'THE BUCK STOPS WITH ME': AN ANALYSIS OF JANET RENO'S DEFENSIVE DISCOURSE IN RESPONSE TO THE BRANCH DAVIDIAN CRISIS

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the University of North Texas in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

- For the Degree of MASTER OF ARTS

By

Shannon Davis, B.A.
Denton, Texas
August, 1998

This study provides a genre analysis of Janet Reno’s apologia in response to the Mt. Carmel disaster. Discussions of the events leading up to the crisis, Reno’s rhetorical response, and relevant situational constraints and exigencies are provided. The genre analysis demonstrates Reno employs successfully strategies consistent with the apologia genre as it has been defined through male discourse. This study also finds that she varies from the male paradigm in several ways. A discussion of these results and their implications is provided. This study also includes a critique of the genre method for the study of female apologia that suggests this area of inquiry may benefit from the use of more sex-sensitive methodologies.

This study provides a genre analysis of Janet Reno’s apologia in response to the Mt. Carmel disaster. Discussions of the events leading up to the crisis, Reno’s rhetorical response, and relevant situational constraints and exigencies are provided. The genre analysis demonstrates Reno employs successfully strategies consistent with the apologia genre as it has been defined through male discourse. This study also finds that she varies from the male paradigm in several ways. A discussion of these results and their implications is provided. This study also includes a critique of the genre method for the study of female apologia that suggests this area of inquiry may benefit from the use of more sex-sensitive methodologies.
'THE BUCK STOPS WITH ME': AN ANALYSIS OF JANET RENO'S
DEFENSIVE DISCOURSE IN RESPONSE TO
THE BRANCH DAVIDIAN CRISIS

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

- For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Shannon Davis, B.A.
Denton, Texas
August, 1998
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY ........................................... 1
   
   Statement of the Problem
   Significance of the Study
   Scope of the Study
   Review of the Literature
   Genre and Genre Criticism
   Apologia
   Nonverbal Communication
   Feminist Research
   Method
   Plan of the Study

2. AN OVERVIEW OF GENRE AND APOLOGIA RESEARCH ............ 27
   
   Genre and Genre Criticism
   The Study of Apologia

3. THE MOUNT CARMELE TRAGEDY AND
   ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO'S RESPONSE .......................... 53
   
   The Events Leading up to the February 28 Incident
   The Events of February 28, 1993
   The Fifty-One-Day Standoff
   The April 19, 1993 Siege
   Reno's Response to the Waco Tragedy
   The Issue of Constraints
   The Exigencies
4. RESULTS ......................................................................................... 92
   Genre Criticism Results
   Factors
   Postures
   Nonverbal Analysis
   Procedures
   Results

5. DISCUSSION .................................................................................. 119
   Genre Results Summary
   Discussion of Genre Results
   Nonverbal Analysis Summary
   Discussion of Nonverbal Results
   A Critique of the Genre Method
   Suggestions for Future Research
   Limitations of the Study
   Conclusion

APPENDIX ............................................................................................ 153

WORKS CITED ...................................................................................... 178
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

On April 19, 1993, the country watched in horror as the Branch Davidian commune near Waco, Texas, burned to the ground, taking the lives of some eighty people. Federal agents maintained that residents inside the commune started the fire on the orders of their leader, David Koresh (Bone and Clancy 1). Nonetheless, the fire was started after federal agents began pumping tear gas into the building in an effort to “put pressure” on its inhabitants to surrender (Kilday and Lewis A1). The event marked one of the most embarrassing moments in the nation's domestic history as the charred remains of men, women, and children who had lived within the walls of the Mount Carmel commune were slowly pulled from its ruins. Many of the bodies could no longer be recognized as those of human beings. Rita Braver predicted that the incident was “bound to go down as one of the greatest federal law enforcement mishaps in U. S. history” (CBS Evening News).

The following day, April 20, newspapers across the world allocated their front pages to details of the federal raid on Mt. Carmel and the subsequent fire that resulted in what FBI spokesperson Bob Ricks referred to as a “massive loss of life” (Bone and Clancy 1). Many of these newspapers also printed stories featuring experts who claimed that the fire was a direct result of the federal agents misguided actions during the raid (e. g. Tendler, London Times). A London Times article cited Dr. Ian McKenzie as
condemning the federal agents and stating that, "I would have counseled waiting and waiting and waiting. The cause of the problem was a frontal assault in the first place (alluding to the earlier federal raid on February 28 that left four agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) and, allegedly, several Branch Davidians dead) and now in the last place as well... Now people are dead who could have been saved" (Tendler 2).

Although the exact events leading up to the fire were not, in fact, have still not been, illuminated fully for the American people, one fact became clear as soon as the first shot was fired; someone would have to take responsibility for the catastrophe. Although the press immediately began questioning President Clinton's culpability (Brodie 3), U. S. Attorney General Janet Reno maintained that she, having authorized the siege, was accountable for the incident. Rather than avoiding the harsh criticism of the press and the public, Reno created the exigence for her apology by claiming personal and sole responsibility. Despite the repeated efforts of the media to implicate President Clinton, Reno boldly stated, "I made the decision. I am accountable. The buck stopped with me" (Brodie 3).

Reno created the need for her apologia by redefining the rhetorical situation in which she found herself. Until she claimed responsibility for the federal raid, the criticisms were aimed at the actions and policies of the nameless, faceless federal agents on the scene. By claiming sole responsibility for the incident, however, Reno's name, face, and reputation became inextricably linked to the Mt. Carmel disaster. The American public could no longer view the incident as the actions of a group of
anonymous officials resulting in a catastrophic fire. Through her responses, Reno
demanded that the public see the event as the actions of the visible Attorney General.
With her rhetorical response, she personalized the situation and created the need for a
personal apologia. Her professional career, however successful it had been, now rested
primarily on her ability to satisfy her peers, her attackers, the media, and perhaps most
importantly, the American people by justifying the actions taken under her authorization
that led to the destruction of the commune and the loss of at least eighty lives, including
seventeen children.

Reno, having taken office only a month before on March 12, 1993, would have to
defend her position as the first female to hold the office of Attorney General. Due to the
short time she had spent in office, she had little evidence on her national record to
demonstrate her ability to handle the job. In fact, one of the only reasons the public
would be familiar with her name was that she was President Clinton’s third choice for the
position. The previous nominees had been embroiled in public scandals that had
eliminated them from consideration. Having been known for her efforts to help children
throughout her career, she found herself responsible for the deaths of approximately
seventeen children living in the commune. Reno’s subsequent discourse represents one of
the few cases in United States political history in which a powerful female political
official at the national level has been forced to defend her character and decisions against
attacks of this magnitude.

The criticism of Reno and the federal agents began as soon as the commune siege
went awry and continue to this day (Kopel). Just as suddenly, however, Reno received
praise and respect from critics and supporters alike for her rhetorical actions taken after
the crisis (Ostrow, “Clinton Praises Reno’s Testimony . . . ”). Her willingness to accept
responsibility for her actions, and her forthrightness in answering questions and
discussing the events leading up to the April 19 incident not only secured her job but
increased her national popularity to its highest level.

Dan Rather pointed out that “from start to finish there’s been a lot of second
guessing of the way federal agencies have handled the siege at Waco . . . [However] after
the smoke cleared, the new U. S. Attorney General stood up, faced the heat, and took
responsibility” (CBS Evening News). Accordingly, she became a “folk hero” in a time
when most citizens were dissatisfied and suspicious of the current administration
(Ostrow, “Janet Reno Emerges . . . ,” 1). Her highly touted response to this crisis and the
success with which she defended her decisions and the dignity of her political office
provides an exemplary case by which to study female political apologia. As such, it
allows for the investigation of a genre that has been neglected because of the traditional
focus on the apologia of male political leaders.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to discover and interpret the prominent issues
involved in the study of female political apologetic discourse. A review of the literature
concerning political apologia reveals crucial gaps in the area of political apologetic
discourse issued by females. To date, scholars have virtually ignored the possibility that
female and male politicians face different constraints in developing their apologies and
require different strategies or styles in order to deliver them successfully. This oversight
is particularly troubling due to Janis King’s research suggesting that the strategies most successfully employed by male apologists proved not to be useful for Wilma Mankiller in her self-defense efforts (1990). King argues for a “broadening of the genre of apologia” in order to address the specific issues that women face (36).

In 1987, Mankiller sought to become the first elected principal chief of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. According to King, Mankiller “found herself as the target for verbal attacks from critics . . . as well as from her opponents in the election” (21). King argues that she employed an “educational strategy” that relied on the history of the Cherokee Nation in order to combat her accusers because the strategies that had been identified as useful for males were not useful for her (27).

Carole Spitzack and Kathryn Carter point out that:

female stereotypes establish a double barrier for women. Presumptions regarding the role and/or nature of women are inconsistent with public power. Traditionally, femininity is associated with private domains such as home and family, while masculinity is at home in the public areas of politics and commerce. (402)

Additionally, they note that “the mere presence of a woman in a traditionally male domain complicates even routine communicative acts . . .” (403). Accordingly, the act of self-defense, a complicated communication ritual that is crucial to the success of a politician (Gold 316), must be looked at from both male and female perspectives in order to uncover the similarities and differences.
This study provides information and analyses that will eliminate some of these gaps in research and generate further investigation into the area of women's political discourse and apologia. In addition, this study attempts to provide answers to several research questions through an analysis of Reno's discourse in response to the Waco crisis. Specific research questions include:

1. What similarities and/or differences exist between Reno's apologetic discourse and that of the genre as it has been developed through studying men's apologia?

2. What relevant issues emerge from an analysis of Reno's nonverbal communication?

3. What specific constraints did Janet Reno face when developing her apologia in response to the Waco disaster?

4. To what extent is the current use of genre criticism as a means to study apologia appropriate for the study of female apologia?

Significance of the Study

The ability to engage in successful apologia is essential to the career of a politician. After the Watergate scandal, the American press and public have become increasingly suspicious of government and politicians (Gold, 1993). A powerful political figure almost assuredly will be called to answer accusations of official or personal impropriety at some point in her/his career. A politician's inability to defend herself/himself in light of such accusations by the press or other sources can easily result in the destruction of her/his political career. In fact, Ellen Gold (1978) argues that aspiring political candidates “can literally be made or broken on their ability to practice
the ritual of self-defense" (316). Consequently, apologia emerges as one of the most crucial components of political discourse.

Thus far, research has focused on the strategies which define male political apologia (e.g. Gold, 1978; Hoover, 1985; R. King, 1985; Ware & Linkugel, 1973), thereby ignoring the need for knowledge concerning women's apologia. Female and male office holders may face different obstacles or constraints when engaging in apologetic discourse, which necessitates an investigation into what some of these differences may be and how they influence female apologia and its reception by audiences. By using only apologia delivered by males and methods more suited to the discourse of male speakers, communication scholars are ignoring the rising number of females in the political arena. These women are at a disadvantage not only due to the lack of information concerning their apologetic rhetoric, but by the implication that their discourse in this crucial area is not worthy of scholarly research.

Considering that research has centered on male apologia, the usefulness of both the findings and the actual methods of the research must be questioned. The exclusion of women's discourse suggests that the methods of investigation may operate under assumptions that devalue the female experience. Similarly, the results reached through this research may reflect a solely male experience as the discourse of women has not been included as subjects of research. Importantly, Spitzack and Carter argue that:

improved understanding becomes possible when taken for granted assumptions concerning the questions asked and the strategies employed by researchers are critically examined. Such analysis not only demands
attention to women's communication, but in the process of critique, dominant assumptive bases in communication research come under scrutiny. (401)

In order to discover how the current methods of research relate to the study of female discourse, the study of apologia must include female-issued apologies.

Women in the political field are the primary, although not the sole, beneficiaries of this investigation into the political apologia of females. These women must compete against men in an arena that has traditionally been dominated by males and attempt to communicate with an audience within which most of the influential members are male. Their ability to defend successfully their characters is crucial if women are to change the tendency of government and politicians to reflect primarily male views. The ability of the political system to adapt to the growing number of women voters hinges on its ability to become more inclusive of their needs and expectations. A step toward a more inclusive political system requires the acceptance of female political rhetoric within the arena, but also the study of the issues surrounding women's political discourse by scholars outside the political field.

This study examines political apologia from a standpoint that has been neglected in existing scholarship in order to eliminate some of the current gaps. This research provides useful insight into the area of political apologia by addressing the limitations in the literature that emphasizes male discourse. The questions posed by this study seek to advance the study of political apologia and the strategies involved in successful apologetic discourse by opening these areas of research to a different perspective.
This study also adds to rhetorical theory and criticism by investigating the usefulness of genre criticism for apologia studies. By applying generic studies mainly to men's political discourse, communication scholars have made the common though incorrect assumption that the male experience is universal. Thus, the standards by which apologetic discourse is developed, judged, and studied are male standards that may not be applicable to females. The contribution made by apologia studies to rhetorical theory and criticism is, consequently, incomplete and should be questioned as to its validity for female rhetoricians. Additionally, the current study may indicate to what extent a female/male dichotomy is a relevant distinction in apologia studies.

Scope of the Study

This study investigates the discourse of Janet Reno in reference to the raid on the Branch Davidian commune. For the purposes of this research, her statements delivered on April 19, 1993, the day of the siege will be studied. The artifacts used for analysis include press releases by Reno and her interviews on a variety of televised news programs.

This study examines Reno's verbal and nonverbal messages. Rhetorical criticism often is text-centered and neglects the nonverbal dimension. According to Joseph Devito (1997), people who view the nonverbal and verbal messages as conflicting typically will believe the nonverbal message (117). This assertion is supported by nonverbal research by Judee Burgoon (1984) and James Stiff, Jerold Hale, Rick Garlick, and Randall Rogan (1990) that demonstrates nonverbal cues are relied on when they are incongruent with
verbal cues. Thus, nonverbal communication is crucial in order to understand the success of an apologist.

Review of Literature

This review provides an overview of the relevant literature in several areas relating to this study. The literature in the areas of apologia and the most popular method of investigating apologia, genre criticism, are reviewed in Chapter Two. The following review provides a foundation for the review in Chapter Two, as well as a discussion of other relevant bodies of literature in order to illuminate some of the research opportunities that exist. The literature review is divided into four categories.

The first section provides a brief description of the foundational studies in apologia. The next section provides a brief overview of the studies that developed the boundaries of the apologia genre. Nonverbal research in the areas of deception, credibility perception, and trustworthiness comprise the third section. This section also provides the necessary insight into how both verbal and nonverbal responses may be perceived differently depending on the biological sex of the responder. Finally, this review provides an overview of some of the relevant literature concerning feminist research relating to this study. The feminist research section discusses some of the research involving the perception of competence and morality as well as other issues that may be influenced by gender biases or sex-role socialization.

Foundational Studies in Apologia: Developing Genres

Apologetic discourse originally was viewed as a part of a speech set, motivated by accusatory rhetoric and dependent on the speaker's ability to gain credibility from the
audience (Aristotle, 1954; Isocrates, 1945; Kennedy, 1963; Ryan, 1982). Although employed by renowned scholars such as Aristotle, Plato, and Isocrates, this method of assessing apologia has never been particularly popular among contemporary scholars. Despite Plato’s mentioning of those constraints facing Socrates in his apology, early scholars continued to focus apologia studies on the speaker’s ability to establish ethos (Kennedy, 1963).

In 1965, Edwin Black began the shift toward a new view of apologia and new methods of studying this discourse. His introduction and definition of genre offers the premise for the study of apologia as genre. Lloyd Bitzer furthers this movement by providing a clear description of what constitutes the rhetorical situation and a discussion of functional communication. He notes the influence on situations by historical contexts, and the influence by situations on the discourse given in response to the elements comprising the event (1968). Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1978) have added to the definition of genre by establishing its position as a classification that develops from the combination of its elements in order to form "a unique kind of rhetorical act" (6). They argue that genres are groups of discursive events that “share substantive, stylistic, and situational characteristics” (20).

These scholars help define the areas relevant to the study of apologia. Their definitions and concepts create the boundaries and guidelines for future scholars.

**Developing the Apologia Genre**

B. L. Ware and Wil Linkugel have provided the characteristics of apologia and the stances that develop from the fusion of the various strategies (1973). Their
conceptualization of the elements of apologia is still referenced by most scholars who
study apologetic discourse (Blair, 1984; Fisher, 1980; Gold, 1978; Hoover, 1989; R.
Jackson Harrell and Linkugel further advanced the study of apologia through genre
criticism by providing terms and methods of research through which the organization of
genres can be obtained (1978). Although Halford Ross Ryan, citing the writings of
Aristotle, Plato, and Isocrates, advocates the study of apologia as part of a speech set
involving accusation and apology (1982 and 1984), most scholars continue to employ the
definitions, strategies, and research methods of generic criticism championed by scholars
such as Ware and Linkugel and Jamieson and Campbell.

One weakness in the Ware and Linkugel study is the failure to address adequately
the issue of constraints and the demands they place on apologetic discourse. Other
scholars have studied these issues from varying viewpoints. Several studies focus on the
constraints placed by the mass media on political figures and their apologia (Blair, 1984;
Butler, 1972; Rosenfield, 1968). Other researchers have viewed apologia as constrained
by the expectations of the audience, which may be based on stereotypes, historical
contexts, or the rhetor's discourse in earlier situations (Aly, 1969; Benoit, Gullifor, and
and 1975; J. King, 1990; Ling, 1970; Linkugel and Razak, 1969; McCleary, 1983;
Mohrmann and Leff, 1974; Simonds, 1990; Smith, 1963; Vartabedian, 1985). Scholars
have furthered the study of constraints in apologia by researching the consequences and
rewards that can result from the violation of audience expectations or the failure to follow

Additionally, Noreen Kruse examines the issues of constraints and motivation in non-denial apologies. Another scholar, Robert Vartabedian, conducted a study that addresses the use of apologia in non-apologetic situations (1985). His findings suggest that the rhetor may be able to redefine his/her rhetorical situation through the use of apologia in situations that do not necessitate it.

More recently, Sharon Downey (1993) addresses the evolution of the apologetic genre and provides a discussion of the ways in which the genre has changed over the years. She also analyzes some of the problems that arise from the changes within the genre. Significantly, she argues that the "genre manifests a precipitate decrease in standards or rules for the conduct of self-defense" (59).

William Benoit (1995) investigates apologia and the related areas of excuses and accounts. Building from Ware and Linkugel’s factors of self-defense, he develops five image restoration strategies. He designates denial, avoiding responsibility, minimalization, mortification, and corrective action as the ways in which a person or corporation can restore a tarnished image.

In 1990, King addresses the issue of constraints that are placed on women when they attempt to employ apologia. Her study suggests that women can best overcome attacks on their character by choosing an educational strategy, one that is not mentioned in the apologia studies that feature male discourse. The universality of her findings is limited by the fact that the audience was a homogeneous culture of which the woman
studied was a part. Nonetheless, her study suggests the need for further research into female apologia because her conclusion argues that none of the strategies developed by Ware and Linkugel were employed by her subject.

Nonverbal Communication

This section of the review seeks to illuminate some of the relevant issues in nonverbal communication research. The impact of nonverbal cues can be significant in assessing the honesty or credibility of a speaker's statements. Stiff et al. report that incongruity between verbal and nonverbal messages usually will result in the rejection of the verbal message in favor of the nonverbal message (208). Thus, nonverbal research in the areas of credibility, trustworthiness, and deception may prove useful in studying the nonverbal cues used by Reno in her apologia.

Nonverbal research has suggested that there is a strong link between the use of specific nonverbals and the perception of credibility (Burgoon, Birk, Pfau, 1990). Research indicates that people who take shorter pauses while speaking and exhibit faster tempos are rated as more credible (Burgoon, Birk, Pfau 146-8). The use of louder volume also may influence the perception of one's credibility.

At this point, it is important to note that these results have been based primarily on social sciences research. This fact is significant due to the use of subjectively defined judgements such as "louder volume" or "faster tempos." The question arises, faster or louder than whom? Although the research in this area has been conducted predominately in tightly controlled environments, the studies' findings may prove useful in creating guidelines for determining which nonverbal aspects to consider in this study.
Research on deception and trustworthiness reports the existence of a number of nonverbal cues that impact the perception of one's honesty. Some of the research is of limited usefulness due to the constraints faced by apologists. For example, Mark Knapp and Judith Hall's finding that deceivers smile less than those being honest is not particularly relevant when studying the nonverbals of a woman who is claiming responsibility for the death of eighty people (1992). Nonetheless, some of the findings in this area may prove useful to this study.

Deceivers often display more hesitations, higher pitches, more blinking, more acts of self-touching, and pupil dilation (Knapp and Hall 391). People exhibiting these traits generally are viewed as dishonest. Although the most common nonverbal cue relating to deception is the lack of eye contact, several scholars argue that lack of eye contact is a poor indicator of honesty (Knapp and Hall 392). The lack of eye contact, they argue is so well known as an indicator of lying that people are able to control their eye gaze when lying.

Dan O'Hair, Michael Cody, Blaine Goss, and Karl Krayer suggest that appearing attentive while being interviewed creates the perception of honesty. They claim that while being asked questions, "appearing attentive or non-attentive may be seen as an indication of whether the (honest) person is listening carefully or whether the (dishonest) person is thinking up a lie" (90-1). Additionally, these researchers suggest that a low dramatic style of communication is seen as more honest (91). This finding may prove problematic for women in light of Barbara Montgomery and Robert Norton's claim that women report themselves as being more animated speakers and that men claim to be less
animated (131). However, the reliability of the self-reports are called into question by researchers who claim that men are more animated than women in public speaking settings (e. g. Kenton, 1989).

Sherron Kenton provides information relevant to this inquiry by asserting that audiences evaluate the same speech differently based on the biological sex of the speaker (143). Elizabeth Aries (1987) remarks that male speakers are perceived as “more honest” and “as doing a better job in giving the facts” than women giving the same speech (166). Thus, the perception of honesty, credibility, and trustworthiness may relate as much to biological sex as to the actual nonverbal cues.

Relevant Feminist Literature

This section of the review seeks to explicate some of the useful feminist research relevant to this study. This portion attempts to illuminate some of the assumptions under which this study is conducted, as well as some of the findings that make this study necessary. Many of the issues raised in this area will be addressed more directly in Chapter Three, when the discussion of the specific constraints and exigencies of this rhetorical event will be provided.

As addressed in the nonverbal section, the sex of a person can greatly influence how her/his actions, responses, and discourses are perceived. Barbara Eakins and R. Gene Eakins assert that “in our society a person’s gender [sic] matters very much, for to a great extent it determines how others act and react” (14). Therefore, the assumption that the same behaviors, strategies, or discourses will be equally successful for women and men is faulty.
Spitzack and Carter point out that many researchers assume that:

if a woman can be taught to communicate like men they will become equally competent. However, women who adopt male usage are often evaluated as less successful and less likable than men. Even when actual behavior is identical, it is viewed differently depending on the source.

(409)

Thus, even if all women desired to operate under the rules and assumptions of the male experience when issuing apologia, it is doubtful that they would be perceived as being as competent as males nor would they achieve the same level of success as males.

King furthers this argument in her study of Mankiller’s apologia. She maintains that:

a man may be aggressive, take the offensive, deny, bolster, and redefine a situation in the name of verbal self-defense, but a woman who uses the same strategies is perceived also as aggressive yet with a negative connotation. On the other hand, a woman who does not defend herself at all is viewed unfavorably or as weak. . . . Consequently, a woman running for or in a public office must develop a fitting strategy of self-justification that allows her to function in a patriarchal society and to use a language that is understandable to men and women, that does not make her appear too aggressive, and that does not label her as a mudslinger. (34)

The differences in the perception of males and females become even greater when the women are operating within a traditionally male arena such as politics. Their
entrance into formerly forbidden areas creates more problems for the women relating to the perceived incompatibility of their sex and the professional field they have entered. Judy Pearson, Richard West, and Lynn Turner remark that “women seem to suffer from a double bind where voters have lower expectations of their ability and higher expectations of their morality. Thus, women have less leeway to make mistakes and are more accountable for their actions [than are their male counterparts]” (202). The fact that citizens allow females “less leeway to make mistakes” and hold them “more accountable” than males has direct implications for this study. The issue becomes whether or not these assumptions influence the construction of female apologia or the ability of females to engage in successful apologies.

Method

This study seeks to uncover the defining characteristics of Reno’s political apologia in response to the Waco crisis. First, the study provides an analysis of the narrower exigence (deaths at Waco) and the broader exigencies, such as having a “woman in charge” and the problematic concept of armed responses by the U. S. government against armed groups whose existence is sanctioned by the Second Amendment to the U. S. Constitution (Halpern and Levin, 1996). The method will include detecting the clues in the attacks and the responses that point toward exigencies.

Second, the central texts stating Reno’s response will be analyzed from a rhetorical perspective. These texts include her statements made or released on April 19, 1993. An attempt will be made to compare Reno’s apologia with the standards of the genre as defined by Ware and Linkugel (1973) and King (1990).
Third, this study assesses Reno’s nonverbal cues. Videotapes of her interviews on April 19, 1993 will be evaluated. The nonverbal analysis will apply the McCroskey Source Credibility 12-Item Semantic Differential Scale to Reno’s nonverbal communication (e.g. Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher 338). A discussion of the procedures and method for the nonverbal analysis precedes the nonverbal results in Chapter Four.

Fourth, the study provides an analysis of the constraints and expectations imposed on Reno. Feminist theory and rhetorical strategies relating to sex-role stereotypes and cultural assumptions concerning perceived differences between men and women will be applied.

Finally, the study attempts to compare the “template” of generic criticism with other postmodern rhetorical templates, such as rhetoric as performance. In this way, the study may indicate the usefulness of generic criticism for studying the apologia of females, possible flaws in the theoretical framework or method, and the extent to which biological sex is a significant variable in the study of apologia.

Plan of the Study

Chapter Two provides an investigation into the apologia genre and genre criticism to uncover the advances that have been made by past scholarship as well as some of the remaining gaps in knowledge which relate to this study. Chapter Three examines Reno’s apologetic discourse in response to the Waco crisis and discusses how she created the need for an apologia on her behalf. This chapter also discusses the various exigencies for Reno’s apologia and the constraints that helped to shape her discourse. Chapter Four
discusses the results of a comparison between Reno's apologia and the defining categories of the apologia genre as well as providing a discussion of the relevant nonverbal elements of her public appearances. Chapter Five provides a discussion of the results of this inquiry, a critique of genre criticism as a means of studying female political apologia, and implications and suggestions for further research in this area.
WORKS CITED


CHAPTER 2

AN OVERVIEW OF GENRE AND APOLOGIA RESEARCH

This review of the pertinent literature involving the study of apologia provides an in-depth overview of the research in this area. The review illuminates many of the advances made in this line of research and uncovers some of the weaknesses in the investigation of apologia and genre criticism, the most popular method of criticism for apologetic discourse. Although some scholars have chosen to investigate apologia by means other than genre criticism (e.g. R. King, 1985; Ling, 1970; McCleary, 1983), apologia has been most thoroughly studied by this method, just as apologia has proved to be the genre to produce the most research (Brock, Scott, and Chesebro 289; Huxman and Bruce 57). Thus, a review of the literature concerning apologia would be, at best, incomplete without first providing a discussion of genre criticism and research.

Genre and Genre Criticism

The emphasis on genres within the area of rhetorical study began with the inception of the concept of rhetoric itself. Richard Rowland notes that “there is a tradition going back to Aristotle emphasizing the value of finding the proper category for describing and evaluating a given work” (128). Therefore, the study of genres, beginning with Aristotle’s classifications of speech into the three categories of forensic, deliberative, and ceremonial, has been a significant trend in rhetorical studies throughout its history and has produced an enormous amount of research. Genre criticism as it is
conceived in contemporary works, however, developed out of Black's 1965 book, *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method*.

In his book, Black details four basic assumptions concerning rhetorical situations that provided the foundation for generic study. The first assumption is that "there are a limited number of situations in which a rhetor can find himself [sic]... and that the recurrent characteristics of rhetorical situations will make it possible for us — if we know enough — to construct an accurate and exhaustive typology of rhetorical situations."

Black's next premise is that "there are a limited number of ways in which a rhetor can and will respond rhetorically to any given situational type." Therefore, he claims:

> the recurrence of a given situational type throughout history will provide the critic with information on the rhetorical responses available in that situation, and with this information the critic can better understand and evaluate any specific rhetorical discourse in which he [sic] may be interested. (133-134)

His last assumption maintains that the importance of classifying discourses in the same category is that it indicates their similarities to one another. Accordingly, these classifications must be somewhat arbitrary to allow for the similarities to be illuminated.

Black's work in the area of rhetorical situations lacks the in-depth research in certain areas that scholars who followed him would produce. For example, Bitzer's 1968 essay explores the concept of rhetorical situations in detail. In addition, Ware and Linkugel (1973) point out that his classification of apologia into the argumentative genre provides less insight into apologetic discourse than does the conceptualizing of apologia
as its own genre. Nonetheless, Black has made a significant contribution to genre study by providing a framework for later scholars to expand and develop.

In 1968, Bitzer developed the concept of the rhetorical situation. His elaboration in this area introduced the important elements of exigencies and constraints in rhetorical events. He defines the rhetorical situation as "a natural context of persons, events, objects, relations, and an exigence which strongly invites utterance; this invited utterance participates naturally in the situation, is in many instances necessary to the completion of situational activity, and by means of its participation with situation obtains its meaning and its rhetorical character" (5). Later, Bitzer (1980) developed his ideas concerning how recurrent rhetorical situations can change. He states that "some rhetorical situations are fashioned largely (perhaps sometimes nearly wholly) of prior rhetorical discourse; and new discourse enters such situations, thereby complicating or modifying them, generating new exigencies, etc." (92).

Bitzer has drawn criticism from several scholars who argue that his definition of the rhetorical situation is problematic. Richard Vatz (1973) claims Bitzer is mistaken in his belief that rhetoric is situational. He believes, in fact, that "situations are rhetorical" and that they rely solely on the rhetor's perception for their construction (159). He argues that "no situation can have a nature independent of the perception of its interpreter or independent of the rhetoric with which he chooses to characterize it" (154).

While Vatz stands in direct opposition to Bitzer's proposal, another of Bitzer's critics, Scott Consigny (1974) claims that the rhetorical situation depends on both the rhetor's perception and the constraints of the event. He notes that both Vatz and Bitzer
ignore the importance of a critical element in the situation and argues for a combination of their opposing views. Despite Bitzer’s contribution to genre study, the usefulness of his conceptualization of the rhetorical situation remains in question (Rowland, 1991).

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, in line with Consigny’s conception of situations, added to genre study with the introduction of the antecedent genre as a constraint on the rhetor’s available options (1973). She states that “genres are shaped in response to a rhetor’s perception of the expectations of the audience and the demands of the situation . . . perception of the proper response to an unprecedented rhetorical situation grows not merely from the situation but also from antecedent rhetorical forms” (163). Her 1975 article, “Antecedent Genre as Rhetorical Constraint,” provides a more in-depth look at antecedent genres as constraints by looking at the 1968 construction of the *Humanae Vitae*, the first presidential address to Congress, and the first congressional reply in the United States.

Jane Elmes-Crahall found Jamieson’s conception of the antecedent genre particularly useful in her study of Geraldine Ferraro’s campaign discourse. Significantly, she argued that Bitzer’s situational theory proved insensitive to gender as an exigence (Bitzer, 1980). She claims that Jamieson’s antecedent genre research better accommodated the issues facing Ferraro as the first female vice-presidential candidate for a major party. She maintains that:

Lloyd Bitzer’s situational theory was of limited use for analyzing the gender exigence addressed by [the] vice-presidential campaign of Geraldine Ferraro. The basic theoretical concepts were useful because
they stressed the interactive relationship of discourse and situation. However, Bitzer's discussion of exigence, audience, and constraints failed to acknowledge the importance of advocacy campaigns designed to redress long-standing cultural wrongs. In addition, Bitzer privileges historical tradition as a constraint in recurring rhetorical situations. In doing so, it is likely that a critic applying his method to an unprecedented situation could overlook the full force of a major cultural change, such as the advancement of the gender exigence. It was Jamieson's concept of antecedent generic constraints that proved to be better suited for this study of constraints affecting women political candidates. (206)

Despite the usefulness of Jamieson's efforts concerning antecedent genres, Stephen Lucas claims that her analysis of the constraints facing George Washington when delivering the first U. S. inaugural address is incomplete. He argues that Washington was not solely constrained by the antecedent genres. Instead, he posits that his response was "modulated by a set of generic constraints derived from the rhetoric of office-taking, from the inaugural speeches of Virginia's colonial governors, and, perhaps from the accession speeches of eighteenth-century British monarchs" (369). He, as well as Walter Fisher (1980), advocates the inclusion of historical context information in a genre study.

In 1978, Harrell and Linkugel's article, "On Rhetorical Genre: An Organizing Perspective," provided a methodology by which critics could conduct the systematic research of genres. They identify four primary types of generic classification as de facto,
structural, motivational, and archetypal. They describe *de facto* classification as the "common-sense perception" that certain texts have an "apparent association" (264). Structural classification is grounded in the assumption that certain texts are developed around pre-determined patterns of language use (264). Motivational classification is described as that which places "primary emphasis upon motivation of the rhetor" (265). Finally, the authors describe archetypal classification as that which focuses on the "images which are commonly recognized and which carry inherent persuasive connotations" (265). The study provided a useful guide at the time it was written, but scholars rarely employ these classifications in their assessments of apologia due to the development of more popular methods (e.g. Jamieson and Campbell, 1978).

Also in 1978, Jamieson and Campbell collected a number of genre studies and combined them in *Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action*. In the book, they provide a discussion of the developments in genre criticism. Perhaps the most enduring contribution of this work is their definition of a genre as "a constellation of recognizable forms bound together by an internal dynamic . . . fusing substantive, stylistic, and situational characteristics" (21).

Several years later, Jamieson and Campbell (1982) again contributed to the development of genre with their discussion of "rhetorical hybrids" (147). In this article, they analyze a number of speeches to demonstrate how elements of various genres can combine to form rhetorical blends. The significance of their research rests in the ability of these forms to provide insight into "complex rhetorical forms" that occur in situations
that call for one instance of discourse to satisfy different, but equally important, demands (147).

Despite the attempts of scholars like Jamieson and Campbell to ensure that genre studies move beyond the mere classification of discourse to provide evaluation and insight into the objects of study, many argue that genre criticism continues to lead to "tiresome and useless taxonomies" (Conley, Ancient Rhetoric 53), and that "generic analysis may proceed for its own sake, rather than for the critical illumination it is capable of producing" (Rowland 129). Thomas Conley maintains that "the critical fixation on genre identity may, in fact, obfuscate more than it illuminates" (71).

Fisher (1980) cautions that "the danger of genre it that is can overwhelm the critic" (299). He suggests that the critic inform herself/himself of the history and theory surrounding a discourse and not just the genre. He warns that the critic can not allow the information with which she/he enters the criticism to "blind her or him to the information provided by the work itself" (299).

Carolyn Miller (1984), like Fisher, proposes suggestions for avoiding the production of meaningless taxonomies. She argues for the understanding of genre that "is based in rhetorical practice, in the conventions of discourse that a society establishes as ways of acting together... for genres change, evolve, and decay; the number of genres current in a society is indeterminate and dependent upon the complexity and diversity of the society" (163). She contends that by viewing genre as social action, the critic can more easily avoid the temptation of mere classification.
Rowland (1991), also believing that the conceptualization of genre criticism is at the root of this problematic trend toward taxonomies, argues for a readjusting of generic parameters. He maintains that "generic situations are made up of three factors, perceived need, limiting purpose, and societal limitation, that in turn lead to the creation of strategic constraints, which influence the rhetorical response" (143). Notably, he suggests that a genre exists only when all three factors are in place "without significant variation" and prove to be "highly constraining" (140). Downey eloquently points out, however, that "Rowland's narrow perspective . . . is antithetical to the goals of genre criticism, goals which make tracing and interpreting shifts in rhetorical genres central to the mode of inquiry" (44). By limiting generic studies to stable genres that do not change, Rowland ignores the critical insight that can be discovered through the investigation of how and why genres alter and adjust.

The Study of Apologia

Much like the concept of genre, the apology was a topic of study in the earliest years of rhetorical study. Plato addresses accusation and apology in his *Phaedrus* as well as authoring Socrates' *Apology*. Similarly, Isocrates includes the concepts of apology, encomium, accusation, and admonition in *Helen* (cited in Kennedy, 86). Thus, this research area also has evolved and developed as the rhetorical tradition has changed over time.

At this time, the scope this review needs to be acknowledged by noting that this review centers on political apologia, rather than those discourses delivered in other arenas. This focus is not an attempt to ignore the contributions that have been made by
studies of sports apologia (Kruse, 1981; Nelson, 1984), corporate apologia (Burns, 1996; Hearit, 1995; Schultz and Seeger, 1991), or religious apologia (Simonds, 1990). Instead, this review seeks to explore the advancement of apologia in the area which is most relevant to the current study. Furthermore, this review concentrates, although not exclusively, on the rhetorical investigation of apologia as a genre. Again, this choice is made due to the prevalence of research on apologia and the need to limit the scope of this review to those studies most closely relating to the research at hand. The preference shown to genre criticism is not an attempt to discount the efforts of those who have studied apologetic discourse using social science methods (McCleary, 1983), pentadic analysis (Ling, 1970), or other means of inquiry (e.g. R. King, 1985).

The most appropriate way to begin a review of apologia literature is with a discussion of Ware and Linkugel’s 1973 benchmark article, “They Spoke in Defense of Themselves,” that proved to have an undeniable and enduring impact on the study of apologia. These authors employed Robert Abelson’s “modes of resolution” in defining the four factors that characterize this genre (1959). According to these scholars, the foundations of apologia are denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence.

The first factor, denial, “consists of the simple disavowal by the speaker of any participation in, relationship to, or positive sentiment toward whatever it is repels the audience” (276). In some instances, rhetors may deny intent rather than maintaining their innocence of action. The second factor, bolstering, occurs when the speaker “attempts to identify himself [sic] with something viewed favorably by the audience” (277). Both
denial and bolstering are identified as reformative strategies because they do not attempt to alter the meaning the audience has developed for the crisis.

The last two factors, differentiation and transcendence are transformative strategies due to their focus on changing the meanings the audiences have projected onto the issues at hand. Differentiation attempts to separate “some fact, sentiment, object, or relationship from some larger context within which the audience presently views that attribute” (277). Conversely, a rhetor employing transcendence focuses on connecting some element of the current situation with a larger context in order to create a new understanding.

Ware and Linkugel further identify four rhetorical postures or subgenres that consist of combinations of one reformative and one transformative factor. They identify the first subgenre as absolution, a combination of denial and differentiation that occurs when the rhetor desires acquittal of the charges against her/him. Vindication, the second posture, consists of transcendence and denial factors and attempts to preserve the rhetor’s reputation. The third subgenre, explanation, seeks the audience’s understanding of the rhetor’s motive and consists of bolstering and differentiation factors. Lastly, the justification subgenre is comprised of bolstering and transcendence strategies and occurs when the rhetor seeks approval of her/his action (282).

Although Ware and Linkugel’s schemas have proved useful for the study of apologia, several criticisms of their work persist. Just as scholars argue that the study of genres in general has become nothing more than classification, the ease with which scholars can classify instances of apologia without providing critical evaluations of the
texts is due, in part, to the success of the classifications espoused by this article. Furthermore, the prevalence of studies focusing on verbal apologia techniques using these criteria has led to the slighting of nonverbal apologia studies and the illumination they might provide.

Perhaps the most convincing argument against this article is made by Conley (1986). He maintains that all of the factors identified by Ware and Linkugel appear in each of the instances of apologia they cite in their study. Thus, their classification of each into a specific posture based on the rhetor’s use of two of those factors is problematic. Conley points out that although “Ware and Linkugel assure us, [that speakers] ‘usually assume one of the four major rhetorical postures when speaking in defense of their characters,’” he finds evidence to the contrary (Linnaean Blues 63).

Conley cites the courtroom speeches of Clarence Darrow and Marcus Garvey, used in Ware and Linkugel’s study, as including all the factors espoused by the authors, and he argues that the authors’ method of evaluating which one is used more is far too subjective. He maintains that the two men engage in as much denial, differentiation, and bolstering as they do transcendence, the category to which they are assigned by the researchers. Furthermore, he adds that both of these speeches have the primary focus of demonstrating that the prosecution did not prove their case, which does not match any of the identified postures. Thus, the accuracy of their assertions are questioned by the same speeches they used to formulate those assumptions.

Having reviewed the most influential article, it is now necessary to discuss some of the studies that predated and, thus, may have influenced Ware and Linkugel’s research.
One earlier study of apologia that has provided some useful guidelines for the future inquiries in this area was that of L. W. Rosenfield (1968). This study's most significant contribution was espousing four predictions concerning the development of televised apologia.

He advocates that "broadcast apologia is likely to be a part of a short, intense, decisive clash of views... (and that) a speaker who chooses to argue in his [sic] own defense over the airwaves is unlikely to limit himself [sic] to defensive remarks" (449). He also predicts that the bulk of the facts in televised apologetic speeches will reside in the middle third of the speech. His final prediction is that rhetors will rely primarily on previously used arguments. Sherry Butler later applied these criteria to Edward Kennedy's "Chappaquidick" address to explain why that instance of apologia failed to secure his political future (1972). She argues that Kennedy's violation of these tenets led to irrevocable damage to his reputation and future political career.

The second hypothesis of Rosenfield's study, that apologists on television will not rely solely on defensive remarks, has some important implications for the study at hand because it suggests the need for aggressive or assertive discourse. Although male apologists may be able to engage in offensive discourse during a defensive event without reprimand from the public, research suggests that women might be violating sex-role expectations by using aggressive verbal tactics and should expect to be punished for their violation (Burgoon, Dillard, and Doran 292). Pearson et al. claim that "research seems to indicate that women may, in fact, be evaluated negatively when they communicate assertively" (174). Thus, the findings of the Rosenfield and Butler studies may prove
Another study that undoubtedly influenced the development of Ware and Linkugel’s classificatory scheme is Fisher’s 1970 article, “A Motive View of Communication.” In this article, Fisher introduces the idea of speaker motivation as a means by which to study apologia. He identifies the four types of rhetorical situations: affirmation, reaffirmation, purification, and subversion. These motives would later aid Ware and Linkugel in developing their postures of self-defense.

Kruse increased the effectiveness of apologia studies by establishing the generic parameters for the study of this genre (1981). She outlines which instances of discourse fall into this genre and which ones should be excluded. She claims that:

apologia is discourse generated in response to an actual situation, in which one’s character is attacked or is perceived to have been attacked, and that the exigencies leading to apologetic messages occur in observable environments. . . . Ultimately, apologiae can be made only for and by the persons whose behaviors have led to negative judgements of their characters. (290)

This study provides guidance in choosing apologia for study. Kruse argues that “for too many years we have been examining apologetic strategies and attempting to explain why a particular message succeeded or failed without first determining in some detail the criteria to which an apologetic item must conform” (291). Vartabedian (1985) discovered, however, that her argument asserting that apologia had to be given as the
result of an actual or perceived attack was premature. His study of former President Nixon’s rhetoric suggests that he was able to successfully redefine his rhetorical situation by using apologetic discourse in non-apologetic situations. This research has particular value for this study due to my claim that Attorney General Reno created the need for her apologia by criticizing herself before others attacked her.

Although most scholars have chosen to study apologia as a genre, Ryan has made a contribution to apologetic study by introducing a potentially useful alternative (1982 and 1984). He argues for the study of apologia as part of a speech set with kategoria or accusation. He maintains that the stimulus (accusation) and the response (apology) must be studied as a unit in order to understand the apology. The main benefit of this approach is that it allows for the study of discourses that Kruse defines as being outside the apologia genre, such as those involving policy rather than character.

Judith Hoover’s analysis of Governor Ray Blanton’s apologia expands Jamieson’s theory of the antecedent rhetorical genre as constraint by suggesting that a rhetor can also be limited by her/his antecedent rhetorical style (1989). She argues that Blanton’s apologia reveals that a rhetor’s previous apologetic discourse may constrain the available options for later discourse. Thus, the problem arises “when the rhetorical situation changes and necessitates the use of a new rhetorical response” which may not be an option to the rhetor due to her/his prior rhetoric (250).

Another recent elaboration on Jamieson’s work focused on her definition of genres which was espoused by Campbell and Jamieson’s *Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action*. Susan Schultz Huxman and Denise Beatty Bruce (1995) argue that
scholars have not made full use of Campbell and Jamieson’s discussion of genres as discursive bodies comprised of “substantive, stylistic, and situational characteristics” fused together (21). They maintain that “apologia has distinct situational (accusatory), substantive (motivational), and stylistic (argumentative) factors that have never been viewed as dynamically interrelated” (57). The authors apply their concepts to the apologia issued by the Dow Chemical Company in response to charges of immorality resulting from their production of napalm. Although their work focuses on corporate apologia, their generic framework may prove useful for political apologia as well.

A significant limitation on the study of political apologia is the tendency of scholars to focus on discourse delivered by males. King’s study of Wilma Mankiller’s apologia is noteworthy because it attempts to close this particular gap in research (1990). Mankiller faced a number of critics as she attempted to become the first female principal chief of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. Interestingly, King found that Ware and Linkugel’s strategies were not useful for the female apologist who was the first female leader of the Cherokee Nation. Instead, she successfully employed an “educational strategy” by which to defend herself (35).

King argues that:

A man may be aggressive, take the offensive, deny, bolster, and redefine a situation in the name of verbal self-defense, but a woman who uses the same strategies is perceived also as aggressive yet with a negative connotation. On the other hand, a woman who does not defend herself at all is viewed unfavorably or as weak. We need only to recall the media
coverage of Patricia Schroeder’s tears when she decided not pursue the Democratic nomination for president to remind us of the perception of a woman in public leadership who appears to have a weakness. Consequently, a woman running for or in a public office must develop a fitting strategy of self-justification that allows her to function in a patriarchal society and to use a language that is understandable to men and women, that does not make her appear too aggressive, and that does not label her as a mud-slinger. (34)

According to King, Mankiller was able to create an educational strategy that allowed her to confront her accusers successfully. She claims that:

an educational strategy permits an acceptable response, since women are viewed often as responsible for educating children and therefore maintaining the culture. Instructing as a strategy encourages a language usage that is neither accusatory nor powerless . . . [and] allows a woman to respond to verbal accusations without appearing as aggressive. (35)

This study, thus, has implications for research on women’s apologia by suggesting that traditional apologetic strategies may not be suitable for women. King also offers a viable alternative for women in the political arena.

The study of Mankiller, although useful, is severely limited by the nature of Mankiller’s audience. Mankiller was operating in a confined, homogeneous arena in which all her audience members shared the same historical background as herself. The audience and the speaker were unified by the fact that they shared the Cherokee heritage.
Mankiller used this shared history in order to defend herself. Significantly, her educational strategy involved educating the public about Cherokee traditions that had valued women in roles that were compatible with that of the principal chief. She, in fact, instructs the Cherokees that sexism has been acquired by their community through contact with the dominant culture of the United States (27). Thus, the study’s findings need to be investigated using a more heterogeneous audience and operating in a culture which has historically held women in less regard.

Another female-authored article published recently by Downey (1993) provides an overview of the apologia genre from classical times to the present. She determines that the apologies of each time period demonstrate a different primary function and develops five subgenres accordingly. Classical apologia is shown to function as self-exoneration, whereas, medieval apologia functions as self-absolution. The function of modern apologia, described by Downey as apologetic discourse issued during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is deemed self-sacrifice, while the function of contemporary apologia before 1960 is self-service. Downey claims that contemporary apologia after 1960 appears to function as self-deception (48-58).

Downey warns that the study of the genre’s evolution suggests a “disconcerting” trend (59). She explains that:

over time, apologia have come to exist within an increasingly detached rhetorical situation. The drama that bound accused, accuser, and audience in the classical period gradually gave way to audience alienation, ambiguous accuser, and aversive apologist. Similarly, the genre manifests
a precipitate decrease in standards or rules for the conduct of self-defense. Where the classical period incorporated a myriad of conventions prescribing who, what, when, where, how, and why apologia would be enacted, apparently those conventions fell out of favor through time, eventually to be replaced by rhetor control. Indeed, progressive variations in apologia’s function coincided with rhetor’s increasing dominion over the apologetic situation, a condition implying diminished collective consciousness of the purpose or value of the genre. Moreover, as discourses became increasingly shorter in length, less accurate, ethical, or consequential, they grew more descriptive, pragmatic, and expedient. (59)

This study also may prove to have important implications for the current study due to the suggestion that male apologists are allowed to engage in more “dirty” strategies when issuing apologia. Pearson et al.’s claim that women are held to higher expectations of morality and “nice-ness” than are men may put women at a substantial disadvantage (202). If, in fact, men are not expected to live up to the same standards of conduct before, during, and after issuing apologia, they are far more likely to be asked to defend themselves less and meet with greater success when defending themselves than women.

Benoit (1995) points out that although Downey’s article “provides a sweeping historic perspective of speeches of apology not possible with studies adopting a more limited purview,” the study does not make clear “the extent to which all examples of apologia from one period do, or should be expected to, fall into a single” category (17).
Nonetheless, the study is significant in that it takes a holistic view of the genre, whereas most studies focus on a few instances of discourse within the same time period.

Benoit also argues that investigating the similar phenomena of excuses and accounts can advance the study of apologia. He points out that “communication scholars are not shy about borrowing from related areas” (viii), yet we have ignored some relevant areas of study in relation to apologetic discourse. In his book, Benoit provides a thorough review of the literature from the fields of communication, sociology, and psychology, among others. He explores the concepts of accounts and apologies from a variety of sociological and psychological perspectives (e.g. Schonbach, 1980; Scott and Lyman, 1968). This study is significant because it incorporates new terms, methods of study, and theories into the investigation of apologia. Furthermore, he elaborates on Ware and Linkugel’s postures and develops five image restoration strategies. He labels the new strategies as denial, avoiding responsibility, minimalization, mortification, and corrective action.

Benoit notes that past scholars have failed to combine the work of Ware and Linkugel (1973), Rosenfield (1968), or other noteworthy researchers. Instead, scholars have chosen to view apologetic criteria by each scholar as mutually exclusive, not allowing for the combination or development of researcher’s criteria. This study attempts to investigate female apologia in as much depth as possible by looking at the criteria of several scholars for guidance (e.g. King, 1990; Ware and Linkugel, 1973).
Summary

This review has provided insight into the development of both genre criticism and apologia studies. Additionally, this chapter has sought to illuminate some of the gaps in research and problematic areas that currently exist as well outline some of the debates in which other scholars have engaged concerning these areas. Although many scholars disagree about the appropriate methods of study, the parameters of the apologia genre, and the accuracy of terminology, the main issue of contention among scholars in both of the outlined areas is the tendency to engage in classification rather than critical evaluation.

This study seeks to avoid the classification trap by employing the research of Ware and Linkugel, Benoit, King, and others in an attempt to view the discourse on a number of different levels. Additionally, this study hopes to provide some useful insight into the relevance of nonverbal communication to the apologia genre in order to help eliminate the void in that area of research. The main goal of this study, however, is to address the current lack of research regarding issues surrounding women’s use of political apologia. In doing so, I hope to assess the usefulness of the method of genre criticism for the assessment of female apologia. The results of King’s case study suggest that the strategies of apologetic discourse that are assumed to be universal are not useful for female apologists. Gold’s assertion that political candidates “can literally be made or broken on their ability to practice the ritual of self-defense” implies that if women are to enjoy any success in the political arena, they must be able to engage in successful apologia (316).
Chapter Three provides an overview of Attorney General Reno’s apologetic discourse relating to the siege on the Branch Davidian commune. The chapter also provides a discussion of the exigencies involved in this instance of apologia. In addition, this chapter discusses the constraints and expectations that may have influenced Reno’s apologia.
WORKS CITED


CHAPTER 3

THE MOUNT CARMEL TRAGEDY AND ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO’S RESPONSE

This chapter provides a review of the discourse issued by Attorney General Reno in response to the fire and loss of life at Mount Carmel, the Branch Davidian residence near Waco, Texas. This section also provides a discussion of the constraints and exigencies that helped to form Reno’s unique rhetorical situation. Before addressing these issues, however, a description of the events leading up to and immediately following the April 19, 1993 tragedy at Mt. Carmel is necessary in order to contextualize Reno’s apologetic discourse.

At this time, it is important to note that the purpose of this study and, in particular, this section is not to address any of the controversies that surround the physical actions of the government or the Branch Davidians before, during, or after their fifty-one-day standoff, unless those actions or public perceptions of those actions prove relevant to the apologetic strategies employed by Reno in her defense. Endless questions relating to what “really” happened between the government agencies involved in the standoff and the residents of Mt. Carmel remain unanswered. For example, the surviving residents of Mt. Carmel insist still they did not purposely set the fire that consumed eighty lives on April 19 as the government claims. The survivors suggest that, in fact, the government
began the fire, some say, to cover up evidence of the unconstitutional actions taken by various government agencies during the standoff (Reavis). I leave the investigation of questions such as these to those who are more informed on the actual events surrounding the Waco incident (e.g., Reavis, 1995; Tabor and Gallagher, 1995). In this chapter, I provide a description of the events leading up to the April 19 incident with the sole purpose of contextualizing Reno’s subsequent discourse. My intent in relating these details is neither to exonerate nor condemn any participant in these events. I attempt to provide as full an account of the events as possible without engaging in any unnecessary speculation or relating any information that is of considerably questionable accuracy.

The Events Leading up to the February 28 Incident

Although the press and the general public did not become familiar with the Branch Davidian sect located near Waco until February 28, 1993, when a bungled raid on Mt. Carmel by the Treasury Department’s Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) led to the deaths of four ATF agents and the wounding of sixteen, the government’s interest in the unusual religious sect began much earlier. Nine months prior to the February 28 raid, ATF officials received information from a sheriff’s department near the commune that led them to open an investigation on the residents of Mt. Carmel. The sheriff’s office had been alerted by a United Parcel Service (UPS) courier, who had discovered that a package he delivered to the commune contained dummy hand grenades. The ATF’s subsequent investigation of delivery invoices and records raised the agents’ suspicions concerning the possible manufacturing of hand grenades, prohibited in the United States by federal firearms laws, and the possible
practice of buying semi-automatic weapons for the purpose of altering them into automatic weapons (Reavis, 33-38). The ownership of automatic weapons is not illegal in this country; it requires, however, registration of the gun and a payment of a $200 fee. If the residents of Mt. Carmel had altered the weapons, which the post-fire trials of Branch Davidian survivors indicate was the case (Tabor and Gallagher 101), they had not paid the fees or registered their guns.

As the ATF became more involved in its investigation and began making plans for a raid of the commune, their presence in and around Waco was known by many, including the leader of the Branch Davidian sect, David Koresh, and his followers (Reavis 43). Accordingly, the press took an interest in Mt. Carmel and helped to disseminate stories of adultery, sexual and physical abuse of children, statutory rape, and polygamy within the commune. Although evidence strongly suggests that Koresh had sex with at least two females who were thirteen and fourteen, one of them being his legal wife, Rachel, most of the stories relating to abuse within the commune have never been verified (Reavis 40). Nonetheless, stories of aberrant or distasteful sexual habits and lifestyle choices were used by the ATF to gain support for their search warrant for the Mt. Carmel residence, the constitutionality of which would later be questioned by many (Reavis 35). The obtainment of this search warrant would lead to the February 28 raid (40).

The ATF’s search warrant was granted, and the agency began to put the plan for their raid on the commune into action. Although the agency denies any connection between their agency’s unsecured future and the decision to raid Mt. Carmel, the agency
was slated to face a congressional review on March 12 of the same year that would
decide the fate of the small, four thousand member agency (Tabor and Gallagher 103).
Accordingly, the ATF, an agency that is responsible for a number of routine and
unheralded tasks such as enforcing the Contraband Cigarette Act, would have benefited
greatly from the positive public relations that could have stemmed from the successful
raid of a group that had been labeled by the press as a dangerous cult (e.g. England and
McCormick). Unfortunately, the raid not only was unsuccessful, it was deadly.

The Events of February 28, 1993

On February 28, the ATF sent undercover Special Agent Robert Rodriguez, who
had visited the commune several times in the past few weeks in the guise of a new
neighbor, to Mt. Carmel to find out whether any unusual behavior was going on in the
commune that would suggest those inside were preparing for the raid. During his visit,
which was to end less than an hour before the ATF was to begin the raid, Koresh, having
ascertained from his first meeting with the Special Agent that he was a “cop” of some
sort, told Rodriguez that he knew the ATF was coming and that they should call off the
raid (Reavis 71). Special Agent Rodriguez left the building and reported frantically to
the raid’s commander, Charles Sarabyn, “Chuck, they know. They know,” in an effort to
preempt the raid. For reasons that have never been illuminated fully, the ATF,
attempting to arrest Koresh and search the premises for illegal or altered weapons, went
ahead with the raid on the Mt. Carmel residence.

Other than the fact that the ATF raid on the Mt. Carmel residence occurred on
February 28 and was unsuccessful in accomplishing its goals, little can be described
about the event itself without engaging in the type of speculation I vowed to avoid or choosing to accept one account of the story despite the existence of many others. Due the fact that four ATF agents, and allegedly several Branch Davidians, were killed and sixteen agents and many Branch Davidians, including Koresh, were wounded during the event, there is documented evidence of a brutal exchange of fire between the two forces. Many questions remain regarding who started the shooting, whether or not the ATF used the National Guard helicopters that hovered above the commune in ways that were in violation of the constitution, whether the Branch Davidians believed they were defending themselves against an unconstitutional attack as well as whether the attack was unconstitutional, how many people were killed inside the building during the raid, and whether a child was killed accidentally by the ATF. Interestingly, the ATF surveillance cameras that had been trained on Mt. Carmel for a month "malfunctioned" on February 28 and could not provide insight into the events of the day (Reavis 32). One fact on which both sides agreed was that the ATF raid on February 28 was both a failure and an embarrassment for the government agency. Dick Reavis writes:

In an attempt to arrest one man, Vernon Wayne Howell, aka David Koresh, federal law enforcement agents, dressed in combat gear, had assaulted a large wooden residence near Waco, Texas—scaling its walls, breaking its windows, throwing hand grenades inside. It was as if the agents had gone to war . . . Not only had a seeming war broken out in America, but the government appeared to have lost. (11)
Initially, ATF officials maintained that their actions were both justified and well planned. Special Agent Ted Royster, who oversaw the ATF’s Dallas division, asserted that those in charge had not “miscalculated” as the media and the public suggested (Aynesworth, March 1, 1993). He told the press, “we practiced for it over and over; we had our plan down . . . and they were waiting” (Potok 4A). By March 2, the spokesperson for the ATF, Jack Killorin, was claiming that the raid was unsuccessful because the Branch Davidians had been tipped off by outside sources (Pinkerton, Kecton, and Bragg), although the agency claimed it was not aware that they had lost the element of surprise before they raided the commune. The ATF admitted a few days later, however, that they had known that the raid had been compromised, but they went ahead with the plan because they feared the sect would commit mass suicide (Pendleton 8).

The ATF asserted consistently that the actions taken during the raid were appropriate and that the Branch Davidians necessitated the agency’s gunfire by initiating the shooting. David Troy, enraged at the allegations circulating in the press and throughout the public, denied the use of unreasonable force by the ATF and stated emphatically that the Branch Davidians initiated gunfire (Bragg, Asin, and Fahleson). He stated, “the ATF agents acted under the rule of law when they executed that raid. . . . The members of that compound initiated the contact under the rules of war” (A1). In contrast, Koresh and the Branch Davidians accused the ATF of firing the first shots. Koresh claimed during a telephone interview on the Cable News Network (CNN), “they fired on us first . . . The bullets started coming into the door, and the young men (inside the
compound) started firing on them. I said, 'There’s women and children, women and children in here' (Sun-Sentinel 1A).

Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen defended the actions of the ATF agents under his department by commending their "incredible bravery" during the incident (Tackett 5N). Several years later, when Bentsen was asked to discuss the events of February 28 with Congress as they reviewed the actions of the federal agencies in regard to the Branch Davidians, he claimed that he had been in London at the time of the incident and did not learn about the raid until after it was over. Congressional Republicans would label him as "derelict" and "highly irresponsible" for not monitoring the ATF investigation of Mt. Carmel. Like Reno, Bentsen had been in office only two months at the time of the raid (Towle).

The Fifty-One-Day Standoff

By 5:00 p.m. the next day, March 1, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had assumed full control of the situation and the fifty-one-day standoff between the residents of Mt. Carmel and the federal government had begun (Tabor and Gallagher 103). Accounts vary concerning whether the ATF called for assistance from the FBI or the FBI responded to the perceived incompetence of the ATF by taking control of the situation. Nonetheless, the FBI took over negotiations with the Branch Davidians the day after the raid while the ATF was relegated to an assisting role (Reavis 208). FBI spokesperson Bob Ricks began conducting daily press briefings on the standoff soon after (Associated Press, March 7, 1993). Significantly, no Attorney General was in office when the standoff began, although Acting Attorney General Stuart Gerson was apprised
of the negotiations (Tabor and Gallagher 216). Attorney General Reno would inherit the situation in Waco almost two weeks later when she took office on March 12.

On March 2, the FBI responded to Koresh’s promise that he would send out all of the Mt. Carmel residents peacefully if a fifty-eight-minute tape he had made was played on the radio. Buses were brought near the commune for the purpose of transporting the exiting Branch Davidians. Although the FBI complied with Koresh’s request and aired the tape locally, he and his followers never emerged from the building, and he eventually sent word that he had changed his mind (Reavis 219).

By all accounts, the negotiations between Koresh and the Branch Davidians and FBI negotiators were difficult for a number of reasons. Significantly, a barrier was erected by the lack of understanding of the Branch Davidian’s complex religious beliefs by the FBI negotiators. Many sources claim that the FBI’s tactics were destined to be ineffective, and that their lack of knowledge or interest in the religious teachings of those inside the building led them to exacerbate the already volatile situation (e.g. Ammerman 283). Additionally, Koresh received a gunshot wound during the February 28 attack that reportedly caused him great pain. His lawyer, Dick DeGuerin, claims that his client would pass out at times during his visits inside Mt. Carmel, and Koresh’s wound was so painful and released so much blood that he believed himself to be dying on March 1 (Reavis 215). Consequently, his ability to think clearly and/or negotiate was, at least at times, impaired.

Another significant obstacle to successful negotiations was the fact that Koresh had long ago predicted an apocalyptic end to the inhabitants of Mt. Carmel. Reavis notes
that, “the residents of Mt. Carmel expected that a corrupted and hypocritical nation would attack them, that they should resist the assault, and that some of them would suffer what secularists regard as death” (184). He also points out that Koresh had prophesized a great siege and that some of his followers were beginning to question why it had not yet occurred (185). Professor Stephen Leary argues that unusual or apocalyptic religious sects will take any action to avoid being proven wrong about their beliefs, including killing themselves or others (CBS Evening News). Thus, the stage was set for the deadly end to the standoff even before the FBI arrived in the city of Waco.

Negotiations continued between the FBI and Koresh, but the patience of both parties ran shorter with each day. After Koresh reneged on his promise to come out, the negotiators became increasingly convinced that he would not surrender peacefully (Labaton A1). On March 9, the FBI started playing loud music and other sounds over a public address system they had constructed near the commune in an effort to wage psychological warfare on its inhabitants. Night and day for the next six weeks, those within the building would be bombarded with the sounds of seagulls, sirens, dying rabbits, crying babies, dental drills and songs from Alice Cooper as well as Nancy Sinatra’s “These Boots are Made for Walking” (Reavis 259).

On April 12, a month after Attorney General Reno had taken office, the FBI presented her with a plan to use tanks to insert tear gas into the commune over a two-day period in hopes that the Branch Davidians would surrender. According to a variety of sources, Reno was hesitant to accept the plan, citing the potential harm of the children within the commune as a special concern (Reavis 264; Tabor and Gallagher 18).
Although some children began exiting Mt. Carmel almost as soon as the February 28 raid ended, Koresh allegedly used the presence of the remaining children in the residence as a bargaining tool similar to the role of hostages (Reavis 201). Additionally, he refused to send out any of the twelve children living in the commune that he had fathered, believing that they held special destinies in Heaven. Several other parents decided to keep their children in the commune after hearing of the fate of those who had been sent out of Mt. Carmel (Reavis 204; Wright 380).

The children who had exited the commune carried notes in their pockets that requested they be sent to specific relatives for care. Instead, those inside Mt. Carmel learned from their sporadic and government supervised access to the radio that their children had been placed in a facility of the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services. The government, attempting to ease the concern of the mothers still inside, sent videotapes of the children to the commune. These tapes allegedly horrified the mothers as they saw their children drinking sodas, eating gluttonously, watching television, and behaving in a hyperactive manner. Many of the activities in which the children were engaged violated the complicated belief system of these devoutly religious mothers (Reavis 227).

Before approving the FBI’s plan, Reno requested more information about the safety of CS gas, the proposed tear gas. Although the accuracy of the information with which Reno was provided has been questioned, she was told that CS gas would not cause any permanent damage and was not flammable (Reavis 264-265). She approved the plan hesitantly, only to call another meeting the next day to request information about the
possibility of waiting for the water supply of the commune to expire (265). She was told that the water supply appeared to be adequate to sustain the group for some time. She gave her final approval for the plan to insert CS gas into the building over a two-day period on April 17.

Interestingly, Koresh sent a letter to DeGuerin on April 14 claiming that he was going to decode the messages of the Seven Seals referenced in the Bible and release them to the world. He claimed he would surrender once his manuscript was distributed to his perceived allies in and around Waco (Reavis 256). Although many government officials and FBI negotiators did not believe Koresh intended to come out or was even working on the Seven Seals manuscript, surviving Davidians testify that he worked on the manuscript up until the day of his death (Tabor and Gallagher 20), and a copy of the unfinished document resides as an appendix to James Tabor and Eugene Gallagher’s Why Waco?. Koresh considered these scholars among his allies and requested that they be sent a copy (190). Most sources agree that Reno was never shown nor told of Koresh’s letter or his manuscript of the Seven Seals (Tabor and Gallagher 18).

The April 19, 1993 Siege

At 6:02 on the morning of Monday, April 19, Reno watched from the FBI Control Room in Washington D. C. as tanks began inserting tear gas into the Branch Davidian commune by punching holes in the walls and depositing canisters of the CS gas into strategic rooms in the building. By 6:04, the Davidians had begun firing on the tanks. Accounts vary significantly concerning where and when the fire within the commune began. By 12:30 p. m., however, the entire building was indisputably engulfed in flames
and black smoke. The factors contributing to the intense heat and incredible speed of the fire as it demolished the building have been speculated on and debated. Although the surviving Branch Davidians deny the charge, the government maintains today as it has from the first sight of flames, that the fire was started by those inside on Koresh’s order for a mass suicide (Verhovek A1). During an April 19 press conference, Ricks claimed, “I can’t tell you the shock and horror that all of us [federal agents] felt when we saw those flames coming out. We thought, ‘Oh my God, they are killing themselves’” (Aynesworth, April 20, A1). Only nine of the estimated ninety inhabitants of Mt. Carmel at the time of the fire survived, and all of the approximately seventeen children present perished in the fire, including Koresh’s twelve children ranging in age from eight years to fourteen months (Wright 380).

Reno’s Response to the Waco Tragedy

Attorney General Reno’s response to the tragic fire and loss of life at Mt. Carmel proved to be immediate, comprehensive, and personal. Having begun the day supervising the FBI’s actions from Washington around 5:00 a.m., she spent the rest of the day and night of April 19 granting interviews with various news correspondents culminating in her late-night interview with Ted Koppel on ABC’s Nightline. In addition to her one-on-one interviews, she called a press conference during the afternoon to discuss the event and to claim full responsibility for the actions of the government agencies on the scene in Waco.

Although the literature concerning Reno’s discourse relating to this incident is vast, for the purposes of this study, I will focus on her statements to the press and her
discourse during her interviews on CBS Evening News, the NBC News Special: The Siege Ends, the MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour, and ABC's Nightline on the evening of April 19, 1993. These artifacts were the most immediate and the most public instances of the attorney general's apologia. Thus, they are important resources in determining what strategies were employed successfully by Reno as she quickly gained the support of both the public and government officials (Johnston, 1993).

Reno's espoused primary objective for the day of April 19 was to "be accountable to the people" (ABC's Nightline). In her effort to convince the press and the public that she was being open and forthcoming about the events at Mt. Carmel, Reno commented during her press conference that, "I don't do spin stuff. I'm telling you what happened" (Kilday and Lewis 12A). She admitted to the audience of CNN's Larry King Live that one of the reasons behind her marathon schedule of interviews that day and her attempts to answer as many questions as possible about the event "is so that everybody will understand that there is no cover-up" (12A). Although Reno was praised publicly for her openness and accountability in relation to the Waco tragedy (Ostrow, "No recrimination . . ."), one of the most heated issues of the day revolved around suspicions that she was taking responsibility for the incident in order to shield President Clinton.

During her press conference, Reno repeatedly defended President Clinton as reporters attempted to shift the blame toward him. She maintained "I approved the plan and I am responsible for it. I advised the President, but I did not advise him as to the details" (CBS Evening News). Reno claimed that she advised the president of her decision to authorize the FBI's proposed tear gas plan on April 18, the Sunday before the
sieg took place (Federal News Service, April 28, 1993). As reporters continued to ask
questions regarding the culpability of Clinton, the ATF, and the FBI, Reno became
visibly irritated and insisted “I made the decision. I’m accountable. The buck stops with
me. And nobody ever accuse me of running from a decision that I made based on the
best information that I had” (ABC’s Nightline).

Reno’s steadfast defense of Clinton continued throughout the day, and led to a
headline in the London Times that read “Attorney-general says Clinton is not to blame”
(Brodie 3). Later in the evening, Ted Koppel attempted, once again, to press the issue of
President Clinton’s involvement in the event. The following is an excerpt of their
discussion on Nightline:

TK: Ms. Reno, I think it was Harry Truman who first coined the ‘The
buck stops here’ phrase [alluding to her earlier statement to the
press], and what he meant was that no matter how much
responsibility is disseminated through the government, there can
be only one final authority, and that is the president. Why isn’t the
president taking full responsibility for this action?

AG: This was a judgement I made. I investigated it completely. I did
all the, the--I asked the questions, and I think the responsibility lies
with me.

TK: Did you not check it out with the president? Wasn’t this
something, I mean, given the consequences now, and I realize that
we are operating with twenty-twenty hindsight, but shouldn’t this have been a decision that the president made?

AG: I consulted with the president, told him that this was a decision I made that I was willing to assume responsibility for.

When congressional hearings began in late April concerning the actions of the government agencies involved with the Branch Davidian standoff, Reno issued one of her last public statements on the subject after being accused of having made “tremendous efforts” to shield the president by Representative Elton Gallegly. Reno responded to the attack by saying, “I was not trying to shield the president. I don’t think I’ve ever been so—I guess lonely is the word” (Republic Wire Services 3).

Reno asserted throughout the day of April 19 that the experts with whom she had consulted informed her that Koresh would not surrender on his own and that the chances of the Branch Davidians committing mass suicide in response to an attempt to force them to surrender was unlikely. She stated during her interview with Dan Rather, “we were told—by the negotiators that there was no further basis for negotiation. He [Koresh] simply wasn’t going to negotiate, they did not think that he was going to come out” (CBS Evening News). Though she lamented the outcome of her decision, she maintained consistently that she did not have any reason to believe that the actions taken that morning would lead to the deadly fire (ABC’s Nightline). Although, she also pointed out that the possibility of a mass suicide was present regardless of when or what action was taken by the FBI. During her interview on the MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour, she stated:
The FBI advised us that they had talked with as many sources as possible to determine what the eventuality might be, and concluded that it [the chances of a mass suicide] was not great . . . I looked at it in terms of whether the followers would follow him [Koresh] and whether he would lead them to something like this. It was a possibility. Again, the possibility of it happening in the future is something that I could not control, but it was a possibility, but considering all the sources that the FBI consulted, considering their responses to the increasing pressure brought by the FBI over the last several days, it did not seem to be a great probability at all.

In defense of the decision to go ahead with the plan on April 19 instead of waiting, Reno usually cited her concern for the children inside the commune as the driving force behind her decision, although she did discuss briefly other areas of concern. During her press conference, she mentioned the fact that the FBI agents on the scene in Waco, in particular the Hostage Rescue Team (HRT), were becoming fatigued and that that did somewhat influence her decision. She stated:

The experts advised us, advised me—and I talked with them—that in those situations where you had to be constantly on the alert that it was in the best interests of everybody concerned, including the safety of the agents and others involved, to provide for really [sic] time off, and what I was told is that there were no back-ups that could insure the safety of the perimeter. I said, 'Why can't we extend something around the perimeter?''
and it was pointed out to me that they had the capacity to fire weapons
over an extended period, area, that could endanger the safety of those that
might come onto the property during the extended period of time. (News

Reno appears to abandon this line of discussion after the press conference. Her
discourse during her interviews on news programs focuses almost entirely on the safety
of the children as the motive for moving ahead with the FBI’s tear gas plan. Her
Nightline interview provided the most in-depth discussion of her concerns for the
children and her decision to approve the plan for April 14. Reno explained to Koppel
that:

What we did when the FBI went in was try our best to negotiate a peaceful
resolution to this matter. The FBI tried not to use force initially, it tried to
negotiate. We had concerns for the children because we had received
reports that the children had been sexually abused. We, then, received
reports of the children, some of the infants, being beaten. I was so startled
by that that I specifically asked and followed up to make sure that the
reports were confirmed to the extent that we could without being in the
compound ourselves. What impressed me is that the Bureau, time after
time, asked Koresh for some evidence that the children were O. K. They,
the Bureau, sent in videotapes asking Koresh to do something to prove
that the children were O. K. Negotiators consistently asked that the
children be sent out. We did not receive verification that the children were
O. K. The sanitation situation within the compound, we were told, was beginning to deteriorate. At that point, negotiators told us that they did not feel that further negotiation would help, they felt that it was at an impasse, that, at this point, they did not believe that Koresh was going to come out. There was the possibility of a mass suicide. Sources said, yes, he had mentioned it, but they did not think he would do it. But, again, we tried different things to see what his response would be and, at that point, he did not respond with any such threats. . . . the problem was that this could have happened at any time. The possibility of mass suicide was there if we waited two months or three months. The possibility was there that had we gone in in two months, we would have not found the children. We would have found them dead or in terrible condition. We made the best judgement we could based on what we thought was non-lethal force.

Although many of the FBI and Justice Department's statements alleging sexual and/or physical abuse were later modified, retracted, or proven to be unfounded (Reavis 229), the allegations of the abuse of children remained throughout April 19 one of the issues Reno kept in the forefront of her discussions (Kopel).

Another issue that Reno deemed as crucial to the understanding of the outcome of the FBI's raid was that of the unpredictability and, what she perceived to be, the violent nature of the adults within the Branch Davidian residence and, in particular, Koresh. Although she insisted that the sole responsibility for the actions of the FBI rested with her, she was quick to remind the press and the public that she fixed the blame for the
deaths of Branch Davidians on those who, the government alleges, set the fire. She reminded both Koppel and the other guest on Nightline, Koresh’s attorney, DeGuerin that:

what we [the FBI] were trying to do was to give everybody the opportunity to come out in the most unobtrusive way possible, not with a frontal assault, not with trying to take what have obviously proven to be dangerous offenders down. These people killed four people and wounded fifteen. I don’t think that we can sit by and suggest that it is inappropriate to take appropriate measures, escalated steps. A horrible, stark, ghastly tragedy has happened, and it is very painful to deal with, but we have got to remember who these people were, how much violence they had committed, and understand it in that context. . . . These ATF agents had raid jackets on that clearly identified themselves. They clearly identified themselves, and they were met with a hail of fire. Four agents lie dead, fifteen are wounded, hand grenades were tossed on them when people clearly knew that they were ATF agents. And, I think, we have got to come back to the point that the FBI didn’t set this fire. This fire was set by David Koresh.

Along with statements regarding the culpability of Koresh for giving the order to set the deadly fire, she also maintained that, “we couldn’t speculate on, on what this man would not do or would do” (NBC News Special: The Siege Ends). She told the audience of ABC’s Nightline that, “I don’t think anybody has ever dealt with a David Koresh who
would purposely set people afire in that number.” Additionally, she noted that, “nobody could tell what he might do. Anybody that has done what he did today, this stark, horrible tragedy, could do anything” (NBC News Special: The Siege Ends). Accordingly, although she accepted publicly the responsibility for the actions of the federal government on April 19, she urged the public to lay blame for the fire and the deaths of the Mt. Carmel inhabitants on Koresh and to be sympathetic to the plight of the experts and herself who misjudged Koresh’s willingness or ability to order a mass suicide.

The Issue of Constraints

Bitzer (1968), in his work with “The Rhetorical Situation,” was one of the first scholars to note the importance of constraints when describing and evaluating a rhetor’s response to a given situation. This section of the chapter explores the notable constraints facing or imposed on Attorney General Reno’s apologetic discourse in relation to the catastrophic events at Mt. Carmel. The issues being addressed focus on the difficulties facing Reno as the first female Attorney General, a newly appointed member of a criticized federal government, and the person who has claimed responsibility for a federal action that produced shockingly disastrous and public consequences.

On March 12, 1993, Reno entered a position that had never before been held by a woman when she became the seventy-eighth U. S. Attorney General. President Clinton was relieved doubtlessly by her entry into the Cabinet as she was his third nominee for this important position. His previous two choices, both women, were caught up in scandals relating to their payment of taxes on household workers and the hiring of illegal aliens.
Upon entering the office of the presidency, Clinton vowed to create a Cabinet that “looked like America” instead of appointing only white males to high-ranking positions. He had received noted criticism from feminist groups who criticized his Cabinet for a lack of diversity. Sources claim, however, that Clinton expressed marked interest in nominating the first female attorney general and had sought qualified female candidates (Lightman). When Clinton announced his Cabinet nominees, reactions were mixed. He was accused of making his choices based on quotas by some groups while others celebrated the diversity of his nominees. Harriet Woods, chair of the National Women’s Political Caucus, proclaimed, “this will be an historic Cabinet, both for the first-ever woman attorney general [referring to Clinton’s first nominee, Zoe Baird] and the record number of women and minorities” (Stinson A1). Clinton also nominated the first African-American secretary of agriculture. His original nominees included four African-Americans, two Hispanics, and four women (A1).

Demonstrating the ever-present double standard in Washington, Attorney General-designate Baird withdrew her nomination after several days of Senate hearings concerning her hiring illegal aliens as child-care providers in her home and the fact that she admitted not paying certain taxes on her maid and her chauffeur (Levick F1). Clinton’s next designate, Kimba Wood, lost the support of the administration even though she had legally hired undocumented workers in the home and paid the taxes that Baird had overlooked. The Clinton administration was so wary after the Baird hearings they worried that the public would respond only to the hiring of an undocumented worker
even if it was done by means within the law (Republic Wire Services, December 21, 1993).

People voiced their outrage at such glaring evidence of a double standard; the public seemed to notice that no one had bothered to investigate who was watching William Barr’s (Reno’s predecessor) children. Peg Persons complained, “If Zoe Baird were a man, there would have been a pretense of an investigation and, after much posturing and harumphing by the supercilious old-liners, Zoe Baird would be Attorney General” (Newsday). In fact, Persons’ prediction comes to life later in the year when Clinton’s defense secretary nominee, Bobby Ray Inman, admits to making the same mistakes as Baird had made. His nomination proceeded, and he joined Commerce Secretary Ronald Brown and a host of other appointed male officials who admitted to not paying the proper taxes on workers within their homes without professional punishment (Republic Wire Services, December 21, 1993).

After such a parade of disasters, Reno proved to be an appropriate choice for the Clinton administration because she was single and childless, yet she had the reputation in Florida for being a champion of children and made it well known that they were her top priority (Green). The absence of a family, although opening her up to questions concerning her sexuality, may have aided Reno in attaining her position.

Elmes-Crahall, while studying Geraldine Ferraro’s campaign discourse, interviewed a number of female political officials. The results of her study suggest that men are held less accountable for the actions of their family members. Citing former
Vermont governor, Madeleine Kunin, she notes that Ferraro’s campaign demonstrates that a woman is more responsible for the actions of her spouse than a man would be (23).

Despite her commitment to children, the Waco tragedy made Reno responsible for the deaths of almost twenty children. Reno’s discourse, if it was to be successful, had to demonstrate her grief over the death of the children in order to satisfy the associations citizens make between women and motherhood and children. King (1990) points out, however, that women in politics are not allowed to be too emotional or they are criticized (34). Thus, Reno could not appear too “soft” or show too much emotion if she was to be seen as being “tough enough” to handle the job of Attorney General. She had to be sensitive, however, to the death of the children or she would risk being labeled as unfeminine or unfeeling and would likely receive a hostile response from the public (Jamieson, 1995). These expectations directly related to her sex and cultural assumptions regarding women.

Reno was further constrained by the fact that she had been in office less than two months before the April 19 fire. She had little evidence of her competence in this position because she had not taken any other significant public actions during her brief period of being in office. Additionally, research suggests that men do not have to provide as much evidence of their competence as women do in order to be judged as competent. Jamieson points out that, “stories . . . as well as statistics confirm that a man’s competence is more likely to be presupposed, a woman’s questioned” (121). Consequently, Reno not only had to defend her ability to handle the position of Attorney
General with few official actions to support her claim, she also had to face common stereotypes regarding the competence of women.

Our refusal to draft women as we do men in this country and our lack of support for females who choose military careers, as evidenced by the claims of many military women that they were falsely and consistently accused of being lesbians as a means by which to have them sent out of the military (e. g. Jamieson 3-21), indicate a general discomfort with the idea of women in military or law enforcement positions. This issue becomes particularly relevant to Reno because, as Attorney General, she is the highest law enforcement officer in the country. The issue becomes even more salient when the war-like images of the unsuccessful ATF raid or the burning commune are considered.

Every television station in the country played at least one clip of the burning inferno on April 19 and newspapers worldwide ran front-page pictures of the incident on April 20. Any discourse related to the Waco tragedy would be accompanied by poignant and vivid visual images of the fire in the minds of both the listeners and the rhetors. Reavis writes:

On April 19, 1993 . . . Mt. Carmel rapidly burned to the ground, folding the lives of 76 men, women, and children into its flames. A comparable tragedy had never been played out, live and in living color, over global TV. So electrifying was the footage that viewers go the feeling that If You Can See It, You Are There. The event was a national sensation . . .

(13)
How would the public respond to having a woman as a “general” in a war with such a violent conclusion? More importantly, how would they respond to her admission that she failed to win the war?

One last constraint deserving notice is the unpopularity and suspicion surrounding some of the men Reno was defending. Although President Clinton had won the election by a significant margin, the public and the press were disenchanted with his inability to fill the important position of attorney general. The press labeled his troubles with Baird and Wood as “a major embarrassment” (Green). One reporter claimed a week before the February 28 raid, “The reporting out of Washington seems to suggest that Clinton’s days are numbered although he is only a quarter of the way into the first 100 days that are supposed to define a new presidency” (Brazaitis 3C).

Additionally, the current FBI director, William Sessions, was under fire for the misuse of FBI funds. Sessions was allegedly asked by former Attorney General Barr “to pay taxes in connection with his use of FBI limousines for travel between his office and home and to reimburse the government for other personal expenditures . . . Sources also said Sessions was criticized for violating regulations of the use of FBI airplanes” (Green). Sessions denied the charges at the time.

The reputation of the ATF had begun declining before allegations of misconduct during the Waco incident erupted. Agents had already been criticized for their handling of a 1992 incident involving white separatist Randy Weaver. The ATF attempted to arrest Weaver after he did not appear in court on firearms trafficking charges. Their actions resulted in a shoot out at his home in Ruby Ridge, Idaho. During the gunfire,
Weaver’s son and wife were killed (Levin 47). Reavis claims that the ATF reputation at the time of Waco was that of “a gang of trigger-happy Rambos” (258). In addition, 60 Minutes had aired allegations of sexual harassment by female agents against the ATF in January.

Reno’s character was highly praised during her confirmation. She received unanimous support for her nomination from Congress. Republicans and Democrats noted her as “a lady of character” and someone who’s “integrity is beyond question” (Green). However, she was constrained by the questionable character of the agencies she was defending.

The Exigencies

The primary exigence for Reno’s discourse emerged from the April 19 fire and the need to explain to the public how the deaths of the eighty people within the commune occurred. Before discussing the exigency itself, it is important to note that she created that exigency and the need for a personal apologia. Until April 19, Reno’s name had seldom been mentioned in relation to the Waco events. Most of the stories in the press focused on the sect members or the ATF and FBI spokespeople. In fact, had Reno chosen to issue only a few statements supporting the agency under her control, as Bentsen did, the general public, being fairly unfamiliar with the complicated divisions of the national government, may have aimed their attacks elsewhere. Reno chose, however, to assume immediate and personal responsibility for the actions of the government agencies. Through her televised appearances in particular, she offered her name and face as the sole source of responsibility.
Significantly, Reno chose to defend herself primarily through one-on-one interviews with members of the press. This method of defense served to personalize her discourse in ways that were not attempted by former president Richard Nixon or Senator Edward Kennedy in their well-publicized and often studied apologias. They chose, instead, to employ more formal means by which to issue their discourse. Nixon preferred televised apologia in which he spoke the public directly from behind a desk or a podium. Kennedy also chose to deliver his apologia to the press in a press conference format without speaking with individually. Although she did hold a formal press conference, the bulk of Reno’s discourse came from the interviews in which she participated. Reno, accordingly, created the need for her own apologia by placing the responsibility for the incident upon herself rather than waiting to responding to attacks from others. She also increased the personal nature of her discourse by choosing to defend herself on a host of news shows with personal interviews. The issue of her choice of medium for her apologia and its significance will be elaborated on in Chapter Five.

Reno’s primary goal during her defensive discourse was satisfying the American public’s demands to understand how the deaths of the eighty sect members occurred. When a loss of life of such magnitude and by such violent means occurs, the public requires that someone take responsibility. The situation is somewhat easier to disarm when the deaths of citizens occur at the hands of a “deranged” individual. In a case such as this one, however, when the government is involved, the public expects a response from government officials. As the Nixon administration’s handling of the Watergate break-in demonstrates, the frustration of the public and the press increases when the
government is perceived as covering up crucial facts. The lack of an appropriate response from the government can easily result in public disillusionment with their officials. Due to the fact that the government is expected to protect and defend its citizens, the failure and/or inability of the government agencies to resolve the Waco situation peacefully demands an explanation. The need for an explanation in this situation was amplified by the death of almost twenty children who were unable to remove themselves from the area by their age.

Reno repeatedly states that her goal is to provide as much information as possible to the public and to “be accountable to the people” (ABC’s Nightline). When Tom Brokaw asks Reno why she has not spoken to the president about the incident, she responds, “I have been trying to respond to the people, trying to be accountable to the people, trying to take your request and the request of others for information as to what happened” (NBC News Special: The Siege Ends). She maintained during her interview on Larry King Live that she wanted the public to know that the government was not trying to cover up what had happened and that she wanted to be forthcoming about the events that led to the destruction of the building and the loss of lives (Kilday and Lewis 12A).

Reno defends her decision although she admits that the decision was a mistake, thus assuring the public that the government agencies acted in hopes of protecting the Branch Davidians. She explains:

As I’ve indicated, the buck stops with me. I make the best judgement I can. And one of the hardest decisions that anybody can make, based on all
the information I can possibly bring together, willing to consider every eventuality. Then it’s my responsibility to be accountable, to ask questions and to answer questions and to review and to see if there is anything that could have been done differently to prevent such as loss of human life. We constantly have to look at what we have done to see if we can do it better. But, at this point, based on everything I know, based on the most careful study possible and a very deliberate manner, this was the best judgement that could have been made under the circumstances. There is no right answer to something like this, there is no perfect time. You just have to do the best you can with the information that is available, considering the interests of the children and the agents.

She also admits during her press conference, “obviously if I thought the chances were great of a mass suicide, I would never have approved the plan” (CBS Evening News).

Through her efforts, Reno attempts to provide the public with information that will enable them to understand what occurred at Mt. Carmel and who was responsible for it. She assures the public that the government attempted to protect the people inside the commune even though their efforts failed. She insists throughout April 19 that she and the federal agents took all possible action to prevent a violent ending to the standoff. She repeatedly defends her decision by insisting that she conducted extensive research and inquiry before choosing to tear gas the commune. Reno claimed, “I investigated it completely . . . I asked the questions . . .” (ABC’s Nightline). She also defends the FBI by telling Jim Lehrer, “I think the FBI exercised remarkable restraint and handled this in
a very professional and very able manner" (MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour). Thus, she ensured the public that the incident was not due to the government's negligence.

Another exigency involves the Second Amendment of the U. S. Constitution that grants citizens the right to own guns. The Branch Davidians were originally investigated for their alleged altering of semi-automatic weapons. The ATF claims that the sect members bought semi-automatic weapons and several other legal gun parts and altered the firing ability of the weapons so that they became automatic weapons. The U. S. requires all automatic weapon owners to register their guns and pay a fee although it does not outlaw the ownership of automatic guns. Many citizens believe that the government does not have the right to infringe upon their ownership of guns and that any regulation whatsoever is a violation of their Second Amendment rights. Although there are any number of groups across the country who hold this belief and any number of names under which they organize, I will refer to them as militia groups or the militia movement for clarity.

The standoff at Waco attracted a number of people who supported the Branch Davidians and believed the government's actions before and on April 19 were unconstitutional. In fact, at the trial of Timothy McVeigh, the convicted bomber of the federal building in Oklahoma City, a student journalist would testify that she had interviewed McVeigh in Waco. She told the jury that McVeigh was selling bumper stickers near the Mt. Carmel commune that read, "Fear the Government That Fears Your Gun" and "Ban Guns: Make the Streets Safe for a Government Takeover." The defense team for McVeigh, arguing that he should not be given the death penalty, told jurors at
his sentencing that his actions were a response to the death of the Branch Davidians and the government cover-up he suspected (Clay and Parker). The bomb in Oklahoma City killed 168 people and occurred on the second anniversary of the fire at Mt. Carmel.

Although McVeigh’s example is extreme, there are a number of people who agree that the government, in particular the ATF, violated the Second Amendment rights of the sect members. The tension between the federal government and the militia movement stems from conflicting interpretations of the Constitution. The Second Amendment reads, “A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.” Government officials and advocates of gun control argue that the right to bear arms is granted only to the government by this Amendment. They contend that the right to own guns is a privilege granted to the citizens and must be regulated by the government (e.g. Limits of Dissent). Levin describes the belief that this Amendment extends the right to own guns to private citizens is “misguided” at best (89).

Members of the militia movement argue that the creators of the Constitution, having suffered abuse at the hands of the British standing armies, established this Amendment to ensure that the citizens of the U.S. citizens could protect themselves against a tyrannical government or its army (Reavis 121). James Pate, a writer for Soldier of Fortune magazine, was also called to testify at McVeigh’s sentencing. He claimed, “In their [the militia members] viewpoint, the Davidians were attacked by the ATF. The common belief is that the ATF went up there on a raid to arrest one man on a failure to pay a firearms transfer tax and recklessly endangered the lives of women and
children (Clay and Parker 1). Koresh, in fact, said in a telephone interview during the standoff, “Do we not have the right to bear arms?” (Sun-Sentinel 1).

The importance of the militia viewpoint to this incident revolves around their belief that the writers of the Constitution granted the right to bear arms specifically because they wanted the public to be able to protect itself against the government. Reavis notes that the framers of the Bill of Rights rejected the use of the words “for the common defense” after “to keep and bear Arms” because they did not want to limit the ownership of weapons to military forces of the government. He also points out that “the people” is assumed in other Amendments, such as the First Amendment that guarantees the freedom of speech and religion, to mean the general public (121). Militia members often refer to quotations from the founders of the U. S. government to support their claim. Thomas Jefferson claimed, “Experience hath shewn, that even under the best forms [of government] those entrusted with power have, in time, and by slow operations, perverted into tyranny.” In addition, Samuel Adams stated, “The Constitution shall never be construed to authorize Congress to prevent the people of the United States, who are peaceable citizens, from keeping their own arms” (“Right to Keep and Bear Arms”).

According to this view of the Second Amendment, Koresh and the Branch Davidians had the right to fire on the ATF and the FBI because they believed their rights were being violated when the ATF “stormed” their home. By supporting the federal agencies, Attorney General Reno was defending the right of the government to enforce gun control. Furthermore, she was defending the interpretation of the Constitution that does not extend the right to engage in hostile action against a government or government
agency that is viewed as tyrannical to private citizens. Reno defended repeatedly the actions of the federal agencies and placed the blame for the fire on the sect members who she believes started it (e.g. MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour). In response to DeGuerin’s claim that the federal agents responded improperly, she asserts that the agents took “appropriate measures.” She adds that, “A horrible, stark, ghastly tragedy has happened, and it is very painful to deal with, but we have got to remember who these people were, how much violence they had committed, and understand it in that context.” She also refers to the Branch Davidians as “dangerous offenders” (ABC’s Nightline).

Through her discourse, Reno designates the violent actions of the government in response to the violence and perceived unlawful behavior of the sect members as appropriate. At the same time, she deems the violent actions of the Branch Davidians in response to the violence and perceived unlawful behavior of the government as dangerous and deserving of punishment. The significance of her stance on this subject may not be noted in mainstream society. Nonetheless, the militia movement has adopted a rallying cry of “Remember Waco” to demonstrate their perception of the significance of Reno’s stance.

Another exigence that Reno addresses indirectly is related to her position as the first female to serve as attorney general. As the first female to head law enforcement in the U. S., Reno carries the weight of proving that a female can handle the pressures of the office. Recognizing this pressure, Reno claimed upon her confirmation, “I hope I do the women of America proud” (Green). Elmes-Crahall contends that the biological sex of a person can serve as an exigence in and of itself when the person enters a domain that has
been dominated by the opposite sex. She claims that the campaign discourse of Ferraro as the first female to run for vice-president on a major party ticket created a unique rhetorical situation that existed in combination with the other situations that were operating (1). In short, Ferraro’s discourse sought to diminish sexism in society and the sexist tradition in the political process while addressing the other issues that arose during the campaign (i.e. winning the 1984 election). The author claims that, “as a separate rhetorical situation that is still being addressed, the sexism situation has its own controlling exigence [sic] — securing political power for women as a means of addressing various issues of concern to women” (197). She asserts:

Ferraro used her discourse to bring a female voice to presidential campaigning, thus challenging the sexist tradition of presidential campaigning . . . Ferraro established the value of her experiences as a woman in preparing for her political office . . . [and] addressed the sexism situation by calling attention to the patriarchal nature of political campaigning and by presenting the experiences of women as political assets. (198)

As the first female attorney general, Reno’s discourse presents the opportunity to uncover patriarchal assumptions concerning women and their perceived incompatibility with powerful positions and public roles. Reno’s position and her apologia demonstrate a particularly unique situation because she is in a public political role and a law enforcement role. Both are roles that have been dominated by men. Accordingly, her discourse presents an opportunity to expose assumptions regarding women and power.
Furthermore, her defensive discourse allows for the investigation of the ways in which women are treated and respond differently than men in issuing public apologies. For example, the nomination of Baird and her subsequent withdrawal brought the double standard regarding the personal lives of male and female political officials into public debate when she lost her position and several men who were guilty of the same acts still received confirmation.

Reno’s response to the Waco crisis provides the opportunity to examine the assumptions that women are less competent than men and that men are inherently “tougher” than women and thereby more qualified to serve in political office. Additionally, this situation allows society to explore the issues related to women in charge of large and influential organizations.

The following chapter provides an analysis of the discourse described in this chapter. Chapter Four will also analyze relevant nonverbal elements of Reno’s public appearances on April 19.
WORKS CITED


Lippman, Thomas. "Unpopular Canadian Leader Gives Clinton Advice on Being Popular; Mulroney Says He Would Welcome a 37% Approval Rating."


*News Transcripts, Inc*. "Excerpts from News Session with Attorney General Reno."


Sun-Sentinel Wire Services. "4 Agents Killed in Shoot-Out, Agency’s Raid on Cult Goes Awry in Texas." *Sun-Sentinel* [Fort Lauderdale], sports final ed.: 1A.


CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This first section of this chapter provides the results of a genre analysis of Attorney General Janet Reno's apologia. The second section outlines the results of the nonverbal analysis of Reno's public appearances. These results are discussed in-depth in Chapter Five, and conclusions concerning the findings of this study presented.

Genre Criticism Results

The artifacts used for the genre analysis include Reno's April 19 interviews on ABC's *Nightline*, the CBS *Evening News*, the *MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour*, the NBC News *Special: The Siege Ends*, and televised segments of her press conference. All of her discourse during these interviews was considered for the analysis. Several segments of discourse were excluded because they pertained to the culpability of President Clinton, the reliability of the child abuse reports, the fate of the Branch Davidians who survived the fire, the exact number of people who died in the fire or were in the commune, or the possible existence of escape tunnels or routes leading out of the commune. These instances of discourse were judged to be irrelevant to Reno's defense. Many of the excluded items were responses to basic fact-finding questions issued by the press. An example of this type of question is, How many people have been confirmed as dying in the fire? In these instances, most of Reno's responses were acknowledgments that final confirmation on those facts had not yet been made.
Factors

An analysis of Reno’s defensive discourse reveals that she adhered to the factors outlined by Ware and Linkugel (1973). Ware and Linkugel explain, “factors are hypothetical variables which in various combinations account for or explain the variations in a particular kind of human behavior. They are not found within the speech; they are merely classificatory instruments that the critic brings to the speech as a means of grouping like rhetorical strategies for ease in study” (274).

The educational strategy uncovered during King’s (1990) study of Wilma Mankiller’s defensive rhetoric proved not to be useful for this study. King claims that Mankiller employed a strategy that allowed her to defend herself by educating her audience about the Cherokee heritage and its history of honoring women in powerful positions (27). Reno’s discourse is not consistent with the strategy King describes. She chooses, instead, strategies that are consistent with those discussed in the Ware and Linkugel study. The following sections will illuminate Reno’s use of each of the factors provided by the Ware and Linkugel study. The factors to be discussed are denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence. The results of Reno’s discourse in relation to the subgenres or postures provided by Ware and Linkugel will follow.

Denial

The strategy most heavily relied upon by Reno is that of denial. According to Ware and Linkugel, “denial consists of the simple disavowal by the speaker of any participation in, relationship to, or positive sentiment toward whatever it is that repels the audience” (276). Reno chooses not to deny her participation in the event that caused the
death of the eighty Branch Davidians. She, in fact, claims repeatedly sole responsibility for the actions of the federal agencies on April 19, 1993. She tells reporters during her press conference on April 19, “I made the decision. I’m accountable. The buck stops with me” (ABC’s Nightline).

Although Reno defends the actions of the agents during the standoff with the religious sect (e. g. MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour), she denies any positive sentiment toward the outcome of the events. She admits that the fire and subsequent death of the sect members was “one of the great tragedies of this time” (ABC’s Nightline) and “a senseless, horrible, tragic loss of human life” (NBC News Special: The Siege Ends). Reno’s reliance upon the strategy of denial, however, rests mainly on her denial of intent as she claims that her decision to approve the tear gas plan was made in an effort to prevent such a tragic outcome.

Ware and Linkugel point out that:

many apologia rely upon the denial of intent to achieve persuasiveness. Naïve psychology dictates that people respond differently to the actions of others when they perceive them to be merely ‘a part of the sequences of events’ [Hieder 100]. The person who is charged with some despicable action often finds a disclaimer of intent as an attractive means of escaping stigma if the denial of the existence of the action itself is too great a reformation of reality to gain acceptance. (276)

This description is consistent with Reno’s attempts to deny having any intent to harm the Branch Davidians or to bring about a violent end to their standoff with federal
officials. In fact, Reno states during her Nightline interview that she believes the public will understand her decision when they take her motives into account. She responds to Ted Koppel’s suggestion that she might be asked to resign by saying, “...I think, in these situations, what’s done is if somebody makes the best judgement they can, if they review everything carefully, if they are accountable to the people, if they proceed in an open and accountable way, people will know what they have tried to...do—the reason they have tried to do it.” Additionally, Reno relies on four main arguments to develop her strategy of denying intent.

The first argument revolves around her insistence that she chose the best possible option based on the intelligence that she had from the federal agencies and the negotiating experts. During her press conference, she warns, “nobody ever accuse me of running from a decision that I made based on the best information that I had” (ABC’s Nightline). She points out that, “these are the hardest decisions that anybody can make, and we [the federal agencies] made the best decision we could based on all the information available” (CBS Evening News). Reno claims, “we [the federal agencies] made the best judgement we could based on what we thought was non-lethal force [tear gas]” and, “I made the best judgement I could based on all the information we had after inquiry, after talking with experts, after trying to weigh all the terrible possibilities that might occur now or later. I’ve made the judgement. It’s my judgement, I stand by it” (ABC’s Nightline).

Reno also discusses her belief that she attempted to make the best possible decision in the interests of the children inside the commune and the federal officials
surrounding the Mount Carmel residence. She reveals during her MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour interview:

we want to make sure that as fair and as objective a review is done of this matter as possible. As I've indicated, the buck stops with me. I make the best judgement I can. And one of the hardest decisions that anybody can make, based on all the information I can possibly bring together, willing to consider every eventuality. Then it's my responsibility to be accountable, to ask questions and to answer questions and to review and to see if there is anything that could have been done differently to prevent such as loss of human life. We constantly have to look at what we have done to see if we can do it better. But, at this point, based on everything I know, based on the most careful study possible and a very deliberate manner, this was the best judgement that could have been made under the circumstances. There is no right answer to something like this, there is no perfect time. You just have to do the best you can with the information that is available, considering the interests of the children and the agents.

Reno adds:

the Hostage Rescue Team surrounded the premises of the compound. One of the points that must be remembered is that the people in the compound had ammunition that could hit an object 3,000 yards from the compound, so you in effect had at least two or a significant square-mile area of property that had to be secured as a perimeter. The Hostage Rescue Team
was in place, able to control that perimeter to the point that it could really be absolutely controlled. We felt, based on our discussion with the experts, that the Hostage Rescue Team would have to be pulled back for retraining, and that this would be the best time when the Bureau had the best opportunity to control the situation for the event to happen.

The second argument Reno uses to strengthen her denial of intent is that the federal agencies tried to negotiate peacefully and were forced to act only after their negotiations were rebuffed. During her press conference, she claims, “it was our earnest hope that we could try to negotiate without any, without endangering human life . . .” (ABC’s Nightline). Reno maintains that, “we [the federal agencies] tried from the beginning to make sure that we did everything possible to negotiate this” (NBC News Special: The Siege Ends). She adds, “what we did when the FBI went in was try our best to negotiate a peaceful resolution to this matter. The FBI tried not to use force initially, it tried to negotiate” (ABC’s Nightline).

A crucial element of this argument consists of Reno’s assertion that the Branch Davidians and, in particular, David Koresh, forced the federal agencies to act by refusing to negotiate. She explains, “our experts, and we talked to the experts in the field, said that they were totally frustrated, that they had not been able to negotiate with Koresh, that they did not think that he would ever come out” (ABC’s Nightline). Additionally, she tells Dan Rather, “we were told by the hostage—by the negotiators that there was no further basis for negotiation. He simply wasn’t going to negotiate, they did not think that he was going to come out” (CBS Evening News). She asserts, “we looked at it, and we
tried our level best to get them out without having to resort to any intrusion into the compound, through tear gas or something else. That having failed, our negotiators—our professional negotiators having told us that it wasn’t going anywhere, we felt we had to begin to take the next step to exert pressure” (ABC’s Nightline).

The third argument Reno employs revolves specifically around the motivation behind this “next step,” the tear gassing of the Mt. Carmel commune. She maintains that the federal agencies’ actions on the morning of April 19 were intended only to increase the discomfort of the residents in order to draw them out of the building. The plan, according to the attorney general, was not intended to lead to escalated violence or the unnecessary loss of life that eventually occurred. Reno claims, “we tried to, to bring the pressure up without using deadly force, making sure that the gas inserted into the compound was absolutely non-lethal, that it would not be permanently injurious to any of the residents there, trying our very best to force them out without getting anybody hurt” (NBC News Special: The Siege Ends). She deems the tear gas plan, “part of a pragmatic attempt to increase pressure without firing or using violent action against members of the cult in the compound” (MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour).

Reno insists that the plan was solely an attempt to bring about the evacuation of the commune. She explains, “...what we were trying to do was to give everybody the opportunity to come out in the most unobtrusive way possible...” (ABC’s Nightline).

Her assertion is that, “there was no perfect day to make such a call, there was no right day. But, this day was a day to increase the pressure as we had tried to do from the beginning, to avoid violence if at all possible and to increase pressure on the people who
were in the compound to come out” (CBS Evening News). Additionally, she relates, “the general expectation is that it might take some time, that there might be some residents who would be better able to withstand the gas than others, but that, ultimately, if we waited, if we were patient, that they would ultimately come out because the gas would be so discomfiting” (MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour). Consequently, the attorney general argues that the exertion of more pressure was intended to bring the sect members out of the building and not to injure them.

The last argument Reno uses to support her denial strategy focuses on the likelihood of a mass suicide by the Branch Davidians, which the government insists was the reason for the fire. According to Reno, the experts with whom she consulted told her that the sect members were unlikely to commit mass suicide. During her press conference, she admits, “obviously, if I thought the chances were great of a mass suicide, I would never have approved the plan. Everything that we were told, every indication, the reactions to the pressure up to that point, was that—there—that would not occur” (CBS Evening News). Later, she tells Jim Lehrer that, “the FBI advised us that they had talked with as many sources as possible to determine what the eventuality might be, and concluded that it [the chance of a mass suicide] was not great” (MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour).

Reno notes that, “we talked to sources who were familiar with some of his [Koresh’s] patterns. Many people said it [a mass suicide] was a possibility, but not a real possibility” (NBC News Special: The Siege Ends). She claims, “sources said, yes, he had mentioned it [mass suicide], but they did not think he would do it . . . we tried different
things to see what his response would be and, at that point, he did not respond with any such threats” (ABC’s Nightline).

She develops this argument most clearly during her interview on the MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour. Reno explains:

I looked at it in terms of whether the followers would follow him and whether he would lead them to something like this. It was a possibility. Again the possibility of it happening in the future is something that I could not control, but it was a possibility, but considering all the sources that the FBI consulted, considering their responses to the increasing pressure brought by the FBI over the last several days, it did not seem to be a great probability at all.

She adds, “we looked to see what had been done when the FBI came in to clear away the cars from around the compound. There had been no threat of anything such as this. As it led up to today, there had been no threat as the FBI took steps to retaliate by something such as this.” When asked to explain what she meant by her references to “increasing pressure,” she elaborates by saying, “the increasing pressure by coming up to the compound, clearing the area away from the compound, coming ... at one point they even bumped the compound, coming up this morning at the time the first gas was put in—they fired in response but there was no threat of anything such as this.” Consequently, Reno maintains that the federal agencies had little reason to assume that the Branch Davidians would actually carry out a mass suicide attempt.
Bolstering

The second factor Reno employs is that of bolstering. Ware and Linkugel state, "bolstering refers to any rhetorical strategy which reinforces the existence of a fact, sentiment, or relationship. When he [sic] bolsters, a speaker attempts to identify himself [sic] with something viewed favorably by the audience" (277). During her apologia, Reno bolsters her image by aligning herself with the children who resided within the commune. She presents the actions of the government as attempts to protect the children from harm or abuse.

She tells Dan Rather, "we had been concerned about the safety of the children from the beginning" (CBS Evening News). Reno explains:

when I first took office, we had discussions with the Bureau [FBI], and we concurred that we should try to negotiate, try to wait it out, try to do everything possible despite the fact that we had information that the children had been abused, were continuing to be abused in terms of babies being slapped and beaten. So we tried our best in terms of negotiation to get them out. We then became increasingly concerned with the safety of the children . . . (MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour)

She asserts that, "we had received reports previously that they [the children] had been sexually abused, we continued to receive reports that some of the infants were beaten (NBC News Special: The Siege Ends). Reno claims:

I was so startled by that that I specifically asked and followed up to make sure that the reports were confirmed to the extent that we could without
being in the compound ourselves. What impressed me is that the Bureau, time after time, asked Koresh for some evidence that the children were O.K. They, the Bureau, sent in videotapes asking Koresh to do something to prove that the children were O.K. Negotiators consistently asked that the children sent out. We did not receive verification that the children were O.K. (ABC’s *Nightline*)

The alleged sexual and physical abuse of the children within the commune proved to be one of the most important issues of Reno’s April 19 discourse. Although Reavis notes that federal agencies would later admit that they had no evidence of such abuse (229), Reno consistently introduces the issue into discussions regarding the Branch Davidians. When, during her *Nightline* interview, Koresh’s attorney, Dick DeGuerin, denies the charges, Reno responds, “we can’t prove it in terms of a criminal case, but in terms of real concern about the children and what we’ve heard, I think it’s something that had to be considered.” Due to the prevalence of news stories concerning the allegations of abuse within the commune prior to the fire, Reno’s allegations were credible even though she did not present evidence because they were consistent with what the media had already presented (e.g. England and McCormick, 1993). She also cites the children as the main factor in the decision to move ahead with the tear gas plan instead of waiting.

Reno asserts, “the possibility was there that had we gone in in two months, we would have not found the children. We would have found them dead or in terrible condition” (ABC’s *Nightline*). During her interview on the *MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour*, she adds:
they [FBI negotiators] have not been successful in negotiating anything in terms of the release of the children. We're continuing to be concerned about the children, we have from the outset... We had a situation where we were continuing to be increasingly concerned about the safety of the children... and we made a judgement that this would be the best time to escalate the pressure.

She claims, “I think what prompted me most was the consideration for the children. We were told that sanitation facilities were deteriorating, that the children had been abused over time. We had tried to negotiate peacefully to avoid any, any harm to the children because that continued to be paramount in my mind” (CBS Evening News).

Consequently, although the actions of the federal government led, indirectly or directly, to the deaths of the children, Reno aligns herself with the role of child-protector which is consistent with cultural assumptions linking women and motherhood (e.g. Jamieson 53-76).

**Differentiation**

The third factor employed by Reno is differentiation. According to Ware and Linkugel, this category:

subsumes those strategies which serve the purpose of separating some fact, sentiment, object, or relationship from some larger context within which the audience presently views that attribute. The division of the old context into two or more new constructions of reality is accompanied by a change in the audience’s meaning... toward the less abstract. (278)
This strategy becomes important because it allows Reno to create a particular image for Branch Davidian leader, Koresh. The attorney general attempts to draw the audience away from the cause-effect perspective that presumes the government actions on the morning of April 19 led to the fire and deaths of some eighty people. Reno chooses to emphasize the alleged violent nature of Koresh and his followers. This strategy may be particularly effective because the government agencies had cut off all outside communication between Mt. Carmel and the press and public (Reavis 222). The public had only the perception of Koresh that the press provided for them that had been, to some extent, censored by the government agencies. The image the press provided was in line with the devious character Reno portrays in her discourse (e.g. England and McCormick). Accordingly, Reno is able to focus attention on the irrational and uncontrollable Koresh, the unpredictability of his actions, and the inevitability of a violent end due to his alleged madness. Reno creates a concrete villain who violates the principles most Americans believe they uphold, which will enable her to move the audience toward a more abstract level when she employs transcendental strategies.

At the time of the fire, Koresh had already been portrayed as a womanizing, child abusing, sexual miscreant by the press (see Reavis, 1995). Consequently, Reno did not have to expend much effort in her attempts to cast him as a villain. The numerous allegations of the sexual and physical abuse of children that were outlined in the bolstering section damaged Koresh’s reputation with the public and made it difficult for the public to sympathize with the sect members. Reno’s use of differentiation, however,
relies mainly on the unpredictability of Koresh and the inevitability of the sect members' deaths due to his power over them.

Her assertion that the federal agents chose to enact the tear gas plan immediately instead of waiting for more negotiations because they could not control when or if Koresh gave the order for a mass suicide proves significant in creating this differentiation. Reno claims, "what we were concerned about, the fact that it [mass suicide] was a possibility indicated that he could do it at any time, particularly at times when we might not have as much of a control or potential control as we did" (NBC News Special: The Siege Ends). She maintains that the federal agencies "felt that there was going to be no perfect time [to increase the pressure on Mt. Carmel] because, if he were going to do something like this, he could do it in the future" (CBS Evening News). Reno admits, "the possibility of mass suicide was there if we waited two months or three months" (ABC's Nightline).

Reno refers to the unpredictability of Koresh and attempts to portray him as a villain during her interview on the NBC News Special: The Siege Ends. She points out, "nobody could tell what he might do. Anybody that has done what he did, this stark and horrible tragedy, could do anything." Consequently, she blames the deaths of the sect members on Koresh's actions rather than on those of the federal agencies while, at the same time, defending the actions of the government by admitting that she and the agents involved had no way of predicting what Koresh would do.

An important element of her discourse in this area is her assertion that the federal government wanted to end the standoff in a more peaceful way and that they had been forced into taking action by Koresh's unwillingness to negotiate. This argument is also
an integral part of her denial strategy. In these instances, however, the argument aids in defining Koresh’s character in order to alter the audience’s interpretation of the events of April 19 and cast Koresh as an unpredictable villain. She claims, “with the recognition that something as awful as this [mass suicide] could occur in the future, that he had the supplies to stay here indefinitely, that the negotiators had said that he wasn’t coming out, this seemed to be the most appropriate time possible. Although there is no particular time that can ever be the right time in something like this” (CBS Evening News).

Reno furthers this argument with her assertion that the federal agencies were in a position of control in relation to the standoff and that they feared waiting would allow the irrational Koresh more time to prepare for a mass suicide. Consequently, she maintains that the federal agencies were forced to act in order to keep Koresh from creating more havoc. She claims, “. . . what influenced us was the concern that it [mass suicide] could happen at any time in the indefinable future that we could not even begin to control” (MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour). Reno states, “we were in better control at this time than at any other” (CBS Evening News). Additionally, she notes, “we could have waited, but there were no assurances that, in waiting, we could avoid something like this . . . we couldn’t speculate on, on what this man would not do or would do” (NBC News Special: The Siege Ends). During her interview on the MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour, Reno admits that Koresh was in control of the sect members and could not be stopped by the federal agencies if he chose to order a mass suicide. She says of the event, “Koresh certainly controlled, if he wanted to do something like this—it would have been, so far as we could determine, impossible to prevent if that’s what he wanted to do.”
Reno's use of differentiation serves to separate the allegedly evil nature of Koresh and the inevitability of the mass suicide at his request in order to move the audience away from viewing the fire as an effect of the government's actions. She attempts to create a concrete and clear villain who is responsible for the mass suicide. Her rhetorical movements take the audience from an abstract view of what occurred at Mt. Carmel and lead them to the more concrete and visible image of a culpable person. The villainization of Koresh also enables her to move the audience away from the concrete images of the events of April 19 to a more abstract view when she employs transcendence. Her discourse provides an interesting example of the use of rhetoric to lessen the abstraction of some elements of the events while increasing the abstraction of other elements.

**Transcendence**

The goal of transcendental strategies is the opposite of differentiation strategies as they seek to cognitively unite concepts rather than divide them. Ware and Linkugel state, "this factor takes in any strategy which cognitively joins some fact, sentiment, object, or relationship with some larger context within which the audience does not presently view that attribute . . . Transcendental strategies . . . move the audience away from the particulars of the charge at hand in a direction toward some more abstract, general view" (280).

During her discourse, Reno attempts to move the public away from the concrete images of the federal agents, the tanks used to insert the tear gas into the commune, and the burning building that engulfed the lives of eighty people. These images had been shown on televisions around the world throughout April 19 and gained sympathy for the
sect members from the public. Despite the fact that many people knew little of the events in Waco before the disaster or did not identify with the unusual religious sect, they were horrified by the sight of the blazing fire and the knowledge that eighty people and seventeen children were inside the commune. Ben MacIntyre writes:

> even the newscasters themselves seemed momentarily stunned by the horrific sight as the flames licked around the compound and billowed into the sky. CNN . . . trained its cameras on the building and remained silent as the building and its occupants were engulfed . . . hundreds of journalists and camera teams [who had been] camped out about two miles from the compound . . . simply stood watching the fire. (2)

Reno attempted to diminish any sympathy for the sect members by portraying the standoff as a battle between good (the rational, well-meaning government) and evil (the violent, irrational sect).

Reno insists that federal agents “exercised remarkable restraint and handled this in a very professional and very able manner” (MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour). She contrasts that image with that of Koresh as a deceptive, uncooperative criminal. During their interview, she has this exchange with Jim Lehrer:

**JL:** Also, Mr. Ricks made the point today that basically David Koresh was a liar, that most of what he said to them—and the FBI agents talked to him endlessly in these last 51 days—is false. Does the evidence or the summaries that you received also bear that?

**AG:** Yes, it does.
JL: There was never a real honest communication between the FBI and David Koresh?

AG: Basically, when he said he would do something, he didn't do it.

During her heated interview with Ted Koppel and Koresh's attorney, DeGuerin, she makes the most use of transcendental strategies as she furthers the creation of a good-evil dichotomy. She told the Nightline audience, "I don't think anybody has ever dealt with a David Koresh who would purposely set people afire in that number." Thus, reminding the audience that Koresh, and not the federal government, was at fault for the deaths of the sect members. She also deems Koresh and the sect members "dangerous offenders."

Reno defends that actions of the federal government by reminding the audience of the earlier raid on February 28 during which four ATF agents were killed and sixteen were injured. She asserts:

these people killed four people and wounded fifteen. I don't think that we can sit by and suggest that it is inappropriate to take appropriate measures, escalated steps. A horrible, stark, ghastly tragedy has happened, and it is very painful to deal with, but we have got to remember who these people were, how much violence they had committed, and understand it in that context.

She furthers the heated exchange after DeGuerin attempts to portray the Branch Davidians in a more sympathetic light. She responds:
these ATF agents had raid jackets on that clearly identified themselves. They clearly identified themselves, and they were met with a hail of fire. Four agents lie dead, fifteen are wounded, hand grenades were tossed on them when people clearly knew that they were ATF agents. And, I think, we have got to come back to the point that the FBI didn’t set this fire.

This fire was set by David Koresh.

Thus, Reno provides the audience with a larger context in which to view the events of the day that proves to be more flattering to the federal agencies involved.

**Postures**

Ware and Linkugel identify four rhetorical postures or subgenres that consist of combinations of the aforementioned factors. They maintain that each posture is comprised of one reformative and one transformative factor. Denial and bolstering are considered reformative factors because strategies subsumed under these categories do not attempt to change the meaning the audience attaches to the events or persons in question (274). Differentiation and transcendence serve as transformative factors because they are employed in order to alter the meaning the audience has for particular elements of the events or persons in question (280).

Ware and Linkugel identify the first subgenre as absolution, a combination of denial and differentiation that occurs when the rhetor desires acquittal of the charges against her/him. Vindication, the second posture, consists of transcendence and denial factors and attempts to preserve the rhetor’s reputation. The third subgenre, explanation, seeks the audience’s understanding of the rhetor’s motive and consists of bolstering and
differentiation factors. Lastly, the justification subgenre is comprised of bolstering and transcendence strategies and occurs when the rhetor seeks approval of her/his action (282).

Although Ware and Linkugel insist that the posture of the rhetor emerges from the combination of the two factors most heavily used by the rhetor (282), Reno does not appear to use two factors in disproportion to the other two. Her apologia relies most heavily on denial, however, the other three factors appear to be employed in fairly equal proportion. This finding is consistent with Conley’s claim that the subjects of the Ware and Linkugel study engaged in the four factors equally in many instances. Conley criticizes Ware and Linkugel for using arbitrary means in order to distinguish which factors are employed more than the other factors (63).

This discovery, however, does not eliminate the usefulness of the postures Ware and Linkugel advocate. Reno appears to assume the explanatory posture espoused in their study. She simply employs this posture without relying primarily on the combination of the bolstering and differentiation factors that Ware and Linkugel claim comprise this subgenre. Nonetheless, the goal of this posture as defined by Ware and Linkugel is consistent with the aim of Reno’s discourse.

The explanatory posture seeks understanding from the rhetor’s audience. Significantly, these rhetors want their audience to understand their motives. Ware and Linkugel claim that a speaker assuming this stance assumes that the audience will choose not to condemn her/him if they understand her/his motives (283). This assertion is consistent with Reno’s statements concerning the context in which she was operating.
She implies that people will support her in remaining in her position as Attorney General by saying, “... if somebody makes the best judgement they can, if they review everything carefully, if they're accountable to the people, if they proceed in an open and accountable way, people will know what they tried to do, the reason they have tried to do it” (ABC’s Nightline).

Throughout her discourse, Reno maintains that there is no justification for what happened at the Mt. Carmel compound. She states emphatically, “... nothing, nothing can justify what happened today” (ABC’s Nightline). Her rhetoric focuses on creating an understanding among the press, the public, and the government concerning why she approved the April 19 raid on the Branch Davidians. When Tom Brokaw presses Reno to explain why she had not yet spoken with the president on the issue, she responds, “I have been trying to respond to the people, trying to be accountable to the people, trying to take your request and the request of others for information as to what happened” (NBC News Special: The Siege Ends).

Reno’s goal throughout April 19 remains to explain to the public and the press what happened at the commune and why. Accordingly, she seeks understanding of her motives and feels that people will understand her actions once they know her motives. As the discussion of the apologia factors reveals, a large portion of Reno’s discourse centers around why she and the federal agencies went through with the tear gas plan and what their goals and motives were.

Reno’s references to her concerns for the children and the officials on-site at the commune, as well as her fears that Koresh might order a mass suicide later when the
federal government had less control of the situation demonstrate her desire to illuminate the complicated issues that led to her decision. She maintains, “there is no right answer to something like this, there is no perfect time. You just have to do the best you can with the information that is available, considering the interests of the children and the agents” (MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour).

Notably, Reno admits during her press conference, “obviously, if I thought the chances were great of a mass suicide, I would never have approved the plan. [But]... every indication... was that... that would not occur” (CBS Evening News). The fact that Reno’s actions were taken in an effort to preempt the mass suicide that eventually occurred remains an important part of her defense (see Denial section). She insists that she and the federal agents went ahead with the tear gas plan because they were worried about a mass suicide while at the same time, they did not see it as a likely possibility. She tells the audience of the MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour:

we looked to see what had been done when the FBI came in to clear away the cars from around the compound. There had been no threat of anything such as this. As it led up to today, there had been no threat as the FBI took steps to retaliate by something such as this. We made a judgement because we had heard consideration that mass suicide might be a possibility, that it was a possibility, and that we had to carefully consider it.

She insists, however, that sources said mass suicide was not a “real possibility.” She claims they were conscious of the threat of suicide, but that they did not believe Koresh
would actually give the order for such an action or that the other sect members would carry out such an order (e.g. *MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour*).

The bulk of Reno's discourse is aimed at eliciting an understanding of her motives. Thus, the main posture she assumes is that of the explanatory subgenre.

**Nonverbal Analysis**

**Procedures**

The artifacts for the nonverbal analysis were the same as those used in the genre analysis with the exception of the *MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour*. Due to the unavailability of a videotaped segment of this program, it was excluded from the nonverbal portion of this study. Three coders with graduate research experience were asked to serve as a panel of experts and view the segments of the remaining artifacts that involved Reno's discourse. The coders were then asked to complete the McCroskey Source Credibility 12-Item Semantic Differential Scale (e.g. Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher 338) based on their perception of Reno's overall performance during the three live interviews and her press conference.

The McCroskey scale elicits their responses on twelve items related to source credibility. The items cover concepts relating to two dimensions of source credibility, Authoritativeness and Character. The scale provided for the coders was randomly arranged in order to avoid response set error variance. The Likert scale arranges the items as bipolar adjectives and asks for the coders' responses ranging from one to seven. Scores of one or seven indicate a very strong feeling, while scores of two or six indicate a
strong feeling. Scores of three or five indicate a weak feeling, while a score of four indicates indecision or an inability to understand the adjectives used.

Reliability

Reliability of the McCroskey scale has been high in previous studies. According to James McCroskey (qtd. in Rubin et al. 333-334), the split-half reliabilities range from .93 to .98 for Character and .94 to .98 for Authoritativeness. McCroskey also reports Hoyt internal consistency reliabilities for Authoritativeness as ranging from .94 to .98 and those for Character as ranging from .93 to .97. An alpha of .93 is reported for Authoritativeness while the six-item Character scale has a .92 alpha (333).

Validity

The validity of the McCroskey scale is generally accepted, although questions exist concerning this area. Rebecca Rubin, Philip Palmgreen, and Howard Sypher report, “most researchers have used the semantic differential version of McCroskey’s (1966) credibility scales, either alone or with other scales; in general, the evidence suggests that semantic differential scales have face and criterion-related validity” (334). They admit, however, that “little validity evidence for the Likert-type instrument exists” (333).

Nonverbal Results

The results of the nonverbal analysis conclude that Reno demonstrated high levels of character and authoritativeness through her nonverbal communication. The highest favorable score being 7, Reno’s mean score for Authoritativeness was 6.11. Her mean score for Character was somewhat less, 4.83. Each of the coders rated the speaker higher in authoritativeness than character.
The adjectives demarking the Authoritativeness dimension are reliable-unreliable, informed-uninformed, qualified-unqualified, intelligent-unintelligent, valuable-invaluable, and expert-inexpert. Of these characteristics, Reno was rated highest in reliability and intelligence with a mean of 6.33 for each. She received her lowest score for expertness with a mean of 5.66. None of the coders rated Reno's nonverbal communication below a 5 (indicating a fairly weak feeling toward a positive adjective) for any of the Authoritative characteristics.

The elements of the Character dimension are honest-dishonest, friendly-unfriendly, pleasant-unpleasant, unselfish-selfish, nice-awful, and virtuous-sinful. The characteristics of this dimension for which Reno was rated the highest were honesty and unselfishness. Her means for these elements were 5.67 and 6.33 respectively. Reno was rated lowest for her friendliness and pleasantness. Her average for both of these characteristics was 3.67. Coders' responses to the various elements of Reno's character varied from 2 (indicating a strong feeling toward a negative adjective) to 7, the highest favorable score.

A discussion of the implications of these results as well as those of the genre criticism will follow in Chapter Five. The next chapter also provides a discussion of the usefulness of the genre method for the study of apologia. Conclusions and suggestions for further research will conclude the chapter.
WORKS CITED

ABC’s Nightline. ABC. April 19, 1993.


CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the implications of the results outlined in Chapter Four concerning both the genre and nonverbal analyses. A brief summary of the results precedes each discussion. Additionally, a critique of the genre method as a means by which to study apologia is included. This study’s limitations and suggestions for future research will follow. A discussion summarizing this study’s findings in relation to specific research questions marks the conclusion of this project.

Genre Results Summary

The results of the genre analysis of Attorney General Janet Reno’s discourse both supports the conclusions of Ware and Linkugel (1973) and suggests the need for further research in the area of apologia, in general, and, specifically female-issued apologia. Reno’s discourse adheres strictly to the factors outlined by the Ware and Linkugel study. The educational strategy discussed in King’s (1990) study of Wilma Mankiller’s defensive discourse is not employed by Reno. This strategy relies on a cultural/historical basis for the education of the audience. Although Reno educates the audience as to what happened, she chooses a posture that relies on the situation in order to provide information about the event rather than about a cultural or historical perspective. In addition, Benoit’s work with image restoration strategies did not provide useful insight
for this inquiry (1995). Reno chooses an approach consistent with the factors created from Ware and Linkugel’s study of male discourse.

Reno’s apologia employs a combination of denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence, all of the factors discussed by Ware and Linkugel. Although Reno relies most heavily on denial strategies as she denies having the intent to harm the Branch Davidians, her use of the other three factors appears relatively equal. Interestingly, she assumes the explanatory posture espoused by Ware and Linkugel without demonstrating a reliance upon bolstering and differentiation factors. Ware and Linkugel claim the explanatory posture is comprised of a combination of these two factors, neither of which is the factor Reno employs the most.

Discussion of Genre Results

Reno’s response to the fire and deaths of the Branch Davidians won her acclaim from the press, the public, and other government officials. One author claims she emerged from the incident as a “folk hero, the closest thing the Clinton Cabinet has to a star” (Ostrow A1). Shortly after the Waco affair, Nancy Gibbs would label Reno, “the people’s lawyer, America’s Chief of Police” (20). This success is notable due to the fact that she employs apologia strategies that have been developed and employed primarily by males.

Spitzack and Carter argue that, “women who adopt male (communication) usage are often evaluated as less successful and less likable than men. Even when actual behavior is identical, it is viewed differently depending on the source” (409). The double standard concerning female political figures has been well documented. Scholars have
noted that Geraldine Ferraro was treated differently than previous male vice-presidential candidates when she ran as Walter Mondale’s running mate in the 1984 election (e.g., Elmes-Crahall, 1991). King notes that Mankiller faced a series of constraints in her discourse due to the fact that she was the first female leader of the Cherokee nation. She asserts that the suitability of a female as a leader was repeatedly brought into question, whereas the competence of male leaders had never been questioned simply on the basis of their biological sex (1990). Additionally, she points out that Mankiller had to resort to apologia strategies different than those identified by Ware and Linkugel because those strategies were not useful in Mankiller’s situation.

The treatment of the attorney general candidates who were forced to withdraw from the nomination process because of issues relating to child-care providers in their homes further demonstrates the different standard to which women are held. Both Zoe Baird and Kimba Wood lost the opportunity to become attorney general, despite the fact that several male politicians had committed the same acts to which these women admitted (Republic Wire Services, December 21, 1993). Wood, in particular, lost the support of the Clinton administration because she legally employed undocumented workers in her home. In contrast, Washington past and present demonstrates an unsurprising lack of concern regarding the people who provide child-care for the children of male political officials (Persons).

Jamieson (1998) points out the difficulties First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton continues to face in the public and the media due to her refusal to engage in stereotypically feminine (and female) roles and communication styles. She argues that
First Lady Clinton employs a stereotypically masculine communication style, and that this style is the primary source of the country’s hostility toward her. She mentions the First Lady’s use of an argumentative style based on logical reasoning and concrete forms of evidence rather than stories and self-disclosures, a style learned from her successful career in law, as examples of Clinton’s violation of the audience’s expectations regarding the “proper” form of communication for women. Jamieson cites Henry Louis Gates, Jr. as saying, “Hillary-hating has become one of those national pastimes which unite the elite and the lumpen” (qtd. in Hating Hillary 1).

Despite the existence of such blatant double standards regarding women in the political arena, Reno met with tremendous success by employing strategies and communication styles consistent with male usage. Accordingly, her success suggests the need for further research concerning when women are and are not allowed to employ communication similar to their male counterparts. The question remains, why was her apologia successful despite the fact that feminist literature suggests audiences often delegitimize and even punish a female for employing “male” communication strategies?

This study suggests several possible answers to this question. Of course, no one author could illuminate all of the possibilities underlying Reno’s success. With my discussion, I attempt to provide those possibilities I view as most likely and most notable. In addition, the most reasonable possibility is that some or all of the reasons for Reno’s success that I suggest, as well as some that have eluded me, work together to provide an explanation for her apologia’s reception.
One possibility is that, due to the violent nature of the Mount Carmel incident, the American public was more comfortable with a masculine style of discourse because they would have been more comfortable with a man in the position of the rhetor. Thus, even though the discourse was issued by a female, the audience’s need for the comfort it provided superceded their need for “a man in charge.” Instead, they were pacified by a “woman in charge” who performed in a manner consistent with a male’s performance. In order to provide the most thorough discussion of this issue possible, I will elaborate on it in the following sections once the supporting results of the nonverbal analysis have been reviewed.

Another possibility is that the double bind outlined by Pearson et al. proves to benefit Reno in her defense. According to these scholars, “women seem to suffer from a double bind where voters have lower expectations of their ability and higher expectations of their morality” (203). Due to Reno’s reliance upon strategies that highlighted her denial of intent to harm the Branch Davidians, the double bind regarding her ability and her morality may have served to increase the audience’s willingness to believe her defensive discourse.

Reno’s main argument is that she attempted to prevent a violent end to the standoff, and her attempt failed. Accordingly, if the public held stereotypical beliefs that forced them to question the competence of a female politician, they may have been more willing to accept Reno’s assertion that the deaths of the sect members were an accident, resulting from her well-intentioned plan to bring about the end of the standoff. Pearson et al. also claim that the double bind would cause the audience to grant Reno little leeway in
making a mistake and hold her accountable for her mistake. Although a more audience-centered study would need to be conducted in order to reach a solid conclusion on this inconsistency, the possibility exists that Reno’s own claims of accountability alleviated some of the audience’s need to attribute culpability to her. Regardless, one of the reasons for the success of her apologia may have been the willingness of the audience to accept her explanation that she had made an error but that she had not knowingly launched a deadly attack on the sect members.

Another issue relating to Pearson et al.’s double bind theory is Reno’s morality. This issue is particularly significant in this instance, again due to Reno’s reliance upon the denial of intent. She argues that she intended to do what was best for everyone involved. The believability of her assertions in these areas may have been increased by stereotypes regarding women. First, if audience members were operating under the commonly held assumption that women are more moral than men (see Jamieson Double Bind; Pearson et al., 1995), they may have been more likely to believe Reno’s claims because she is a woman. In other words, the strategy of claiming that she was trying to do the “right thing” but failed is compatible with the cultural assumption that women are likely to do the right thing in most ethical situations.

Reno doubtlessly benefited from her well-known reputation for integrity and honesty. Gibbs cites a Washington insider as saying Reno has, “established a certain air of integrity that is emanating... You cannot diminish the value of having the head of the Justice Department being recognized nationally for strength, integrity, and honesty” (20). Although much of the praise showered on Reno has been a result of her post-Waco
discourse, her reputation for honesty and integrity had already been established by April 19, despite the fact that she had only been in office a month.

Reno’s unanimous confirmation by Congress (98-0) for the attorney general position was well publicized due to the troubles of Baird and Wood. She received public praise from both the Republican and Democratic members of Congress. Robert Green claims, “she was praised by senators from both parties as an outstanding choice to head the Justice Department” (March 12, 1993). He also cites Senate Judiciary Committee Chair, Joseph Biden, as saying that her “integrity is beyond question.” According to Green, “Conservative Jesse Helms . . . backed Reno although he disagreed with many of her views: ‘I think this lady is absolutely honorable. I believe she is a lady of character.’” Consequently, Reno was in a solid position at the time of the Waco crisis to deliver an apologia that rested heavily on the fact that she was being open about the events at Mt. Carmel and her motivations for approving the FBI’s tear gas plan.

During their heated interview on Nightline, Ted Koppel states, “I don’t think anyone, Ms. Reno, questions your motivations.” This statement is particularly noteworthy because, if Koppel is correct in his assumption, Reno was guaranteed to be successful, to some extent, in issuing her apologia because she relied primarily on her denial of malicious intentions in order to defend herself. Additionally, the explanatory posture Reno assumes theoretically begets success when the audience understands the rhetor’s motives. According to Ware and Linkugel, “the speaker assumes that if the audience understands his [sic] motives . . . they will be unable to condemn him [sic]” (283). Consequently, if Reno’s motivations were understood and accepted by the public,
as Koppel suggests, her apologia, based on the goals Reno claims to have had for her discourse, was virtually guaranteed to be successful in achieving understanding among Reno and the public.

The success of Reno’s apologia, and specifically, her denial strategies may have also been increased by the cultural assumption regarding women as care-providers and unselfish, other-oriented beings. During her defense, she cites concern for the sect members, their children, the officers on the scene in Waco, and the people living in the area surrounding Mt. Carmel as reasons for the decisions that she made during the standoff (see Chapter 4). Thus, a staple of her defense is that she was trying to protect others by her actions.

According to Jamieson, an other-orientation is often expected of women specifically in reference to children (*Double Bind* 22-76). As women have been the primary care-givers in our culture, people often expect them to put the needs of others or the concern for those needs above their own. In fact, as society’s lack of encouragement for, and even hostility towards, women who choose to have a career instead of, or in conjunction with, a family demonstrates, our culture often devalues, ostracizes, or punishes women who do not overtly place the needs of others above their own (e. g. Jamieson, *Double Bind,* 22-76).

In her 1998 article, Jamieson points out the radically different responses to Elizabeth Hanford Dole and Hillary Rodham Clinton during the 1996 election. One of the reasons for the public’s positive reaction to Dole and negative reaction to Clinton, claims Jamieson, is the fact that Dole assumed a “stand by your man” position with her
discourse and did not emphasize her own accomplishments or her own identity. Clinton, on the other hand, did not rely on her role as mother or wife in order to construct herself publicly. Jamieson states:

When Elizabeth Hanford Dole spoke to the National Convention . . . Her speech was intensely personal and self-disclosing; it developed through anecdotes about her husband's life; as his wife, not as a former cabinet member or as head of the Red Cross, she praised him, showed her love for him . . . Not only did she speak in the distinctively female role of his wife, but she assumed a persona with a long history for women, unselfishly acting on the behalf of someone else. Her speech received rave reviews from the public and the press. It was a paradigmatic performance of rhetorical femininity" (5).

Consequently, Reno's concern for others and her decision to approve the FBI's plan in order to protect others is not only believable for the audience, but admirable and consistent with their expectations of women. In particular, her efforts to bolster herself by associating her actions with concern for the children, taking on the role of a care-taker and mother, may have benefited from cultural assumptions regarding women and their roles as protectors of children (e. g. Jamieson, 1995 and 1998; Pearson et al., 1995). Accordingly, her biological sex may have been a crucial element to her successful apologia due to her use of denial and bolstering strategies that are consistent with cultural assumptions about women and their roles.
Another possibility for Reno’s success revolves around Jamieson’s (1975) work with antecedent genres (*Antecedent Genre*). Jamieson claims that rhetors in unprecedented rhetorical situations are constrained by both the situation and the antecedent genres. She notes, “antecedent genres are capable of imposing powerful constraints” (414). Although as a mere political apologia, Reno’s situation was in no way unprecedented, it marked the first time in United States history that a female political figure of her high political status issued an apology for a mistake of this magnitude. Accordingly, Reno had few examples of female-issued apologia to aid her in formulating her response to the situation. Perhaps more importantly, the audience had few examples of female-issued apologies to aid them in formulating their expectations of her response.

The issue of the antecedent genre may be significant because it may represent another double bind in which Reno was caught and from which she escaped. If the genre of apologia has been constructed around male discourse, so have the expectations of the audience. Consequently, the American public brought expectations for Reno’s response to the situation that stemmed from the apologetic discourse they had observed from the political arena over the passage of time. Due to the scarcity of female-issued apologies, their expectations were the same expectations they would hold for male candidates. However, as the Clinton and Ferraro experiences have demonstrated, our society in general has not typically responded favorably to females who speak or act like males in the political arena. Thus, a double bind forms in which Reno is expected to respond in a way that meets the audience’s expectations for political apologia, yet she is also required to meet their expectations for a female which contradict some of their expectations for an
apologia based on the male model (e.g., King, 1990). Reno’s ability to escape this double bind may relate to the audience’s desire for a “masculine” persona in the role of attorney general that will be discussed in the nonverbal analysis section.

Nonverbal Analysis Summary

The nonverbal analysis of Reno’s performance reveals that she demonstrates high levels of credibility as a rhetor. All of the coders rated Reno higher in authoritativeness than character, although her average scores for both dimensions were high. She was rated the highest for her reliability, intelligence, and honesty. Reliability and intelligence are components of the Authoritativeness dimension, while honesty is a factor of the Character dimension. She received her lowest scores for her friendliness and pleasantness which are both components of the Character dimension.

Discussion of Nonverbal Results

The results of the nonverbal analysis are significant because they demonstrate that Reno successfully employs a nonverbal style that is consistent with males or masculine communication. Reno’s nonverbal communication matches her verbal communication in that it remains assertive and authoritative. Her success in employing this assertive nonverbal stance contradicts research by Michael Burgoon, James Dillard, and Noel Doran that suggests women often violate sex-role expectations by being assertive. They also note that women are often punished for this violation (292). Research by Pearson et al. supports Burgoon et al.’s findings that women are viewed negatively when they communicate assertively (174). Nonetheless, Reno actively engages in assertive nonverbals and paralanguage.
Reno's ratings are notably lowest in the areas of kindness (the nice-awful dimension), friendliness, and pleasantness. Each of these categories is an area in which women are encouraged to excel during their interactions with others. Pearson et al. point out that "men are viewed as instrumental, task-oriented, aggressive, assertive, ambitious, and achievement-oriented. Women, on the other hand, are viewed as relational, socioemotional, caring, nurturing, affiliative, and expressive" (111). Through her verbal and nonverbal communication, however, Reno demonstrates assertiveness and aggressiveness while demonstrating little evidence of nurturing or caring responses during her interviews. The question remains whether or not Reno was rated lower for her kindness or pleasantness because she demonstrated less of these qualities than she did the others or because her status as a female raised the coders' expectations for these components.

Reno's results, however, demonstrate that she was viewed most positively in relation to adjectives that are most often attributed to males, such as intelligence, reliability, and the appearance of being qualified (e.g. Aries, 1987). She was viewed most negatively in relation to the adjectives usually attributed to females, such as nice and pleasant (Pearson et al. 111). She also took an aggressive stand during her Nightline interview with Koppel and Koresh's attorney, Dick DeGuerin, by enacting a "masculine" style of assertiveness and offensiveness for which women are often evaluated negatively (e.g. King, 1990). She and Koppel grappled for control of the conversation on several occasions, with each attempting to interrupt the other. Research concerning the relationship between biological sex and interruptions is mixed. Some authors claim men
interrupt more than women and women are interrupted more than men (e.g. Baird, 1976; Eakins and Eakins, 1978), while others find no difference in the use of interruptions (Smythe and Schlueter, 1986). Katherine Hawkins claims, however, that audiences expect men to interrupt more than women (1988).

Reno may have been viewed as honest due to her adherence to nonverbal cues that do not relate specifically to biological sex. She displays few hesitations in her speech during her interviews as well as taking only short pauses and demonstrating a low voice pitch and a low dramatic style. Research suggests that all of these cues increase a rhetor's perceived credibility (Burgoon, Birk, Pfau 146-48; Montgomery and Norton 131; O'Hair, Cody, Goss, and Krayer 91). Additionally, Reno's reputation for honesty may have influenced the perception of both the audience members at the time of her discourse and the coders of this study.

Regardless of the reasons behind Reno's perceived credibility, the question concerning why she is not punished for her violation of nonverbal and verbal sex-role expectations remains. The possibility exists that Reno was rewarded for the fact that she assumed a masculine persona and communicated with stereotypically masculine behaviors because the audience was more comfortable with a man in her position. As discussed in earlier chapters, the violence of the Mt. Carmel incident was shocking and public. The visual images of the commune in Waco were reminiscent of a war scene. The presence of tanks, tear gas, large stockpiles of ammunition, and the blazing inferno that resulted in a “massive loss of life,” according to FBI spokesperson Bob Ricks (Aynesworth A1), created war-like images. The government fueled this perception
throughout the standoff by describing the commune as a “compound” and referring to the number and caliber of weapons possessed by the Branch Davidians. Reno, through her use of differentiation and transcendence strategies, reinforced the war image by framing the events as a battle between the rational government and the ‘violent enemies,’ the Branch Davidians (e. g. ABC’s Nightline).

The responses to Reno’s rhetorical response to the Waco crisis further indicate the presence of a war-like context. Dan Rather asserts, “after the smoke cleared, the new U. S. Attorney General stood up, faced the heat, and took responsibility” (CBS Evening News). Gibbs claims, “when she became the first woman to hold the job [of attorney general], Reno didn’t know she was going to war” (20). Government officials are also cited as praising Reno for her actions by using military terms. A veteran FBI agent is quoted as saying, “she stood up and took a bullet for us” (Gibbs 20).

Her alleged efforts to protect President Clinton from blame may have added to the “good soldier” image. She not only shouldered the responsibility for the actions of those under her command, she risked her political life in order to provide Clinton with unwavering protection. Accordingly, the war-like context of the events in Waco may have called for a masculine stance during her apologia.

Ferraro’s vice-presidential campaign serves as an excellent example of the prejudices held by both males and females concerning a woman’s ability to lead a country in war. She was questioned repeatedly about her willingness and ability to “push the button” or declare war if she were to become president due to Mondale’s illness or
death. Both the public and the press insisted explicitly and implicitly that her sex was a factor in her ability to handle the pressures of war (Elmes-Crahall 112).

Through her actions, Reno eliminated any doubt concerning whether or not she was “tough enough” to be attorney general. She may, in fact, have benefited once again from the audience’s presumption that her status as a woman called into question her “toughness.” Her violation of this presumption may have been rewarded because the audience was both surprised and comforted by a “woman in charge” who could “take it like a man.” In addition, the audience’s respect for Reno’s actions could have been increased by Clinton’s unwillingness to do the same. According to Gibbs, the press and the public responded negatively to Clinton’s response to the situation. She claims, “much was made at the time [of the Waco incident] of the contrast between her mea culpa and that of President Clinton, who vanished for hours before surfacing to claim responsibility. That contrast owes as much to Clinton’s instincts as to hers . . .” (20).

The suggestion that the public supports Reno’s masculine communication style because they are more comfortable with someone who embodies masculine attributes in the position of attorney general, particularly in a war-like context, aids in explaining the notable differences in the public opinion of Reno and Hillary Clinton. Although both women engage communication styles that are typically assumed as masculine and, judging merely by physical appearance, Clinton would actually be the less masculine of the two women, Clinton is shunned repeatedly while Reno continues to be among the most popular figures in Washington.

Unabashedly, Reno states during an address to the National Press Club:
I'm not anything different than what you see. I am a 54-year old, awkward old maid who is not a great speaker. I can be impatient. I do have a temper. My mother accused me of mumbling. I am not a good housekeeper. I don’t put much priority on housekeeping . . . My fifth-grade teacher said I was bossy. My family thinks I'm opinionated and sometimes arrogant. And they would be happy to supply you with other warts that I have too. (July 1, 1993)

The audience responds to her discourse with laughter and support. Meanwhile, the same press attacks Clinton consistently for being much the same person.

Clinton was blasted by the press for a comment she made during a 60 Minutes interview concerning her lack of traditionally feminine housekeeping skills. Her discourse from the interview was recreated in sound bites in which she asserted that she chose to follow her career in law although she could have stayed at “home and baked cookies and had teas.” In contrast to Reno’s admission that she does not “put much priority of housekeeping,” Clinton’s admitted preference for career-oriented activities is criticized harshly by the press (Jamieson, Double Bind 24).

Although the sexuality of both women has been called into question repeatedly over the years, the media continues to apply the political-life-threatening label of lesbian to Clinton while casting Reno as a lonely spinster. Even though Reno has never been married and has a physical appearance traditionally labeled as manly which includes her six foot plus height, qualities which would ordinarily assure her of a reputation as a homosexual in the press, the media often repeats her claim that she is “an awkward old
maid with a very great affection for men” (73). A Reno-imposter has become, in fact, a popular *Saturday Night Live* character who makes frequent and not-so-subtle sexual plays for various men on the show. Meanwhile, rumors of Clinton’s homosexuality are highlighted and celebrated by the media. A popular joke during the 1992 election asked, “What do you call a cross between a draft-dodger and a dyke? Chelsea?” (22).

There exist doubtlessly any number of explanations for the differences in the public perception and press treatment of Attorney General Reno and Hillary Clinton. However, one possibility that has particular relevance for this study is that society is comforted by Reno’s “masculinity” due to her position in law enforcement and threatened by Clinton’s “masculinity” due to her position as, among other things, the president’s wife. This concept is supported by the results of this study, and the supportive response to Reno’s “masculine” approach to her defense. Reno once told a group of elementary children, “when I was your age, they said ladies didn’t become lawyers. Ladies certainly didn’t become attorneys general” (209). Reno’s success demonstrates that ladies can become popular lawyers, while Clinton’s incessant image problems demonstrate that lawyers cannot necessarily become popular first ladies.

**A Critique of the Genre Method**

Although the genre method proved to be useful for this study, questions remain as to whether or not it is the best method of investigation for apologia research. As the preceding discussion demonstrates, the question of why Reno was able to employ successfully the strategies of her male predecessors, when so many women in the political arena are punished for communicating in ways similar to men, is far more
worthy of discussion than the mere fact that she employs the factors of denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence. The genre method does not exclude a discussion of sex/gender issues in relation to an analysis of apologetic discourse. This method, however, also does not require such an addition to the analysis. Accordingly, the work of Jamieson and Campbell (1978) advocating a situational approach to genres that takes into account the defining constraints and exigencies of a rhetorical situation is relevant. For example, the discourse issued during Reno’s apologia concerning President Clinton’s culpability was excluded from the genre analysis because it did not pertain directly to her defense of herself. Nonetheless, this discourse may have furthered her chances of success by creating the “good soldier” image that impressed the audience. This particular image was appropriate due to the war-like context of the Waco incident and may not have been an issue for an apology issued in a more peaceful context, such as an apology in response to allegations of the misappropriation of federal funds or sexual misconduct. Although not obscured by the genre method, this insight was not illuminated by the method itself. This insight, instead, was illuminated by a careful study of the political climate leading up to and following the Waco crisis and the responses to Clinton’s rhetoric concerning the incident.

This study also demonstrates that many of the constraints imposed on Reno’s discourse, and some of the possible explanations for her success, relate directly to her biological sex. For example, the success of her bolstering strategies may have been furthered by the cultural associations linking women and children or other-orientations. Additionally, the myth of the higher morality to which women are predisposed may have
increased the believability of her strategies that maintained she did not intend to harm the Branch Davidians and that she was trying to do what was just. Issues such as these are, again, not obscured by the genre method, nor are they illuminated. They stem from research concerning the cultural assumptions regarding women and the double binds they often face in society and political life.

Due to the focus of genre criticism on the results or outcomes of the discourse and the often noted tendency for mere classification (e.g. Fisher, 1980), the genre method may obscure relevant information, particularly in relation to the sex of the rhetor. As evidence suggests that sex is often, if not always, a factor in the evaluation of a female’s communication (Eakins and Eakins, 1978), the genre method’s insensitivity to this factor may limit its usefulness for the study of the apologetic genre when women’s discourse is included.

As the careers of female political figures demonstrate, cultural assumptions regarding women are prevalent and notably influential in a figure’s political life (e.g. Elmes-Crahall). Consequently, any study of a female’s effort to defend herself, particularly in a male-dominated arena such as politics, needs to include a study of the constraints imposed on her due to her sex. For example, a female responding to allegations of the misappropriation of funds may face constraints brought about by the assumption that women are morally superior to men, that they are less ambitious than men, or that they are less likely to be, and more culpable for being, corrupted by their ambitions than men (e.g. Jamieson Double Bind; Pearson et al., 1995). Another example in which sex might be a crucial factor would be a female answering to charges of sexual
misconduct or harassment. Due to the existence of double standards regarding the sexual behavior of males and females, a female might be constrained by cultural assumptions policing the sexual actions of women (e.g. Jamieson Double Bind). These examples demonstrate the need for the inclusion of situational analysis in apologia studies that highlight the historical context surrounding the rhetor’s response, particularly in relation to the operating societal assumptions regarding women.

The need for the investigation of the historical contexts in which apologies are issued is not limited to studies involving women. As the preceding discussion demonstrates, Reno may have benefited from her well-known reputation for honesty and integrity. Consequently, her success may have been due, in part, to historical elements that did not relate directly to her sex. A male apologist, thus, may also benefit or suffer due to the presence of contextual elements that are not illuminated by the genre method.

Perhaps the most significant finding of this study that questions the validity of the genre method is Reno’s use of the explanatory subgenre. Reno violates Ware and Linkugel’s expectations regarding the postures they outline (1973). They claim that an apologist will employ two factors in greater proportion to the remaining two, and that these factors will determine the posture the rhetor assumes. This study reveals that Reno uses all of the factors Ware and Linkugel identify and employs only denial in greater proportion to the others. Although she assumes the explanatory posture espoused by Ware and Linkugel, she does not rely primarily on the bolstering and differentiation factors they claim comprise this subgenre. Thus, the accuracy of Ware and Linkugel’s postures are called into question by this discovery.
The findings of this study suggest that there may be little or no correlation between the factors employed by apologists and the postures they assume. This assertion is supported by Conley’s criticism of Ware and Linkugel’s article (1986). Conley claims that the rhetors studied by Ware and Linkugel employ all of the factors they outline. He adds that the factors identified by Ware and Linkugel as being used the most and comprising the postures are not used in greater proportion to the others by the rhetors. He argues that these scholars arbitrarily assign certain factors greater importance when the discourse does not support their claims (63). This criticism is significant because the findings of this study are similar to those of Conley.

This discovery suggests that the subgenres espoused by Ware and Linkugel may have been created through faulty research. Due to the classificatory nature of genre criticism, the possibility exists that other scholars identify the most prominent factors based on the posture assumed by the rhetor rather than identifying the factors before choosing the subgenre. Although future research needs to be conducted before the relationship between Ware and Linkugel’s postures and factors can be illuminated fully, this study proves that this relationship, at least at times, does not emerge as clearly as Ware and Linkugel claim. Accordingly, the validity of the genre method as it has been identified for apologetic study is in question, particularly in relation to the apologetic subgenres identified by Ware and Linkugel.

A better means of investigation for the apologetic genre may be a combination of the genre method and another method. In the case of female-issued apologetic discourse, a feminist methodology could be employed, alone or in conjunction with the genre
method, in order to illuminate the sex-related issues that were discovered during this study. In addition, this study introduced a nonverbal analysis to assist in the criticism of Reno's discourse. Future scholars could employ similar nonverbal scales or use more qualitative methods in order to eliminate the customary division of rhetorical and nonverbal studies.

Jamieson's 1998 article, "The Discursive Performance of Femininity: Hating Hillary," proved to be a useful reference for this study. This fact is significant due to Jamieson's use of the concept of gender as performance. After further research, the gender as performance and/or rhetoric as performance templates may prove useful for the study of apologetic discourse, particularly female-issued apologia. Jamieson builds on the work of Judith Butler who claims that gender is an "illusion...discursively maintained" through "words, acts, and gestures." Butler adds, "Gender norms operate by requiring the embodiment of certain ideals of femininity and masculinity, ones that are almost always related to the idealization of the heterosexual bond" (qtd. in Jamieson Hating Hillary: 2). Jamieson writes:

Butler's works develop two key ideas. First, that sex, the arrangement of one's genitals, and gender, 'the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes,' are distinguishable; that is, 'a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way.' Simply put, gendered behavior will be culturally coded and will vary from culture to culture and through time, and such codes are not mandated by biological sex. Second, that gender is behavior; it is 'embodied'; the body, itself a cultural construction, is 'a
mere instrument or medium' through which cultural meanings are expressed. Moreover, '[t]he practice by which gendering occurs, the embodying of norms, is a compulsory practice, a forcible production.'

Such behavior is disciplined by cultural approval or censure. Accordingly, . . . gender is not a physical or biological given; it is enacted and performed bodily, and in order for a 'woman' or 'girl' to be an agent, to assume what postmodernists call the 'subject position,' which is a role like that of rhetor, she must 'cite' or 'enact' cultural norms of femininity. (2)

Jamieson claims that Butler's work, "in an important although limited way, illuminates the dynamics surrounding reactions to the gender performance of U. S. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton" (2).

The concept of gender as performance, as well as the more inclusive study of rhetoric as performance, may illuminate issues significant to apologetic study. This course of study may be particularly useful for the study of situations similar to Reno's in which the audience's expectations for a law enforcement officer responding to attacks for a military-like action are in conflict with the traditional expectations for the performance of femininity. This type of method may also illuminate some of the issues involving the roles of the rhetor and their relationship to the evaluation of their discourse in terms of the perceived masculinity and femininity of that discourse. For example, the current reactions to Hillary Clinton by the media and the public suggest that she might not receive a positive response equal to the one given to Reno if she defended herself in the same manner. This template may serve to address some of these issues which will
increase in significance as more women continue to enter the political arena, and their
discourse and the issues that surrounds it become a larger part of the political voice in
general.

This discussion has attempted to introduce some of the shortcomings of the genre
method, particularly in reference to female apologia and the accompanying issues.
Although I do not maintain that genre criticism is no longer useful, I hope to have
illuminated some of the ways in which the study of apologia could be improved by
incorporating other means of study. My assertion is that the genre method may be more
useful for the study of apologia when it is used in conjunction with other means of
investigation that are more sensitive to such issues as historical context, situational
constraints, sex/gender issues, and/or the interplay of an apologist’s verbal and nonverbal
cues.

Suggestions for Future Research

As my discussion of the usefulness of the genre method illustrates, my first
suggestion for future research in the area of apologia is that more studies be conducted
with various methods of inquiry. If the intricacies of female-issued apologia are to be
understood, the apologetic discourse of both males and females needs to be investigated
with attention paid to the implications of cultural assumptions, historical climates, and
sex/gender issues. Additional methodologies may serve to illuminate relevant issues that
are currently obscured or considered to be of little importance.

Further research must also be done involving the apologia of diverse members of
society. As the opportunities for advancement continue to increase in this country, the
government, in theory, will become more inclusive. As President Clinton’s appointment of a variety of cabinet officials of different sexes and racial and ethnic backgrounds demonstrates, the study of political discourse must accommodate the changing face of the political arena and include the study of discourse issued by those who are not the white male norm. Current political apologia research has not only excluded women, but other minorities as well. Research needs to be conducted in order to illuminate the issues that surround the apologies of ethnic and racial minorities and women in a variety of situations.

This study introduces some interesting questions relating to the diverse responses to Hillary Clinton and Reno. In view of this inconsistency, apologia studies need to be conducted in order to uncover the relevant issues relating to the expectations for the rhetor and the expectations for their particular role. Like Hillary, Ferraro was labeled as “bitchy” for her aggressive/assertive communication style during her vice-presidential campaign. In contrast, Reno not only employs an aggressive style, she labels herself as “bossy” and admits that her family believes she is “arrogant.” Nonetheless, she is beloved as a “folk hero” rather than “bitchy.”

An interesting study could compare and contrast the defensive discourse of Reno in response to Waco, Clinton in response to the Whitewater allegations involving her illegal dealings as a lawyer, and Ferraro in response to the Roman Catholic church’s attacks on her pro-choice position. The apologia genre can benefit from the study of both successful and unsuccessful apologies in order to discern the deciding factors in each case. Additionally, rhetorical theory, in general, can benefit from inquiry into the
discourse of women such as these to discover why some are praised while others are punished. The study of the contradictory responses to these women who employ similar communication styles need not be limited to the study of their apologia. However, their defensive discourse allows for the investigation of their handling of similar rhetorical situations despite the differences in their political positions and the situational rhetoric those positions engender (e.g. campaign rhetoric).

As mentioned earlier, this study demonstrates the need for further inquiry into the accuracy of the Ware and Linkugel study (1973). The relationship between the factors and the postures they identify is in need of particular scrutiny due to the results of this study and the supporting findings of Conley (1986). As the most common means of studying apologia, the genre method's suitability, and specifically the accuracy of the Ware and Linkugel subgenres, is crucial to the development of the apologetic genre.

This study suggests one final area of inquiry worthy of future research. In order to defend herself, Reno chose to engage in a series of live interviews on news programs. Although she held a press conference on April 19, the majority of her defensive case was built during interactive sessions with various news anchors. This finding is significant because several other women have chosen to defend themselves through interaction with the media rather than a formal press conference or televised statement. King (1990) notes that Mankiller rejected the idea of a formal apologia. King claims, "Ms. Mankiller was the subject of magazine and newspaper stories because of her position as the first female principal chief and the 1987 election, and she often used these forums as the way to face her accusers" (25). Additionally, Jeffrey Nelson (1984) points out that Billie Jean
King took her case to the media when she was discovered to have had an extramarital affair with a female former secretary. The television program, 20/20, and People magazine were the outlets she selected. Although Nelson claims that King also held a "major press conference" (92), he does not describe how large a part that conference comprised of her defense, and most of the discourse he cites is attributed to her interviews rather than the press conference (93-95).

This finding needs to be researched further and may prove relevant to the study of apologia because women may prefer personal, interactive mediums through which to defend themselves. Conversely, men have selected traditionally more formal settings for their apologia. Both Ted Kennedy and former President Richard Nixon, two of the most studied apologists in U. S. history (e.g. S. Butler, 1972; Gold, 1978; Ling, 1970; Vartabedian, 1985; Wilson, 1976), chose to defend themselves by means of formal, mass mediated rhetorical events in which there was little or no interaction with the press. If women choose consistently to engage in self-defense through different mediums, the content and results of their apologia may differ accordingly. Research should be conducted in order to discern whether Reno's preference for one-on-one interviews is consistent with other women and, if so, what, if any, are the implications of this preference for the apologia genre.

Limitations of the Study

This study, like any other, is necessary bound by certain limitations or constraints. One of the most frustrating and, perhaps, significant limitations of this research is the lack of sources with which to conduct my analysis. Due to the controversial nature of the
Waco incident, a researcher must expend a great deal of time and effort in order to find a limited amount of usable data concerning the events of April 19. I spent several months in contact with the Department of Justice and received none of the official press releases that were allegedly “on their way.” Reavis spared me temporarily from the process of filing for the information under the Freedom of Information Act. Reavis learned during his research that he would have to wait five years for the information he requested. Accordingly, my analysis had to be conducted using only the segments of the press conference that were broadcast of various news programs. In addition, due to the unavailability of a taped segment of the MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour, my nonverbal analysis did not include that artifact which was used in the genre analysis.

Conclusion

This section provides a review of the crucial elements of this study. I have organized the conclusion by reviewing the original research questions and providing brief synopses of the answers uncovered during my research.

RQ 1: What similarities and/or differences exist between Reno’s apologetic discourse and that of the genre as it has been developed through studying men’s apologia?

Reno’s discourse demonstrates adherence to the guidelines for apologetic discourse as defined by male-issued apologia in relation to Ware and Linkugel’s factors (1973). She employs denial, differentiation, bolstering, and transcendence strategies while relying mainly on her denial of intent to harm the Branch Davidians or provoke them to take violent action. Her discourse diverges from the guidelines of the subgenres
espoused by Ware and Linkugel. She assumes an explanatory posture that seeks to create an understanding among the audience members of what her motivations were. She assumes this posture, however, without relying primarily on bolstering and differentiation factors which contradicts Ware and Linkugel's findings.

Reno's apologia also differs from the typical male paradigm in her choice of medium. Reno selects an interactive format for the bulk of her defensive discourse. She engages in a series of live, one-on-one interviews with television news anchors instead of issuing a formal, mass-mediated apologia.

RQ 2: What relevant issues emerge from an analysis of Reno's nonverbal communication?

The results of the nonverbal analysis indicate that Reno's nonverbal behavior demonstrates a high level of source credibility. She is rated high in both authoritativeness and character, although she is perceived more positively in relation to her authoritativeness. Her scores are notably lower on traditionally feminine qualities and higher on traditionally masculine qualities. In addition, applied nonverbal literature suggests that she engages in nonverbal communication consistent with expectations for men and inconsistent with expectations for women. This literature also suggests she employs non-sex related cues which are associated typically with credible sources.

RQ 3: What specific constraints did Reno face when developing her apologia in response to the Waco disaster?

Reno faced constraints relating to her position as the first female attorney general and societal assumptions regarding women and their incompatibility with leadership and
law enforcement. She also had little evidence of her ability to be a competent attorney general because she had only been in office a month at the time of the Waco crisis. As a result, her actions/decisions in the Waco standoff were the only ones with which the general public was familiar. Additionally, Reno was a member of a highly criticized federal government that was riddled with allegations of various improprieties. In particular, the agencies she was defending the actions of, the FBI and the ATF, were already beleaguered by scandals. Reno also faced constraints imposed on her because of the violent and public nature of the death of the Branch Davidians. The shocking visual images of the federal government's siege on the Mt. Carmel commune and the subsequent fire were seen by most of her audience.

RQ 4: To what extent is the current use of genre criticism as a means by which to study apologia appropriate for the study of female apologia?

This study illustrates that the genre method, if used exclusively, has limited usefulness for the study of women's apologetic discourse. Reno diverges from the postures suggested by Ware and Linkugel calls into question the accuracy of their research. Furthermore, the issues relating directly to Reno's sex were not illuminated by the genre method, although they were not obscured. I suggest that feminist methodologies used in conjunction with or in place of the genre method may provide more insight into female-issued apologies. Additionally, the concept of gender as performance may further illuminate the relevant issues relating to an apologist's sex and the constraints imposed on her because of cultural expectations for women.
WORKS CITED


*Communication Quarterly* 36 (1988): 77-93.


APPENDIX

TRANSCRIPTIONS
Excerpt from April 19, 1993 CBS Evening News

(Excerpts from Attorney General Press Conference on April 19)

AG: I approved the plan, and I'm responsible for it. I advised the President, but I did not advise him as to the details.

AG: Obviously, if I thought the chances were great of a mass suicide, I would never have approved the plan. Everything that we were told, every indication, the reactions to the pressure up to that point, was that—there—that would not occur.

(Live Interview with Dan Rather)

DR: With us now is the Attorney General of the United States, Janet Reno. Ms. Reno, thank you for being with us this evening. Uh, you said that, on the FBI's recommendation, you made the call to go today. Why today and not some other day?

AG: There was no perfect day to make such a call, there was no right day. But, this day was a day to increase the pressure as we had tried to do from the beginning, to avoid violence if at all possible and to increase pressure on the people who were in the compound to come out. We felt that there was going to be no perfect time because, if he were going to do something like this, he could do it in the future. We were told by the hostage—by the negotiators that there was no further basis for negotiation. He simply wasn't going to negotiate, they did not think that he was going to come out. We had been concerned about the safety of the children from the beginning. We were concerned that, at any time, he could determine to take
this course of action. We felt that we were in better control at this time than at any other. These are the hardest decisions that anybody can make, and we made the best decision we could based on all the information available.

DR: Ms. Reno, how big a factor was it, or was it a factor at all, reports that there was growing danger to FBI agents that would eventually have to go in, and growing danger to the children?

AG: I think what prompted me most was the consideration for the children. We were told that sanitation facilities were deteriorating, that the children had been abused over time. We had tried to negotiate peacefully to avoid any, any harm to the children because that continued to be paramount in my mind. With the recognition that something as awful as this could occur in the future, that he had the supplies to stay there indefinitely, that the negotiators had said that he wasn’t coming out, this seemed to be the most appropriate time possible. Although there is no particular time that can ever be the right time in something like this.

DR: Janet Reno, Attorney General of the United States, live in Washington, thank you for being with us.
Excerpt from April 19, 1993 NBC News Special: The Siege Ends

(Excerpt from Attorney General Press Conference on April 19)

AG: We must all reflect on how we as a society can, in the future, prevent such a senseless, horrible, tragic loss of human life.

(Live interview with Tom Brokaw)

TB: With us now is Attorney General Janet Reno, who has been in on this since the beginning, from the planning and then monitoring the operation today at the FBI Control Room in Washington D.C. She took full responsibility at a news conference. Madame General, I guess that’s how we describe you, we’ve never had a woman as an Attorney General before. Let me ask you, first of all, why did you feel compelled to move today, after 51 days?

AG: We have tried from the beginning to make sure that we did everything possible to negotiate this. We were concerned for the children. We had received reports previously that they had been sexually abused, we continued to receive reports that some of the infants were beaten. I even double-checked that to make sure, to confirm that. We could have waited, but there were no assurances that, in waiting, we could avoid something like this. No, nothing could--we couldn’t speculate on, on what this man would not do or would do. This was a possibility at any time that the children and the others remain there. And we tried to, to bring the pressure up without using deadly force, making sure that the gas inserted into the compound was absolutely non-lethal, that it would not be permanently
injurious to any of the residents there, trying our very best to force them out without getting anybody hurt.

TB: Of course, hindsight is always twenty-twenty. But, don’t you think that you might have had better intelligence about what he was likely to do before you made that kind of move today?

AG: I think we had considerable intelligence about what he might or might not do. We talked to sources who were familiar with some of his patterns. Many people said it was a possibility, but not a real possibility. What we were concerned about, the fact that it was a possibility indicated that he could do it at any time, particularly at times when we might not have as much of a control or potential control as we did. I was concerned that if we waited, we might come in there in three months and find the children diseased and dead. Nobody could tell what he might do. Anybody that has done what he did today, this stark and horrible tragedy, could do anything.

TB: Once the fire broke out, what did you tell President Clinton?

AG: I haven’t talked to President Clinton yet because others with me have been talking to the White House while I have been talking with the FBI. And, as I have said, this is my responsibility, I’m accountable for it, and I’ve been trying to respond to questions from you and others in the media.

TB: Yea, but, with all due respect, General Reno, you mean to tell me that the president has not had a direct conversation with you, has not expressed curiosity?
AG: The president has expressed extensive curiosity, and he has had a direct conversation with Webb Hubbell who was with me as I was talking to the FBI.

TB: And what did he tell Webb Hubbell?

AG: That would, you would have to talk with, with—as I understand, I should say that I understand that he was talking with Webb Hubbell. Uh, but you would have to check and see.

TB: But, Webb Hubbell, did not share with you anything that the president had been saying?

AG: Again, I haven't—I have been trying to respond to the people, trying to be accountable to the people, trying to take your request and the request of others for information as to what happened. And, as soon as I’m through this, I’m gonna try to talk to the president. As a matter of fact, somebody in your studio has said that they would give me a phone.

TB: Thank you very much, General Reno, for being with us tonight.

AG: Thank you.
Excerpt from April 19, 1993 ABC News *Nightline*

(Excerpts from Attorney General Press Conference on April 19)

AG: It was our earnest hope that we could try to negotiate without any, without endangering human life to get these children out as soon as possible.

AG: Our experts, and we talked to the experts in the field, said that they were totally frustrated, that they had not been able to negotiate anything with Koresh, that they did not think that he would ever come out.

AG: I made the decision. I'm accountable. The buck stops with me. And, nobody ever accuse me of running from a decision that I made based on the best information that I had.

(Live Interview with Ted Koppel)

TK: Ms. Reno, I think it was Harry Truman who first coined the 'The buck stops here' phrase, and what he meant was that no matter how much responsibility is disseminated through the government, there can be only one final authority, and that is the president. Why isn't the president taking full responsibility for this action?

AG: This was a judgement I made. I investigated it completely. I did all the, the... I asked the questions, and I think the responsibility lies with me.

TK: Did you not check it out with the president? Wasn't this something, I mean, given the consequences now, and I realize that we are operating with twenty-twenty hindsight, but shouldn't this have been a decision that the president made?
AG: I consulted with the president, told him that this was a decision I made that I was willing to assume responsibility for.

TK: You have said several times during the course of this afternoon and evening that one of the reasons that the decision was made was because of violence against children, is that correct?

AG: What we did when the FBI went in was try our best to negotiate a peaceful resolution to this matter. The FBI tried not to use force initially, it tried to negotiate. We had concerns for the children because we had received reports that the children had been sexually abused. We, then, received reports of the children, some of the infants, being beaten. I was so startled by that that I specifically asked and followed up to make sure that the reports were confirmed to the extent that we could without being in the compound ourselves. What impressed me is that the Bureau, time after time, asked Koresh for some evidence that the children were O. K. They, the Bureau, sent in videotapes asking Koresh to do something to prove that the children were O. K. Negotiators consistently asked that the children be sent out. We did not receive verification that the children were O. K. The sanitation situation within the compound, we were told, was beginning to deteriorate. At that point, negotiators told us that they did not feel that further negotiation would help, they felt that it was at an impasse, that, at this point, they did not believe that Koresh was going to come out. There was the possibility of a mass suicide. Sources said, yes, he had mentioned it, but they did not think he
would do it. But, again, we tried different things to see what his response would be and, at that point, he did not respond with any such threats.

TK: Let me just interrupt . . .

AG: But, most importantly, Mr. Koppel, the problem was that this could have happened at any time. The possibility of mass suicide was there if we waited two months or three months. The possibility was there that had we gone in in two months, we would have not found the children. We would have found them dead or in terrible condition. We made the best judgement we could based on what we thought was non-lethal force.

TK: I don’t think anyone, Ms. Reno, questions your motivations. But, the question I do have is, what recent information did you have about the children and from whom?

AG: The information that the Bureau received concerning the children were from people who came out after the Bureau took over the operation. Uh . . .

TK: But that was some weeks ago?

AG: That was some weeks ago. We had not had any verification concerning the well being of the children since that time.

TK: But nor did you have any information that the children had been mistreated since that time.

AG: Having indication that children had been sexually abused or beaten at any time within the past two months by someone who was keeping them under those
circumstances, without in any way verifying to us that the children were O. K., to me, indicates a great risk with respect to the children.

TK: I guess the question that I'm getting to is, if it was the brutalization of the children in one way or another that was the motivation for this, and if that took place some weeks ago, why didn't the FBI's action take place some weeks ago?

AG: Because we made a balancing judgement. We looked at it, and we tried our level best to get them out without having to resort to any intrusion into the compound, through tear gas or something else. That having failed, our negotiators—our professional negotiators having told us that it wasn't going anywhere, we felt we had to begin to take the next step to exert pressure.

TK: We've got to take a break. When we come back, we'll be joined by one of the last people outside the compound to have had a face-to-face conversation with David Koresh, his lawyer.

(Commercial Break)

TK: Dick DeGuerin was hired by David Koresh to be his attorney shortly after the assault on the Branch Davidian compound on February 28. He joins us from our affiliate KXXV in Waco. Uh, Attorney General Reno has said several times during the course of this evening that she feels it's her obligation to respond to any appropriate questions or observations. Let me ask you to make a couple of minutes worth, and then we'll give her a chance to respond.

DD: Well, let me say first, that this, uh, business about child abuse, I was in the compound, and I spoke to David and to others in the compound for a total of
about thirty hours. I saw no evidence whatsoever of child abuse. I saw some happy, peaceful children. If I had seen any such child abuse, I would have reported it promptly. I think it’s a false issue. I think it’s a false issue, uh, just to justify the earlier misconduct on the part of the agents that first started the raid.

TK: Let me just interrupt you to ask you this, how would you know? I mean, if there had been sexual abuse of a child, I’m not sure that’s the kind of thing that you can just spot by looking at children.

DD: I don’t, uh, I don’t understand that to be their claim. I understand their claim to be physical abuse of the children. I saw no physical abuse of the children. I didn’t see any scared kids. I didn’t see the kind of vacant look, uh, that you would expect from someone who’s been physically or sexually abused. I saw kids that were at peace and were happy with their mothers. I saw nothing to make me suspect that there was any substance to those allegations of abuse. I think they were thoroughly investigated by state authorities before this raid ever occurred.

TK: Let me just ask you, are there other points that you wish to make right now? Hopefully, we’ll have another chance to keep talking after the break, but go ahead if there’s anything else you want to say at the moment.

DD: Well, yeah, I think we really need to focus on the decision that was made. I admire Ms. Reno for taking responsibility, but the bottom line is it was a bad, bad decision. It escalated greatly the violence, um, I think it was a terrible decision.

TK: All right, Ms. Reno, um, let’s begin with the question about the children. Are you satisfied that the evidence you had from a few weeks ago, uh, was sufficient that
it contradicts, uh, Mr. DeGuerin's observations which, I gather, were probably a little bit later in time?

AG: I've never heard of anybody who had abused children who's gonna have children around that show evidence of abuse to someone who is coming back out to talk to authorities. We can't prove it in terms of a criminal case, but in terms of real concern about the children and what we've heard, I think it's something that had to be considered.

TK: But as a justification, if you'll forgive the interruption, for what happened today. As a justification . . .

AG: Mr. Koppel, nothing, nothing can justify what happened today.

TK: I'm not speaking of the fire and the death of the people. I'm speaking of using tanks to ram the compound and to inject, uh, tear gas into the compound.

AG: I think that what we were trying to do was to give everybody the opportunity to come out in the most unobtrusive way possible, not with a frontal assault, not with trying to take what have obviously proven to be dangerous offenders down. These people killed four people and wounded fifteen. I don't think that we can sit by and suggest that it is inappropriate to take appropriate measures, escalated steps. A horrible, stark, ghastly tragedy has happened, and it is very painful to deal with, but we have got to remember who these people were, how much violence they had committed, and understand it in that context.

TK: May I ask you . . .

DD: I . . .
TK: I know, if you'll just hold on one second. I know it's been a long day, and we promised you, Ms. Reno, that we'd only ask you to stay until midnight. May I ask you to stay on for one more segment?

AG: Sure.

TK: Thank you. We'll be back in just a moment.

(Commercial Break)

TK: And we're back live, once again, with Attorney General Janet Reno and David Koresh's lawyer, Dick DeGuerin. Mr. DeGuerin, it is not irrelevant, as the Attorney General points out, that these are the same people, after all, who killed four members of the AFT and wounded sixteen other agents.

DD: The ATF.

TK: ATF, I'm sorry.

DD: You have to remember that, also, there were six, at least six, of their people that were killed at the same time. And, let's look at how this whole thing started. They went there with a search warrant that didn't, uh, authorize them to storm the compound. They went in there like marines on Iwo Jima. And, they stormed the compound without warning and shot the first shots. I'm thoroughly convinced of that.

TK: Is that a settled matter? I've heard arguments on both . . .

DD: It's settled in my mind.

TK: sides.
DD: It's settled in my mind. I've talked to the people that were there. I was inside. I saw the bullet holes in the door. I saw where several people died inside.

TK: Well, you can see bullet holes, I mean, forgive me for the interruption, but you can see bullet holes, I don't know how you can determine the chronology of whether those bullet holes were made before or after somebody else fired.

DD: That's true, but it fits, uh, in what I was told by the folks inside. It fits in what little we've learned from the ATF briefings that, at one point, they finally admitted that the ATF fired first. I have a pretty good idea from talking to my client and others inside exactly what happened. And, I think that, once we concentrate on that, once the Senate or House hearings concentrate on that, once a trial concentrates on that, the truth is going to come out. That's what I believe David wanted to come out and that's why I think he would've come out peacefully. This didn't have to happen. This could have been resolved peacefully, but this wasn't simply a turning up of the pressure. This was a massive escalation of the pressure. I don't think Ms. Reno has ever been at the business end of a tank with spewing, uh, tear gas. She might not call it just turning up the pressure.

TK: Ms. Reno, I realize that you didn't take over as Attorney General until this unfortunate affair was already several weeks underway, but from what you have learned and from the briefings that you have had from the FBI, and, I assume also, from the ATF, do you have any quarrel with what Mr. DeGuerin just said?
AG: Like you, Mr. Koppel, I can’t understand how he suggests an order of fire based on the number of holes in a door. These ATF agents had raid jackets on that clearly identified themselves. They clearly identified themselves, and they were met with a hail of fire. Four agents lie dead, fifteen are wounded, hand grenades were tossed on them when people clearly knew that they were ATF agents. And, I think, we have got to come back to the point that the FBI didn’t set this fire. This fire was set by David Koresh.

DD: It’s not a question of who set the fire. It’s who escalated it, who provoked it. And, uh, running tanks into their living room and spewing tear gas was not calculated to bring about a peaceful resolution. And, let’s get back to the original business of how the ATF stormed the compound. It was the ATF throwing grenades, I found a grenade. I was given a grenade and turned it over to the ATF the first time I went in there. This didn’t need to happen. It didn’t need to happen on February 28 the way it happened, and it didn’t need to happen today.

AG: I couldn’t agree more, sir. I think it is one of the great tragedies of this time. And, I think we’ve all got to look forward to what we can do about people like David Koresh who put themselves in this situation and then set that place afire.

TK: There are, and I’m gonna go a little bit off the subject of the day, Ms. Reno. But, there are other groups like this around the country, equally heavily armed. What, if anything, have you learned from this that would cause you to take a different kind of approach?
AG: One of the things that I've said consistently, Mr. Koppel, is that I made the best judgement I could based on all the information we had after inquiry, after talking with experts, after trying to weigh all the terrible possibilities that might occur now or later. I've made the judgement. It's my judgement, I stand by it. But one of the things I try to do is to be accountable to people, to answer questions, to respond, to review matters to see what can be done. And I will do that as we proceed through this matter to see what could be done under similar situations. Number one, to prevent it from even occurring in the first place to the extent of having an armed camp like that. And, two, to see what could be done in terms of negotiation or anything else that we didn't consider, though we tried to consider every possible option.

TK: Did you also consider the possibility of, in effect, just building a fence around the place and saying, you know, we're going away, let us know when you want to come out?

AG: We considered that, and we had a situation where people had killed four people, had wounded fifteen others, were heavily armed, and I did not think it was safe for the surrounding area to let people go free in those circumstances.

TK: What is now going to happen to the people who have survived today's confrontation? And who are now--I don't know if they are in the hospital or if they are in custody. What, in fact, is their legal status?

AG: Some are in the hospital, some are in custody, and the evidence will be reviewed and appropriate action taken.
TK: Let me ask you, if I may, one more question and then, as I promised, we’ll let you go. I’ve said repeatedly, it’s been a terribly long day for you. And, believe me, I ask this question with sympathy, but in other countries and in other governments, when a minister takes full responsibility for an unfortunate action, even if it was not entirely his or her fault, sometimes they resign.

AG: If that be the case, if that’s what the president wants, I’m happy to do so. But, I think, in these situations, what’s done is if somebody makes the best judgement they can, if they review everything carefully, if they are accountable to the people, if they proceed in an open and accountable way, people will know what they have tried to done, do—the reason they have tried to do it. And, in this situation, I don’t think anybody has ever dealt with a David Koresh who would purposely set people afire in that number.

TK: Ms. Reno, I am very grateful to you for being with us this evening. You are, of course, welcome to spend the rest of the broadcast with us if you want to listen to what some of the other guests have to say. But, if you feel the need to leave, believe me, I do understand. Thanks very much, indeed.
Excerpts from the MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour on April 19, 1993

(Live Interview with Jim Lehrer)

JL: We return now to the Waco story. The plan that the FBI launched was approved by Attorney General Janet Reno. She joins us now from the Justice Department. Attorney General Reno, welcome.

AG: Good evening.

JL: Do we assume at this point that 88 people died in that fire, is that correct?

AG: We do not have a final conclusion on that.

JL: But the FBI seems to assume that that is the case, but you’re not assuming that, is that right? It’s possible that somebody could have gotten out?

AG: We’re going to wait to see until we can carefully determine just what happened.

JL: Did the FBI handle this thing correctly this morning?

AG: I think the FBI exercised remarkable restraint and handled this in a very professional and very able manner. I don’t think that there is any situation that is more difficult than this. These are the hardest decisions possible to make.

JL: Now, when did they bring this idea to you—I’m talking about the gassing idea, the thing they did this morning before the fire. When was that brought to you?

AG: This was presented as part of a pragmatic attempt to increase pressure without firing or using violent action against members of the cult in the compound, and it was presented to me last Monday.
JL: It was brought to you by their initiative or was it the result of you or the president saying, hey, look, let's get this thing over with, FBI? Or was it they came to you and said, look, we believe it's time to do something? Here's what we'd like to do.

AG: They came to us describing, again so that everybody understood exactly what the circumstances were, thought they had kept us advised each step of the way. They came to me and they said these are the circumstances. Our negotiators do not believe he is coming out. They have not been successful in negotiating anything really in terms of the release of the children. We're continuing to be concerned about the children, we have from the outset. We have had reports that they have been sexually abused, that babies had actually been beaten.

I asked when I first heard that for them to verify it, and again that was the report that was brought back. We had a situation where we were continuing to be increasingly concerned about the safety of the children, about the danger to everyone who was around the compound, and we made a judgement that this would be the best time to escalate the pressure. We looked to see what had been done when the FBI came in to clear away the cars from around the compound. There had been no threat of anything such as this. As it led up to today, there had been no threat as the FBI took steps to retaliate by something such as this. We made a judgement because we had heard consideration that mass suicide might be a possibility, that it was a possibility, and that we had to carefully consider it. But that was also a fact, based on every piece of information we had, that they had supplies that would enable them to remain in the compound indefinitely. We
checked the water supply because we thought that might be a way to control, and I asked specifically about that. But the water supply continued to apparently be adequate based on the surveillance that the FBI was able to do. We then determined that they could do something like this as any time. We could not control it for the future, that there was no right time for any thing such as this but this would be the time to do it.

JL: But what caused them and you to agree that this was the best time—best time in what kind of context?

AG: The Hostage Rescue Team surrounded the premises of the compound. One of the points that must be remembered is that the people in the compound had ammunition that could hit an object 3,000 yards from the compound, so you in effect had at least two or a significant square-mile area of property that had to be secured as a perimeter. The Hostage Rescue Team was in place, able to control that perimeter to the point that it could really be absolutely controlled. We felt, based on our discussion with the experts, that the Hostage Rescue Team would have to be pulled back for retraining, and that this would be the best time when the Bureau had the best opportunity to control the situation for the event to happen.

JL: The conventional wisdom, of course, is that in these kinds of situations, the longer you wait, the more you increase the chances of a peaceful resolution. Was the decision simply that 51 days was long enough, that there was no point in waiting
any longer, that that conventional wisdom was not necessarily at work in this particular case?

AG: When I first took office, we had discussions with the Bureau, and we concurred that we should try to negotiate, try to wait it out, try to do everything possible despite the fact that we had information that the children had been abused, were continuing to be abused in terms of babies being slapped and beaten. So we tried our best in terms of negotiation to get them out. We then became increasingly concerned with the safety of the children, the safety of those who were providing the perimeter around the compound and made the determination that in all eventualities, based on the efforts that we had made to date, without receiving response or any threat of a response such as this, as the Bureau took each increasing step or pressure, that this would be the time to do it.

JL: When you went over the possibilities, the eventualities, the expectations of what might happen, if this gassing operation was successful—I mean, if they did what they did this morning and they put the gas in there, et cetera—what was the expectation?

AG: The general expectation is that it might take some time, that there might be some residents who would be better able to withstand the gas than others, but that, ultimately, if we waited, if we were patient, that they would ultimately come out because the gas would be so discomfiting.

JL: Did anybody raise the possibility that it could trigger this terrible—could trigger some kind of mass suicide?
AG: This was a possibility that was considered because any time you make a hard, hard decision such as this, you have to consider all the eventualities, and what influenced us was the concern that it could happen at any time in the indefinable future that we could not even begin to control.

JL: So it didn’t matter—your conclusion was, the FBI’s conclusion was that Koresh was in control of the situation not the FBI, is that essentially it?

AG: Koresh certainly controlled, if he wanted to do something like this—it would have been, so far as we could determine, impossible to prevent if that’s what he wanted to do.

JL: What was the preponderance of the evidence about the likelihood of a mass suicide that the FBI gathered from people what had come out of the compound, other people who had once been members of this section?

AG: The FBI advised us that they had talked with as many sources as possible to determine what the eventuality might be, and concluded that it was not great.

JL: That Koresh was just not suicide-bent or his followers wouldn’t follow him, or what was the basis for that?

AG: I looked at it in terms of whether the followers would follow him and whether he would lead them to something like this. It was a possibility. Again the possibility of it happening in the future is something that I could not control, but it was a possibility, but considering all the sources that the FBI consulted, considering their responses to the increasing pressure brought by the FBI over the last several days, it did not seem to be a great probability at all.
JL: What pressure are you referring to?

AG: The increasing pressure by coming up to the compound, clearing the area away from the compound, coming . . . at one point they even bumped the compound, coming up this morning at the time the first gas was put in—they fired in response but there was no threat of anything such as this.

JL: Mr. Ricks of the FBI said there was some fresh intelligence that made them alter their plan in the last couple of days or so. Do you know what he was referring to there?

AG: I don't know specifically what he was referring to.

JL: Was the intelligence pretty good from inside.

AG: It would vary; we can't really tell what the intelligence—whether it was really good, considering the final outcome.

JL: But David Koresh was clearly the man in charge, is that correct? Is there any doubt about that?

AG: From everything that I have been advised, from all the information that the Bureau received, that is clearly the case.

JL: Also, Mr. Ricks made the point today that basically David Koresh was a liar, that most of what he said to them—and the FBI agents talked to him endlessly in these last 51 days—is false. Does the evidence or the summaries that you received also bear that?

AG: Yes, it does.
JL: There was never a real honest communication between the FBI and David Koresh?

AG: Basically, when he said he would do something, he didn't do it.

JL: The children—should we assume that those—what is it, 17 children were in there by last count, or 25? I've seen two different figures? Could you help me out on that?

AG: What I understood was that there were at least 17 children and then there were possibly minors who were people Koresh considered to be his wives.

JL: And we should assume at that point that they perished as others in this fire, is that right?

AG: I have not heard the final conclusion.

JL: There are all kinds of rumors about underground tunnels and all that sort of thing. Those turn out to be not true, is that correct?

AG: We will certainly explore those. I've consulted with the FBI trying to make sure that all possible underground bunkers or tunnels are identified and explored.

JL: What does happen next? What should we expect over the next couple of days or so? What are you going to be in there—you and the FBI, your folks, going to be looking for and how is this information going to come out, et cetera?

AG: We want to make sure that as fair and as objective a review is done of this matter as possible. As I've indicated, the buck stops with me. I make the best judgement I can. And one of the hardest decisions that anybody can make, based on all the information I can possibly bring together, willing to consider every
eventuality. Then it's my responsibility to be accountable, to ask questions and to answer questions and to review and to see if there is anything that could have been done differently to prevent such as loss of human life. We constantly have to look at what we have done to see if we can do it better. But, at this point, based on everything I know, based on the most careful study possible and a very deliberate manner, this was the best judgement that could have been made under the circumstances. There is no right answer to something like this, there is no perfect time. You just have to do the best you can with the information that is available, considering the interests of the children and the agents.

JL: Now, you talked to President Clinton about this. Did he sign off on it, or did he approve it? I mean, what was his position on this plan?

AG: I basically told him that I had carefully reviewed the matter, spent a number of days carefully talking to experts such as medical doctors to make sure that the gas was not lethal, that there was no permanent injury related to the gas; I had talked to other experts. I had tried to make sure that all the questions that I had were answered. I tried to explore all the eventualities. I told him that I had done as careful a study as possible, that this was the decision that I had made, that I thought it was the correct decision though it was an extremely difficult decision, and he said okay.

JL: All right, Attorney General Reno, thank you very much for being with us.
WORKS CITED


Jamieson, Kathleen Hall. "Generic Constraints on the Rhetorical Situation."


News Transcripts, Inc. "Excerpts from News Session with Attorney General Reno."


Sun-Sentinel Wire Services. “4 Agents Killed in Shoot-Out, Agency’s Raid on Cult Goes Awry in Texas.” *Sun-Sentinel* [Fort Lauderdale], sports final ed.: 1A.


Verhovek, Sam Howe. "Apparent Mass Suicide Ends a 51-Day Standoff in Texas."


