 and 49. According to Experian Marketing Services the following percentages of registered voters by party reported recently watching an episode of *Duck Dynasty*: 12.8% of independents, 9.5% of Democrats and 13.5% of conservative evangelical Christians (The Politics of Who Watches Duck Dynasty).

Theories of opposition

Social Judgment Theory

The researcher chose to study the image restoration of Phil Robertson because of the reaction of certain audiences to his interview. While he was answering questions as he saw fit, albeit crudely, the backlash was created and increased by individuals. People

had broad opinions about the interview, and others shared those opinions. However, were those opinions shared because of a strong belief system or because that was simply a popular opinion? Social judgment theory, based on the work of Muzafer Sherif (1961) and Sherif, W., Sherif, M., & Nebergall, R. E. (1965), tries to predict how one individual's belief system is affected based on another individual's belief system.

Sherif and Hovland (1965) mention the ego involvement, which is the individual's personal feeling of relevance on an issue. Knowing this, how does social judgment theory relate to communication? First, "individuals judge the favorability of a message based on their own internal anchors and ego involvement" (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011, p. 86). Messages may be distorted by contrast or assimilation. The contrast effect occurs when "individuals judge a message to be farther from their own point of view, while the assimilation effect happens when individuals judge messages to be closer to their own points of view" (p. 86). Sherif illustrates that these concepts are heightened by ego involvement.

Social judgment theory "predicts that messages falling within the latitude of change of acceptance are likely to be accepted and will in turn cause attitude change, alternatively, messages falling within the latitude of rejection will reduce attitude change or lack it completely" (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011, p. 87). The boomerang effect can occur at times, where the message and attitude change are inversely related, that is, a "discrepant message strengthens positions on an issue" (p. 87). A graphic public service announcement (PSA) against smoking can lead the audience to favor smoking even more. Finally, the greater the ego involvement, the greater is the latitude of rejection. Highly ego-involved individuals are harder to persuade than low ego involved individuals. This

undoubtedly shows that the more relevant the issue at hand is to a particular individual, the more that individual will be attached to opinions that favor his view. According to this theory, Phil Robertson's comments were crude; however, an individual who identifies himself or herself as a Christian with the same viewpoint would agree with what Robertson said (no matter how he stated it). Once opinions that differ from their beliefs are offered, individuals are more likely to reject those opinions.

Spiral of Silence

Public opinion has been defined as “opinions publically expressed, opinions regarding public affairs, and opinions of the public as a group rather than a small group of individuals” (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011, p. 354). Noelle-Neumann (1991) argues that interpersonal communication and media work together to develop public opinion. She developed the spiral of silence theory, proposing that a spiral of silence occurs when individuals who perceive that their opinions are popular express them; whereas, those who do not think their opinions are popular remain quiet. The media covers some stories and leaves others untouched. When issues become controversial, individuals become morally loaded, meaning they hold their definite opinions of right and wrong. People, then, are more likely to express their opinions if the people around them share those opinions. People can determine popular opinions by making guesses based on the people around them. If an individual attends a large conservative college, in a small conservative town, an educated guess would indicate that students would most likely be conservative.

Noelle-Neumann (1984) suggests the spiral of silence is based on three rules: fear of isolation, threats of criticism and fear of rejection. Fans of *Duck Dynasty* would be more likely to support Robertson's comments in the interview because other fans of the

show would do the same. A community of support based on mutual adoration of the show would allow an individual to speak his mind in favor of Robertson. An individual who is a fan of the show but does not agree with Robertson's comments would be less likely to speak out because that person would be in the minority among most of the fan base, so he would avoid the fear of isolation, criticism and rejection.

However, those who are exceptions to the rule do not fear being isolated no matter the consequences. If a fan of the show believes Robertson's comments were unfounded and hurtful, that person would speak up regardless of the reaction from fans that are in support of Robertson. These individuals include innovators, change agents, and the avant-garde.

Media effects on public opinion are cumulative and not always apparent. The more a story is covered, the more popular it becomes, the more people express opinions about it, and those opinions are based on what the media choose to cover. Journalists express their own opinions when covering stories, and hence may contradict expressions of the public, or shape it. "Individuals express their opinions or not, depending on dominant points of view; the media in turn, attend to the expressed opinion, and the spiral continues" (Littlejohn & Foss 355).

Reality Television Studies

Reality-based television is a vaguely defined genre containing programs that are viewed at best as only moderately real (Nabi, Biely, Morgan & Stitt, 2003). It would seem that there is no clear industry standard definition of the genre even though reality television began to emerge as a distinctive genre in the late 1980s. While reality television seems unscripted, it is at least semi-scripted. Scholars can deepen

understanding of what, if any, unique appeal these programs might have, to whom, and to what effect. Nabi, Biely, Morgan and Stitt (2003) infer that viewers enjoy the programs because of their unique elements (eg. real people and unscripted nature) and the pleasure received by watching personal dynamics, both for what the viewers learn about others and what they learn about themselves. Reality television is characterized by several elements (Nabi, et al., 2003): (a) people portraying themselves (ie. not actors or public figures performing roles), (b) filmed at least in part in their living or working environment rather than on a set, (c) without a script, (d) with events placed in a narrative context, (e) for the primary purpose of viewer entertainment.

Nabi, et al. (2003) hypothesize that because the unscripted, unpredictable, and somewhat spontaneous nature of reality-based television, individuals with higher levels of impulsivity would be more likely to be regular viewers of these programs. They came to the conclusion that younger people and persons with less formal education are more likely to be regular viewers of reality programming. This is not to say that educated people would not enjoy reality television, but it would seem they would more likely look for logic and structure when choosing entertainment. The findings suggest that respondents believe that people on reality-based television shows are at least somewhat aware of being watched and that the behavior evidenced might be affected. Human beings are conditioned to act differently once the element of monitoring comes into play. For instance, if an individual only performs tasks for the sake of doing them, that individual may have a change of heart once his boss announces that he will be monitored.

The show *Undercover Bosses* is a great example as to how people behave and what they say when they assume their boss (the individual who is a factor in their

livelihood) is not present. The premise of the reality show is that bosses go incognito, or “undercover” as it were, to monitor their companies at the ground level. The best way they can learn the truth about the company is if they do not appear authoritative in any way because individuals will alter their behavior once they know they are being monitored. Employees become open and honest about the policies, the wages, their struggles and their triumphs with no fear of repercussions because of their unawareness. That is not to say that the boss may not end up firing employees who do not have the company’s best interest at heart.

Nabi, et al. (2003) define regular viewers as individuals who watch reality television mainly because they are entertained, find the programs suspenseful, and enjoy their unscripted nature. In contrast, casual viewers are more likely to watch out of curiosity and for entertainment value. The authors conducted two studies. Study one considered how the public constructs reality television, and the second evaluated what makes reality television interesting. They noted that respondents disliked reality-based television mostly because it appears contrived, that is, not real, and as such, regular viewers found the editing misleading and bothersome. Regular viewers revealed that they find reality television entertaining because they get a peek into others’ lives and the self-awareness they acquire through viewing, while the casual viewers watch primarily because they are bored and secondarily to get a view into others’ lives. This revealed that the regular viewers wanted to feel connected because of the human condition that they can identify with, while the casual viewers wanted to engage in a passive activity.

Lundy, Ruth and Park (2008) share the view that, contrasted with scripted television, reality television portrays people in their natural settings. They go further by

stating that the rationale for watching reality television is the “great escape,” an opportunity to sample other lifestyles and realities than their own. Lundy, et al. found that participants in their study believed that they could watch a given episode at their convenience and out of sequence and still be completely engaged in the narrative. Watching reality television does not require their full attention, unlike scripted television dramas that they fall behind if they miss an episode due to the narrative. Dramas need attention because the writers make sure there is a certain narrative to follow; however, reality television does not have a standard narrative, otherwise, it wouldn't be reality. The authors argued that reality television's collective moral impact on society is negative and that it brings people together, not only for watching the shows, but in conversations resulting from viewing.

The participants in the study by Lundy et al. (2008) did not perceive reality television as real, feeling that reality television shows go overboard in order to maintain ratings. They were also skeptical of the editing process in reality television. The authors conclude that reality television is and will continue to be a significant part of the young adult television appetite. They also made the distinction between good reality television and bad reality television. Good gives viewers useful ideas or advice, giving characters a second chance and providing entertainment or humor. These shows improve appearances or self-esteem while giving a positive glimpse into the lives of others (Lundy, et al., 2008). Examples include *Super Nanny*, *My Cat from Hell* and *Extreme Makeover*. Bad reality television shows are based on deception, ridicule, contempt, and physical or emotional harm. Examples of such shows include *Catfish*, *My Strange Addiction* and *Boiling Point*.

The effects of reality television as defined by Abt and Seesholtz (1994) are that it is here to “create audiences by breaking cultural rules, by managed shocks, by shifting our conceptions of what is acceptable, by transforming the bases for cultural judgment, by redefining defiance and appropriate reactions to it, by eroding social barriers, inhibitions and cultural distinctions” (p. 171).

Apology

In unscripted situations, such as reality television, it is likely for people to make mistakes in what they say, in which case, an apology might be issued. Spencer-Oatey (2008) identifies the apology as a “post-event speech act” (p. 9) in which the event in question is perceived as requiring a remedial response. When made genuinely, public apologies can be considered moral acts (Kampf, 2009). Despite the positive effects that can be gained when a public figure apologizes after being accused of violating norms, or ethical codes, the speech act (speaking to defend) still poses a threat to the public figure’s image. Within an apology, the transgressor admits to failing to fulfill a task or conform to a norm. Therefore, the act is face threatening because it may be regarded as a challenge to the apologizer’s ability to perform his role appropriately in the public arena. Apologies are an interesting opportunity for studying the costs and the benefits for a public figure’s face. They can undermine the public agent’s desired face and project the image of a person who lacks professional capabilities or discretion and even behaves recklessly.

Page (2014) demonstrates that failure to respond to a complaint on Twitter can lead to further offense, since communication via Twitter is rapid. This is very important to this study, as the hashtag IStandWithPhil (#IStandWithPhil) was used to create a shared location where supporters could voice their opinions about Phil Robertson.

Linguistic and rhetorical approaches to apologies share several areas of concern. Both fields debate which factors influence the perception of an apology as successful (Page, 2014). Scholars in both fields distinguish between an apology's form and function and recognize that these vary across modes of production and cultural context.

Reality television in the scope of image restoration theory lacks in-depth research. However, this review of literature has shown that image restoration theory can be used to analyze the restorative attempts of any individual, group or company. This theory has a good theoretical scope, as it deals with a narrow range of events and reparative and restorative rhetoric, but the typology of strategies can apply to a large number of situations. Image restoration theory is appropriate to use to analyze restoration attempts that will be studied in this paper because the typologies offered are descriptive rather than prescriptive (Benoit, 1995a), and they are largely independent of each other. They do not give causal explanation for purposeful action, but rather, but offer strategies used to treat image damage. The theory of image restoration also has heuristic value, in that, it can be used to explore new situations that arise and generate new ideas for research and additional theories.

This review of literature has highlighted the typology of image restoration strategies that were used as the theoretical framework for this study, as well as how others have used this theory to study crisis response. Other theories that involve image have been discussed and so have theories that deal with opposition of popular opinion. *Duck Dynasty* is a reality television show, and studies on the phenomenon were briefly discussed.

The researcher used Benoit's image restoration theory to analyze restoration attempts and answer the research questions presented in the following section of this study. In her book *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration & Practice* (2011), Sonja K. Foss synthesizes complex rhetorical concepts and processes into clear explanations and presents nine methods of rhetorical criticism. She carefully explains and illustrates the theory behind each method with abundant examples of applications. It is clear that there are a number of rhetorical strategies to conduct analyses of phenomena. The researcher chose to employ a rhetorical content analysis to study the image restoration techniques employed by Phil Robertson, his family and the Christian community. This involved looking at the restoration attempts and applying image restoration theory to answer the four research questions presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study identifies the image restoration strategies used by those involved in the crisis surrounding Phil Robertson as defined in the context of Benoit's image restoration theory. This chapter describes the study's research design, data sources, data collection method, and research procedure. The chapter ends with a table representing the typology of image restoration strategies used to analyze apologetic discourse.

The researcher used the following questions to guide this study.

(RQ1) In what ways did Phil Robertson attempt to restore his image after facing negative backlash for comments made in his interview with *GQ Magazine*?

(RQ2) What restorative strategies did the A&E Network attempt to make to restore its image as a company and the *Duck Dynasty* television show?

(RQ3) How did Phil Robertson's family, part of the *Duck Dynasty* cast, attempt to repair the image of the *Duck Dynasty* show, and that of their patriarch?

(RQ4) How did the Christian community react and try to restore Robertson's image?

Research Design

The researcher used a rhetorical content analysis to examine the crisis surrounding Phil Robertson and generated responses to the research questions listed above. This study is qualitative, and as Marshall and Rossman note that social science researchers can use content analyses as a method for describing, as well as interpreting "the artifacts of a society within a social group" (p. 117). They state that material that can be used for analysis include "any form of communication, usually written materials" (p.

117). The researcher chose to use content analysis because of the data being analyzed. The media chosen for this study includes written interviews, video interviews, letters, and *Duck Dynasty* episodes that represent different forms of communication.

A content analysis is non-reactive and unobtrusive (Wilke, 2003); hence, the data collected will cause no disruption to the subject or other variables analyzed in this study. A content analysis can be conducted by analyzing two types of content: manifest and latent. Manifest content is more quantitative and is “what one actually sees and counts” (Stacks, 2002, p. 109). Stacks (2002) also defines manifest content as the words, phrases, characters, items and space or time that is counted. Latent content is more qualitative. Stacks defines this as dealing with deeper meanings of the message (2002). Latent content is thematic, and Wilke (2003) posits that “while manifest content deals with meaning found on the surface, latent analysis runs deeper into the thematic realm” (p. 54).

Data Sources

The purpose of this study was to identify the image restoration strategies used by those involved in the crisis surrounding Phil Robertson. The January 2014 issue of *GQ Magazine* featured an article entitled “What The Duck?” in which interviewer Drew Magary wrote about Phil Robertson. Magary mentions that Robertson referred to himself as a Bible thumper and wanted to talk about what he said were controversial topics to society. For example, Robertson was frustrated at the fact that editing of the statement “in Jesus name” happens in the show more often than not. While the researcher obtained a physical copy of the magazine containing the interview, an online version was used

because of the availability and easy access. The resource is also freely available to anyone seeking to view it on the GQ website.

The researcher watched five episodes of *Duck Dynasty*. The pilot episode of *Duck Dynasty* was viewed to gain an introductory view of the Robertson family and was discussed in the introduction of this study. The last two episodes of the fourth season and the first two episodes of the fifth season were viewed as well. The researcher thought it valuable to analyze any verbal or behavioral change that happened after the crisis surrounding Robertson. The interview was released when the show was on a break between the last episode of the fourth season and the first episode of the fifth season. With 14 million weekly *Duck Dynasty* viewers (CBSNews.com, 2014), the researcher wanted to look at any changes to viewership.

This study analyzes the image restoration techniques used by those involved in the crisis surrounding Robertson. The data analyzed include the apologetic discourse from Phil Robertson, the Robertson family, the A&E Network (and major stores that carry the *Duck Dynasty* brand) and the Christian community. Once the act that was perceived as offensive was performed by the actor, the audience had a response or a reaction. The response or reaction was deliberately chosen for the analysis because this study involves using image restoration theory to describe verbal and behavioral acts that were used to restore Robertson's image.

Data Collection Method

Episodes

The researcher watched the pilot episode, the last two episodes of season four and the first two episodes of season five of *Duck Dynasty*. The pilot episode is titled "Family

Funny Business” and was discussed earlier in this study. The researcher watched the tenth episode (fifty-first overall) and the eleventh (fifty-second overall) of season four of *Duck Dynasty* entitled “Quack O’Lanterns” and “O Little Town of West Monroe.” The fifth season’s episodes were also viewed. The researcher chose the first episode (fifty-third overall) and second episode (fifty-fourth overall) of the fifth season. They were entitled “Boomerang Becca” and “Willie’s Number Two.” While watching, the researcher documented what was happening in the episodes.

Websites

The researcher obtained the *GQ Magazine* article from the *GQ website* (<http://www.gq.com/entertainment/television/201401/duck-dynasty-phil-robertson>). This was chosen because of free and easy access. The information was open to the public with no subscription or fees. The GQ interview mentioned an article written in *Sports Spectrum Magazine* that the researcher viewed. The online version of the article was viewed on the website (<http://www.sportsspectrum.com/articles/2013/03/23/duck-dynasty-how-it-almost-never-happened/>). The Robertson’s letter to their fans was obtained from the Duck Commander website. They addressed it to the public and it was free and easy to access for all.

The researcher also obtained information from the A&E website. The company addressed a letter to the public sharing their views about Robertson’s *GQ Magazine* interview. The Faith Driven Consumer organization’s website was also viewed because this Christian organization released a letter addressed to the A&E Network.

Videos

The researcher chose to view interviews that addressed the crisis surrounding Robertson. A preacher from Robertson's home church in West Monroe, Louisiana, (White's Ferry Road Church) was among the individuals who expressed their thoughts about Robertson's controversial interview. A one-on-one interview on Hannity featuring Willie Robertson was also viewed. These segments were deliberately chosen because they had various forms of image restoration. These videos were obtained from YouTube.

Research Procedure

Constant Internet connection was needed to access episodes of *Duck Dynasty* that were viewed on a Sony Playstation 3 with through the Amazon Video application. All the data collected were saved for review, applying the theoretical framework used for this study.

Theoretical Framework

William Benoit's image restoration theory (1995) is being used in this study. This theory was discussed earlier. However, this table will show the typology in five categories, three of which have subcategories. The typology presented was applied to apologetic discourse that was collected for analysis.

Table 1. Image Restoration Strategies

Denial
Simple Denial- did not perform the act
Shifting Blame- the act was performed by another
Evading Responsibility
Provocation- responded to the act or the action of another

Defeasibility- the lack of information about the act

Accident- the act was an unintentional mishap

Good Intentions- the act was performed with

Reducing Offensiveness of Event

Bolstering- the actor stresses good traits

Minimization- the act was not very serious

Differentiation- the act is less offensive than it appears

Transcendence- the act is negative, but other vital considerations at stake

Attack accuser- the actor reduces credibility of accuser

Compensation- the reimbursement of victims and affected persons

Corrective Action- a plan in place to solve and prevent action from reoccurring

Mortification- an apology for the offensive act

(Benoit, 1995a)

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to identify the image restoration strategies used by those involved in the crisis surrounding Robertson. This chapter presents the researcher's results from various data collected from the sources mentioned in chapter 3. This chapter is discussed in two parts. The data collected from various sources are presented first. Then the research questions that guided this study are answered.

Part One

The Books

In 2013, four books written by the Robertson family members made the top ten on the *New York Times* nonfiction best-seller list. Faith, family and ducks are the elements that the Robertsons hold dear and also happens to be the tagline of the book *The Duck Commander Family*, written by Willie and Korie Robertson. Willie, along with his wife Korie, own and operate Buck Commander where deer hunter products are created. Willie Robertson is also the CEO of Duck Commander, which manufactures duck calls. Both companies are successful and create products that tailor to successful hunting ventures. They produce calls, clothing, and videos. Willie Robertson is a *New York Times* best-selling author, traveling speaker, father of five children and an avid hunter.

The book gives an inside peek into the family and follows an interesting structure. Every chapter is entitled with a kind of food, for example, Chapter Eight: Chicken Strips. Each chapter begins with a Bible verse and ends with a recipe; this shows the importance of faith (the Bible verse in the beginning) and family (the body of the chapter). Robertson shares stories of growing up and being raised by Phil and Kay Robertson. He gives

readers advice, such as not taking themselves too seriously, enjoying time with family, respecting elders and saying sorry and forgiving. Despite problems such as family discord, alcoholism, and financial difficulty, the family stayed together. The Robertsons follow the rags-to-riches classic, but they worked very hard to get where they are and all this can be credited to their patriarch Phil Robertson (Robertson, Robertson & Schlabach, 2012).

“It was the 1950s when I was a young boy, but we lived about like it was the 1850s,” Phil Robertson writes, with help from *ESPN* columnist Mark Schlabach, in his autobiography, *Happy, Happy, Happy: My Life and Legacy as the Duck Commander*. Robertson recounts his history in this book, and reassures readers that he grew up dirt poor but maintains his passions that are deeply rooted in him even now that he is wealthy. When A&E approached the family with the idea of a reality television program, Robertson told them that they would be dealing with “a bunch of rednecks who duck-hunt.” The network titles most episodes with a preceding “redneck” to get episode titles, such as “Redneck Christmas”. Robertson’s sons also mention they are rednecks in most of the episodes of *Duck Dynasty*. Although there seems to be a variety of “Southern,” “outdoor,” or “redneck” reality based television shows, *Duck Dynasty* is not the stereotypical “redneck” show. It is unlike TLC’s *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo* and CMT’s *Party Down South* that are designed to target the typical “redneck” people. These shows feature characters that are undereducated, loud, and overweight (Brumback, 2012).

Robertson devotes a large percentage of his book to the role God has played in his family and business life. He set aside an entire chapter to “Share God’s Word,” showing that he is a keen student of the Bible and an evangelist. The book spent weeks on the *New*

York Times best-seller list, showing popularity in nonfiction. He applies the Biblical principles to his life and shares how he tackled his son's adolescent strays from the faith. He emphasizes the need for forgiveness and sharing the Word of God with others. It is clear that the Word of God guides his life and he wants to show that to the world through all that he does. *Duck Dynasty* often shows the family sharing dinner after a prayer, and he often quotes the Bible to his children and grandchildren. "Happy, happy, happy!" is Phil Robertson's catchphrase on the hit reality television series *Duck Dynasty*, the family friendly show that has gained millions of followers and pop-cultural dominance. Books penned by the different family members, merchandise, and movie appearances demonstrate the success of the Robertson clan.

Episodes

The researcher watched a total of five episodes of *Duck Dynasty*. The pilot episode, the last two episodes of season four and the first two episodes of season five. The first season has a total of 15 episodes and wrapped on May 23, 2012. *Duck Dynasty*, a reality television show about a duck hunting, Christian family from Louisiana, airs on the A&E Network. The show reaches a wide variety of demographics. The pilot episode Family Funny Business aired on March 22, 2012. The runtime for episodes is typically 22 minutes. Phil Robertson makes a distinction between Willie and himself by saying, "Willie got himself educated and bought a suit. I have never worn a suit in my entire life. He's a suit man now." Jase makes another distinction, this time between CEO and Willie's appearance. He implies that his brother looks like a homeless man, not a Chief Executive Officer. There are two kinds of people in the world, the educated and the

uneducated, but the Robertsons never allude to the narrative that a person has to be educated to be successful.

Phil Robertson loves his family. He has grandchildren that he teaches to live off the land, which he says is clean and honorable. He gives his grandsons advice about which girl to marry: a kind, gentle, country girl. “If she loves to cook, carries her Bible around and love to eat bullfrogs, now there’s a woman.” His prerequisite for marrying a woman is if she can cook and he goes on to say that she doesn’t have to be good looking. The episode features a cooking demonstration video that Ms. Kay is trying to make. Phil constantly refers to the audience as ladies or women, and Korie points out that there are male audiences as well because men cook. Phil immediately comments, “Oh, right, the girly man.”

The researcher watched the tenth episode (fifty-first overall) and the eleventh (fifty-second overall) of season four of *Duck Dynasty* entitled “Quack O’Lanterns” and “O Little Town of West Monroe.” The fourth season started on August 14, 2013, and ended on October 23, 2013. This season had a total of 11 episodes and included a Christmas special that aired on December 11, 2013. “Quack O’Lanterns” aired on October 22, 2013. This Halloween special featured the Robertsons’ throwing an event at Duck Commander. The family came together and transformed the warehouse into a “scarehouse.” Willie Robertson tried to be the scariest, but none of the children were afraid of him. Miss Kay made treats with the help of her grandchildren and Phil Robertson decorated a jack-o-lantern with a shotgun. “O Little Town of West Monroe” aired on December 11, 2013. The Robertsons were asked to perform a live nativity for their church and the wives took over to ensure that the event went well. Rehearsals did

not go smoothly at first because the men shared their opinions and couldn't seem to stop. Willie and Jase Robertson couldn't decide what to get their wives for Christmas. They ended up having an argument over who came up with the brilliant idea of giving a beautiful framed family portrait to their wives. Jep Robertson had the idea and shared it with both of them. This episode was full of arguments and rough sailing through rehearsals, but Phil Robertson's antics entertain the audience. Robertson introduced Miss Kay and Jessica (Jep Robertson's wife) to the fine points of hog hunting.

The fifth season's episodes were also viewed. The researcher chose the first episode (fifty-third overall) and second episode (fifty-fourth overall) of the fifth season. They were entitled "Boomerang Becca" and "Willie's Number Two." While watching, the researcher documented what was happening in the episodes and documented observations. The fifth season started on January 15, 2014, and concluded on March 26, 2014. This season had a total of 10 episodes. The first episode of the fifth season titled "Boomerang Becca" featured the first appearance of Willie and Korie's foster daughter Rebecca Robertson. Rebecca returns from her fashion internship in Los Angeles and the Robertson family plans a huge surprise party for her. Willie starts to wonder about Rebecca's future plans because she does not divulge any details as to how long she plans to stay. He becomes concerned and decides to do some digging to find out how Rebecca plans to earn her keep as a member of the household. She surprises Willie with news of her plans to start her own business. The audience learns that she is a go-getter much like Willie. The secondary story in this episode is Uncle Si believing that he has contracted what he thinks is the bird-flu. Miss Kay allows him to stay in their house so that she takes care of him. He immediately takes over the living room and Phil Robertson is not

pleased. There was an estimated 8.49 million U.S viewers watched this episode while the last episode of the fourth season had 8.89 million U.S viewers (Kondolojy, 2014). The *GQ Magazine* interview was released between the two episodes.

The second episode of the fifth season titled “Willie’s Number Two” aired on January 15, 2014. Korie suggests that her husband Willie should get a personal assistant to help increase his productivity, but at the same time reduce the load he has to carry. He is hesitant in the beginning but finally warms up to the idea. Korie hires her cousin John David, but Jase, Godwin and Martin Robertson are opposed to the idea of an outsider working in Duck Commander. Willie finds John David humorous and likes that they have a lot of similarities, while the Robertson men do not like the idea of having another Willie in the Duck Call room. The secondary story in this episode is Uncle Si’s ultimate treasure hunt. He organizes this activity to entertain Jep Robertson’s children who were dropped off at Phil and Miss Kay’s house. This episode is full of fun and adventure and learning to accept newcomers to the office.

Articles

The researcher obtained the GQ article from the GQ website (<http://www.gq.com/entertainment/television/201401/duck-dynasty-phil-robertson>). The purpose of this study was to reveal the image restoration strategies by those involved in the crisis surrounding Phil Robertson, and in order to understand this; the researcher discussed the comments that brought about the controversy. While the article as a whole was not controversial, the answers Phil Robertson gave in response to certain questions were perceived as damaging to his image, as well as distasteful. When writer Drew Magary asked Robertson about his life growing up in Northern Louisiana, Robertson

talked about working in cotton fields with African American workers and shared his perception of how they felt doing so. He told Magary:

I never, with my eyes, saw the mistreatment of any black person. Not once. Where we lived was all farmers. The blacks worked for the farmers. I hoed cotton with them. I'm with the blacks, because we're white trash. We're going across the field They're singing and happy. I never heard one of them, one black person, say, 'I tell you what: These doggone white people'—not a word! ... Pre-entitlement, pre-welfare, you say: Were they happy? They were godly; they were happy; no one was singing the blues. (Magary, 2014).

Magary then asked Robertson what he considered sinful and Robertson went on to say:

Start with homosexual behavior and just morph out from there. Bestiality, sleeping around with this woman and that woman and that woman and those men," he said. Then he paraphrased Corinthians: "Don't be deceived. Neither the adulterers, the idolaters, the male prostitutes, the homosexual offenders, the greedy, the drunkards, the slanderers, the swindlers- they won't inherit the kingdom of God (Magary, 2014).

The GQ interview mentioned an article written in *Sports Spectrum Magazine*, the "Christian magazine where Faith and Sports connect." The researcher viewed the article on the website (<http://www.sportspectrum.com/articles/2013/03/23/duck-dynasty-how-it-almost-never-happened/>). Robertson conducted himself in a way that garnered no negative attention. In another interview titled *Duck Dynasty, How It Almost Never Happened* written by Stephen Copeland published on March 23, 2013. Phil Robertson shared his religious views. Robertson stated:

My job is to tell them the good news about Jesus, and I'm on down the road," Phil says, piggybacking off his own story. "Jesus died for the sins of the world, was buried and raised from the dead. Ya want in? Put your faith in Him, find ya a pond somewhere, let somebody baptize ya, and let's go with it" (Copeland, 2013). He is very passionate about sharing the Gospel and is not hindered by societal qualms about it. His voice fluctuates as he continues to share God's Word:

Love God. Love your neighbor. Ya think the U.S. would be a little better off if we tried that? Not looking too good the way we're going now. People robbing, raping, ripping babies out of wombs—it's just pitiful.

Robertson shared a story about preaching in large crowds and being present to witness hundreds of people being baptized. He also shared his sinful habits in the life he led before becoming a Christian, including drinking, partying and kicking his family out of the house. He is not proud of any of his past behavior, but he has no apologies about the number of people he has touched with life change. He talks about the number of people who have traveled to West Monroe to be baptized by the Robertsons and the number of people who believe in change of lifestyles because of his story. The article ends with Robertson referencing *Duck Dynasty* as a chance to "preach to millions."

Response to the GQ interview

Activist Groups

After the interview was released, there were several reactions and responses. The researcher collected data on various websites. The comment Robertson made about bestiality being equated to homosexuality brought about a response from the lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgendered people organization, Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against

Defamation (GLAAD). This activist group called Robertson's comments vile and extreme and demanded that A&E take him off the show. They also wanted to meet with A&E and other carriers of *Duck Dynasty* products about getting the products off the shelves and "reexamine their ties to the show" (Carter, 2013). The comments Robertson made about working with African American people were also addressed by an activist group. The NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) and the HRC (Human Rights Campaign) wrote a joint letter to A&E president Nancy Dubuc and CEO Abbe Raven on Wednesday, December 18, 2013 (Carter, 2013). The civil rights organizations were offended by his remarks that, they claimed, were racially insensitive, homophobic and ill-informed. Here is an excerpt from the letter:

As you may know, Phil attacked both African Americans and LGBT people in a recent GQ interview (January 2014) – saying that African Americans were happier under Jim Crow laws, and equating being gay with bestiality and promiscuity. These remarks go beyond being outlandishly inaccurate and offensive. They are dangerous and revisionist, appealing to those in our society who wish to repeat patterns of discrimination. We urge A&E to immediately denounce and repudiate Robertson's comments... it's so critical for you to take immediate action and condemn these offensive remarks. (<http://goo.gl/8RbyrV>)

Cracker Barrel

Cracker Barrel made the decision to remove *Duck Dynasty* merchandise from their shelves in response to the statements made by Robertson, after releasing the following statement on their website:

We operate within the ideals of fairness, mutual respect and equal treatment of all

people. These ideals are the core of our corporate culture. We continue to offer Duck Commander products in our stores. We removed selected products which we were concerned might offend some of our guests while we evaluate the situation. We continually evaluate the products we offer and will continue to do so (O'Connor, 2013).

The company decided to put the removed merchandise back, in an attempt to placate its customers after a day of evaluating (O'Connor, 2013). Cracker Barrel then went on to release the following statement to Cracker Barrel customers on their website:

When we made the decision to remove and evaluate certain Duck Dynasty items, we offended many of our loyal customers. Our intent was to avoid offending, but that's just what we've done. You wrote, you called and you took to social media to express your thoughts and feelings. You flat out told us we were wrong. Today, we are putting all our Duck Dynasty products back in our stores... we apologize for offending you. We respect all individuals' right to express their beliefs. We sincerely hope you will continue to be part of our Cracker Barrel family.

A&E Network

The A&E Network responded in two ways. The organizations first response to Robertson's interview was a statement released on its website that shared its disappointment in the comments Robertson made. The organization added that those comments were based on his own beliefs and were not shared by the *Duck Dynasty* show. The organization went on to remind the readers that it has been a supporter of the LGBT community for years.

A&E's second response was to suspend Phil Robertson on December 18, 2013,

but did not disclose a timeline. The finale of the fourth season of *Duck Dynasty* aired on December 11, 2013 with “8.89 million U.S viewers and the fifth season aired on January 15, 2014 with 8.49 million U.S, viewers” (Bibel, 2013).

Robertson was suspended on the 18th; however, due to the backlash from devoted fans, Faith Driven Consumers (an organization behind the IStandWithPhil.com petition), and the activist groups mentioned earlier, A&E reinstated Robertson on December 27, 2013. The company determined that the show is not about one man’s views (#IStandWithPhil Petition).

Faith Driven Consumer

The North Carolina based Faith Driven Consumer organization immediately stood behind Robertson. The organization supports those whose faith, or worldview that is driven by the Bible, is significant enough in their lives to be a major factor in everyday decisions, including consumer decisions. The organization posted a petition addressing A&E on their website and concluded it with a space for supporters to sign it (#IStandWithPhil Petition).

The organization expressed its disappointment in the treatment of Robertson. The petition pointed out that his views reflect a Biblical view that has stood the test of time for years and are held by majority of Americans and the world. The organization then acknowledged that the LGBT community does not agree with that view and hence took offense, but that it was not right to accept one view of thinking and punish the other. The organization then requested that A&E reinstate Robertson (#IStandWithPhil Petition).

Fans of the show found a platform to show their support for Robertson when the Faith Driven Consumer organization created the hashtag IStandWithPhil

(#IStandWithPhil) to create a shared location where Internet users could find and post opinions that could easily be searchable. If Twitter users clicked the hashtag, they could be directed to all messages associated with it. The petition gathered more than 260,000 signatures from supporters and fans of the family (#IStandWithPhil Petition).

Those who did not want to put their signatures on a petition were given the phone numbers of A&E executives by Sean Hannity, who said on his radio show, “A&E knows how he [Robertson] feels about this. Why did they put him with a GQ guy in the first place?”

The Faith Driven Consumers group claimed that they were the driving force behind A&E’s decision to reinstate Phil. Similarly, the Facebook group “Bring Back Phil Robertson” attained more than 190,000 likes (#IStandWithPhil Petition).

White’s Ferry Road Church of Christ

The Robertson family attends White’s Ferry Road Church of Christ in West Monroe, Louisiana. After Robertson’s GQ interview was accessible to the public, the church received hundreds of calls from fans supporting Phil. The senior Pastor Mike Kellett commented:

It seems to me like people are tolerant of views except Christianity. I don’t have anything to say about the wording in it. I would express things differently, but that’s Phil (Schapiro, 2013).

The pastor continued by stating that the members of the church believe that God reserves sex for marriage and between a man and a woman. He had a comment about homosexuality and shared: “We’ve had people here before that struggle with that sin. He knows them. It’s not a negative thing” (Schapiro, 2013).

Kellett said gays have attended the church before, though he wasn't sure if there were currently any in the congregation. He also addressed claims that Robertson's views on homosexuality are just bigotry masked by religion by commenting, "They don't know him, people can think what they want. It's a free country. I don't hate anyone just because they believe different" (Schapiro, 2013).

Brandon Ambrosino (2012), a self-proclaimed openly homosexual Christian who writes about sexuality and religion, he notes in his article "*The Duck Dynasty Fiasco Says More About Our Bigotry Than Phil's*" that Pope Francis holds the same position that Robertson does, but there is a distinguishable difference in their tone.

Robertson Family

Following the release of the article and the backlash Robertson released his own statement on December 22, 2013 saying:

I myself am a product of the '60s; I centered my life around sex, drugs and rock and roll until I hit rock bottom and accepted Jesus as my Savior. My mission today is to go forth and tell people about why I follow Christ and also what the Bible teaches, and part of that teaching is that women and men are meant to be together. However, I would never treat anyone with disrespect just because they are different from me. We are all created by the Almighty and like Him, I love all of humanity. We would all be better off if we loved God and loved each other (Finn, 2013).

The women of *Duck Dynasty* opened up in an interview on ABC News in April 2014. They discussed the controversy surrounding Robertson with reporter Diana Golodryga. They made it clear that he was merely quoting from the Bible, and if A&E

did not lift his suspension, the show would not have gone on without their patriarch. The family also threatened A&E with their intent to walk away from the show that has brought the company so much success. Miss Kay, Phil's wife, continued to defend Phil's comments by saying that he loves everybody and loves God. Korie, Willie's wife, stated that the family is not racist nor are they homophobic, but their beliefs center on Biblical principles. She went on to say that Phil would still say what he said if another interview were conducted.

Willie Robertson, Phil Robertson's son, wanted to clear the air about his father's controversy in an interview on CNN's "New Day." Willie claimed that the *GQ* interviewer already knew what he wanted to put in his article, and he was directing questions to get specific answers that would ultimately spark controversy. He said his father said what he thought and what was in his heart but he paraphrased. Willie appears in the movie *God's Not Dead*, and he states that the family is not there to offend anybody, and if people do not like them, they can change the channel. He went on to say that they are not perfect, nor do they profess to be. In an interview on Hannity on November 21, 2014, Willie Robertson discussed his father's controversial interview. He made it clear that what his father said should not be in discussion a year later, owing to the fact that his father simply made a misstatement. He mentioned that he has been trying to build bridges ever since, and so has his father.

Jase Robertson, Phil Robertson's other son, spoke out about the family's infamous interview on CNS News on July 10, 2014 (Chapman, 2014). He revealed that the rest of the family had opted out of the *GQ Magazine* interview and had urged the patriarch to do the same, albeit unsuccessfully. Jase said Drew Magary was "combative

and disrespectful” of the whole family’s religious beliefs (Chapman, 2014). Jase went on to say that the questions being asked were meant to elicit controversial responses from the family.

Robertson’s family and fellow co-stars stood by him after A&E suspended him and released the following statement to the public on their website:

We want to thank all of you for your prayers and support. The family has spent much time in prayer since learning of A&E’s decision. We want you to know that first and foremost we are a family rooted in our faith in God and our belief that the Bible is His word. While some of Phil’s unfiltered comments to the reporter were coarse, his beliefs are grounded in the teachings of the Bible. Phil is a Godly man who follows what the Bible says are the greatest commandments: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart” and “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Phil would never incite or encourage hate. We are disappointed that Phil has been placed on hiatus for expressing his faith, which is his constitutionally protected right. We have had a successful working relationship with A&E but, as a family, we cannot imagine the show going forward without our patriarch at the helm. We are in discussions with A&E to see what that means for the future of “Duck Dynasty”. Again, thank you for your continued support of our family (Duckcommander.com).

The first part of this chapter presented results collected from various data sources. The second part presents the research questions that guided this study and provides further analysis to the results by applying Benoit’s image restoration theory to the findings presented in this chapter, to answer the research questions.

Part Two

This section of the results applied Benoit's image restoration theory to the findings presented earlier.

Application of Benoit's theory of image restoration to results presented

(RQ1) In what ways did Phil Robertson attempt to restore his image after facing negative backlash for comments made in his interview with *GQ Magazine*?

Robertson's initial move was silence. He did not release any statement to the public until December 22, 2013. His statement included several strategies to restore his image. He mentioned his upbringing in the 1960s. This is a form of defeasibility, in that the actor can plead lack of control. His mention of the period in which he was raised gives the audience something to blame for his comments, rather than fully laying the blame on Robertson. Robertson makes use of transcendence when he talks about his mission. Transcendence is the actor's directing the audience's attention to higher values, and this strategy is used to justify the behavior that was perceived as wrong. He also mentions that he is to go forth and tell people about Christ and what the Bible teaches, and those teachings include the message that men and women should be together. This is another example of transcendence. Robertson stated that he would never treat anyone with disrespect just because they are different from him and goes on to state that the Almighty creates everybody. This statement shows that he does not think less of people, no matter who they are or what they practice. He bolstered his image (stresses good traits) by finishing off with the statement that the world would be better if everybody loved one another.

(RQ2) What restorative strategies did the A&E Network attempt to make to restore its image as a company and the *Duck Dynasty* television show?

The A&E Network expressed its disappointment in Phil Robertson's comments during his *GQ* interview. It was clear that the company was displeased, and it made that public. The statement the company released also mentioned that the comments Robertson made are based on his own personal beliefs and are not reflected in the series *Duck Dynasty*. The strategy used in this statement is shifting blame. The network moved the audience's focus off of it and *Duck Dynasty* and on to Robertson's beliefs. The A&E Network completed its statement by reminding readers that it has always been a strong supporter and champion of the LGBT community. The strategy in use in this situation is bolstering. The company stresses its good traits.

A&E's behavioral response was to suspend Phil Robertson. This showed that the company had a plan in place to solve the problem and prevent further damage, an example of corrective action. A&E reinstated Robertson on December 27, 2013, after the company determined that the show is not about one man's views. Robertson was on "suspension" for a total of nine days. His suspension did not affect his appearance on the show, and the researcher found that there were no definitive effects on his role.

(RQ3) How did Phil Robertson's family, part of the *Duck Dynasty* cast, attempt to repair the image of the *Duck Dynasty* show, and that of their patriarch?

Phil Robertson's family immediately stood behind him by lending statements of support and love during interviews conducted. The women of *Duck Dynasty* opened up in an interview on ABC News in April 2014 and made it clear that he was merely quoting from the Bible. They made use of transcendence, painting the comments in a larger moral

context. Miss Kay, Phil's wife, continued to make use of the transcendence strategy when she defended Robertson's comments saying that he loves everybody and loves God.

Korie, Willie Robertson's wife, went on to say that Robertson would still make the same comments if another interview were conducted, showing that he had good intentions in mind and his goal was not to be hateful.

Willie Robertson, Phil Robertson's son, wanted to clear the air about his father's controversy in an interview on CNN's "New Day." Willie claimed that the *GQ* interviewer already knew what he wanted to put in his article; this strategy of shifting blame moves the audience's focus from Phil Robertson's comments, to that of the interviewer's questions that elicited those comments. In an interview on Hannity on November 21, 2014, Willie Robertson made use of the accident strategy when he discussed his father's controversial interview. He made it clear that what his father simply made a misstatement and the family has been trying to mend bridges a year later.

As stated earlier, when Jase Robertson, Phil Robertson's other son, spoke out about the family's infamous interview on CNS News on July 10, 2014, he stressed that his father was provoked (Chapman, 2014). Jase revealed that Drew Magary was "combative and disrespectful" of the whole family's religious beliefs then went on to say that the questions being asked were meant to elicit controversial responses from the family (Chapman, 2014). This is a form of attacking accusers, as well as shifting blame to the interviewer, rather than his father.

Robertson's family and fellow co-stars made use of minimizing, bolstering and transcendence in the statement they released to the public. The statement acknowledged that Robertson's comments were coarse but stressed that they were rooted in Biblical

teaching (making sure the public understood the comments in a moral sense). The statement bolstered Robertson's image when it mentioned that Phil is a Godly man and would never incite or encourage hate. Another statement mentioned his faith and his constitutionally protected right that showed transcendence in use.

(RQ4) How did the Christian community react and try to restore Robertson's image?

The North Carolina based Faith Driven Consumer organization immediately stood behind Robertson. The letter addressed to A&E had a number of image restorative discourse regarding Robertson's suspension. The first statement attacked the network calling it intolerant, discriminatory and punitive. The organization then engaged in transcendence when it mentioned Robertson's comments merely being reflective of a Biblical view that is shared by today's world as a whole. The use of minimization is evident in the statement "discriminated against simply for expressing a perspective." The company goes on to use A&E's position, which is "championing" the gay and lesbian community to remind them that it excludes the views held by the majority of Americans.

The letter goes on to request that corrective action be taken by suggesting that Robertson be reinstated immediately and that A&E should engage in mortification by formally apologizing to Robertson, his family, and the millions of viewers who tune in every week, stand by him, and share his worldview.

A threat to A&E was issued when Faith Driven Consumers stated that consumers would gladly stop watching Duck Dynasty and all other A&E programming if Robertson was not reinstated. Those who did not want to put their signatures on a petition were given the phone numbers of A&E executives by Sean Hannity, who said on his radio show, "A&E knows how he feels about this. Why did they put him with a *GQ* guy in the

first place?” The statement suggested shifting blame from Robertson to A&E and *GQ Magazine*.

After Robertson’s *GQ* interview was accessible to the public, his church received hundreds of calls from supporting fans. The senior Pastor Mike Kellett commented and attacked the accusers when he mentioned that people are tolerant of views except Christianity. He then used differentiation when he said he would express things differently, but Robertson is Robertson, as most people in support of him would comment. The pastor continued by bolstering Robertson’s image when he shared that White’s Ferry Road Church of Christ has had homosexual members that Robertson knew.

Chapter five presents the researcher’s discussion, conclusions, limitations and recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify the image restoration strategies used by those involved in the crisis surrounding Robertson. The researcher found evidence of overwhelming support from his fans, his family, and the Christian community. The most prominent image restoration strategy that was used was transcendence. Essentially, those involved in Robertson's image restoration reminded audiences that Robertson was quoting the Bible and sharing his faith. This can also be seen as a form of shifting blame to God's Word and not Robertson's. In most instances, the researcher found that those who attempted to restore Robertson's image mentioned that if "the tables were turned" and they had to answer the interviewer's questions, they would have said the same thing but used different words. Robertson speaks the way he does with no apologies, and that is essentially what contributed to the negative backlash. The way Robertson answered the specific questions was the problem.

The Faith Driven Consumers Organization and Cracker Barrel supported Robertson when he got a lot of backlash for his interview. Cracker Barrel made the decision to remove Robertson related items from stores and immediately apologized for that when fans send in their grievances. The restaurant saw sales increase due to the support of fans buying items until they were out of stock. The fans fear that Robertson's suspension would lead to merchandise going off the shelves was enough to increase profits for the restaurant. The Faith Driven Consumer Organization threatened A&E with pulling their support. The organization mentioned that millions of people who buy

merchandise and tune in to watch *Duck Dynasty* supported Robertson, and there would be a significant decrease in viewership if A&E did not treat Robertson decently by reinstating and apologizing to the family.

Park, Kee and Valenzuela (2009) found that individuals could connect as a community using online groups. In the current study the researcher found that the community of fans came together to show support for Robertson. This community let A&E, Cracker Barrel and essentially the world know that they stand behind Robertson. Many fans and followers operated by way of computer mediated communication, but they shared the same view: Phil Robertson and *Duck Dynasty* should be saved. This support pressured A&E to reinstate Robertson and pressured Cracker Barrel to restock merchandise and issue an apology in order to keep fans tuned in to the crazy family friendly show.

Duck Dynasty was originally a serious show about a family of hunters, but once producers caught a glimpse of what the family was like in real life, they decided to make the reality television show about a “funny” and “close-knit” family (Alter, 2013). Every episode that was viewed was focused on the family and their fun albeit crazy antics. The cast of *Duck Dynasty* argues, makes fun of each other, and constantly competes for titles of manliest or toughest, but at the end of every episode they come together to pray and enjoy a home-cooked meal. When initially promoting the show, A&E used the line “Money. Family. Ducks” (Ross Jr., 2012). The Robertsons saw the tag line and instantly disliked it. They offered to fix it by taking out the “Money” and replacing it with the word “Faith” (Ross Jr., 2012). Faith is the largest part of the Robertson family and hence an important element in the show. Robertson found his faith after kicking his family out

and living the party lifestyle (Robertson, Robertson, & Schlabach, 2012). It is important to note that Robertson does not condemn or hate people because he has shared his own spiritual journey and makes it clear that he is not perfect and had his own troubles with alcoholism and women.

After the *GQ Magazine* interview was released, Robertson was silent. This strategy was good because it gave the appearance of careful planning and thought as to how he would handle the situation. When he issued a statement, he engaged in defeasibility, blaming his comments on his upbringing. The researcher found no evidence of a clear apology for the comments that were perceived as offensive. The most prevalent strategy that Robertson used was transcendence. This acknowledges that the act may have been negative, but there are other vital considerations at stake. He pushed the audience to have morality in mind and reminded them that he was sharing the Word of God, something for which he would not apologize. Robertson bolstered his image when he mentioned that everybody should love one another.

Coombs' study on structuring crisis discourse knowledge reveals a set of guidelines for crisis managers looking to protect their reputation. He divided them into three categories (2004, p. 468): instructional strategies, adjustment strategies and reputational protection. While this study used Benoit's image restoration to view the crisis surrounding Phil Robertson, it is important to note these guidelines because the A&E Network engaged in adjustment strategies. The network did not engage in strategies to repair Robertson's image; however, the company engaged in strategies to repair its image and that of *Duck Dynasty*. The company made it clear that it was displeased with Robertson's comments, then engaged in shifting blame. A&E did not share Robertson's

view and made it clear that those views are not reflected in the series. Faith is clearly a part of the show and Robertson always shares his views on the episodes. The company was referring to the crass comments, when it released the letter to the public, and not necessarily the content in its entirety. The company bolstered its image and then made another step to repair its image by engaging in corrective action. The pressure from activist groups factored into A&E's decision to suspend Robertson. The suspension was not a long-term solution, but it placated the offended audience.

Robertson's family was supportive and combined different strategies to repair the image of their patriarch. Miss Kay used transcendence reminding viewers that Robertson was merely quoting the Bible, while Korie (Willie Robertson's wife) mentions that Robertson had good intentions in mind when he said what he said. The women of Duck Dynasty stood behind Robertson, and the researcher found that transcendence was used the most. The women needed audiences to know that the Bible was being quoted, though not word for word; the focus should be God's Word. Jase Robertson was the only member of the family to use provocation to repair his father's image, blaming the GQ interviewer Drew Magary. The family statement released on the Duck Commander website acknowledged that Robertson's comments were coarse, then engaged in minimizing, bolstering Robertson's image and transcendence. This statement included different strategies that went well together, but the fact that the family admitted Robertson's comments were coarse helped in repairing his image. Robertson did not issue an apology, but his family apologized for the way he said what he said, not that he said it.

Whiting and Williams (2013) found that “social media is a communication mechanism that allows users to communicate with thousands, perhaps billions, of individuals all over the world” (p. 363). The Faith Driven Consumers organization made good use of social media when it created the #IStandWithPhil. The petition gathered more than 260,000 signatures from supporters and fans of the family. Similarly, the Facebook group “Bring Back Phil Robertson” attained more than 190,000 likes. The Faith Driven Consumers Christian organization rallied behind Robertson and used a variety of strategies to accomplish the goal of getting Robertson reinstated after he was suspended by A&E. A number of strategies were used to repair Robertson’s image, but the use of social media was effective in defending Robertson and the strategy in use was transcendence. The researcher noted that the community attacked the accusers of not being tolerant of Christianity.

Prior to this study, the researcher had not viewed an episode of *Duck Dynasty*. The researcher noticed the merchandise and heard people talk about the bearded men with the beautiful wives, but was never interested in watching it. The researcher was very hesitant to watch the show, but had to put the hesitation aside and make time to watch it and try to understand why the *Duck Dynasty* clan was interesting. Phil Robertson is a family man and that was not always the case. He loves his family and shares his faith when he can. He has outdated views on men and women today as seen on the pilot when he thought men do not cook. It would seem that Robertson communicates in a way that is understood by his family and those who know him.

As the researcher read Robertson’s comments in the *GQ Magazine* interview with a Christian worldview, she considered the way he presented his answers. He compared

African American workers to white trash and commented that they were happy working because he never heard them complain. The comparison of African Americans put them at the same level as the “trashy” white people. This implied that Robertson considers African Americans equal to poor and uneducated “trashy” white people. Robertson then went on to equate homosexuality to bestiality. The researcher does not agree with the way Robertson phrased his statements he came across as crude and hateful even though that was not his intention. He loves God and shares his faith with all who will listen on a regular basis. The way he communicates his opinions usually comes off as offensive and hateful, but he is a product of, as he says, a “poor 60s background.” The issue was the how of his answers and not the what.

Future Research

The major limitation in this study is that the results serve as a cautionary tale and not a collection of suggestions to repair image. Image restoration discourse is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and the strategies used in this particular case will not necessarily work for other individuals. The study was conducted while the Robertsons were still engaging in image restoration strategies, and this contributed to the amount of time needed to attain relevant discourse and the number of resources that were to be analyzed. The study was narrowed down but restorative discourse was still taking place as late as November 21, 2014. A secondary limitation involves the scope of the analysis. While the Faith Based Consumers Organization provided a fascinating insight into the Christian communities response, it did not serve as a representation of the whole. Despite the limitations, the study was completed.

The researcher recommends that future studies on television include a thorough audience analysis. This would provide information about the viewers and give insight into why they watch what they watch. While this study contributes to the understanding of image restoration by Phil Robertson, the A&E Network and the Robertson family, it would be beneficial for more studies to be conducted on reality television shows that are similar to Duck Dynasty. This particular reality television show is different from other Southern themed shows and is worthy of study.

This study did not examine social media, and this platform contributed to Robertson's image restoration. Future studies could examine restorative content on social media platforms and examine the success of apologies on those platforms, as opposed to press conferences or letters issued to the public on company websites.

Another recommendation includes analysis of the interviewer. The Robertson family mentioned Magary knew how to instigate controversial answers. This study did not analyze the questions or the interviewer and recommends that future research includes such analysis.

Although studies in crisis management are vast, the theory of image restoration used to view restorative communicative behavior should grow. The numbers of celebrities who have damaged their image and are slowly or quickly working to restore them are evident in daily news. Today, the social media platform gets celebrities in trouble more quickly, it seems, because they are sharing their opinions in an open forum with little to no filter.

Conclusion

The common strategy used to restore Robertson's image was transcendence. Guiding the audience to think about Robertson's answers in the light of his intentions was the theme of the apologetic rhetoric. This sub-strategy of reducing offensiveness was seen in use by all involved with the exception of the A&E Network. Multiple strategies are beneficial to use because they reinforce each other, unless a single strategy is likely to be effective with the intended audience. Image restoration is an important theory to use in research that can impact persuasive rhetoric, mass communication and public communication. Individuals, groups and organizations can benefit from learning to handle crises because there will always be opportunities to damage our image, and we should learn how to restore our image effectively. Benoit's image restoration theory does not suggest ways to prevent a crisis in the first place. Thus, helpful as it is, image restoration theory is not a cure for any crisis that may arise. It is a useful tool with roots in risk communication, issues management, and crisis communication, but it cannot replace or repair problems caused by poor management and lack of knowledge of how words work or how to communicate effectively.

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