I, Tiffany Sunshine Hadley, hereby submit this work as part of the requirements for the degree of: Master of Arts in Communication. It is entitled: Not All Reality is Created Equal: A Rhetorical Hybrid of Conspiracy and Diatribe in Michael Moore's Fahrenheit 9/11.

This work and its defense approved by:
Chair: Stephen Depoe, Advisor
Michelle Rodino-Colocino, First Reader
Cynthia Berryman-Fink, Second Reader
Not All Reality is Created Equal: A Rhetorical Hybrid of Conspiracy and Diatribe in Michael Moore’s Fahrenheit 9/11

Tiffany Sunshine Hadley
B.A. Advertising & Public Relations

Thesis presented as part of the requirements for the Degree Master of Communication of the University of Cincinnati

Dr. Stephen Depoe, Advisor

February 23, 2006
Abstract

The controversial documentaries by Michael Moore have provoked public debate on social and political matters since the end of the 1980s. This study analyzed Michael Moore’s Fahrenheit 9/11 from a dualistic approach. Utilizing media scholar Nichols’ documentary modes of representation, this study identified three emergent modes: expository, participatory, and politically reflexive. This project also examined the extent to which these three modes reflected a particular view toward the rhetorical situation. Often times situations arise that call for a dual response. Jamieson and Campbell’s generic hybrid was also used to assess the extent in which Fahrenheit 9/11 responded to the needs of the situation and the audience. The hybrid blend Moore used was comprised of the conspiracy and diatribe genres. Not only did these two genres fulfill the perceived needs of the audience and situation, but they also worked together in such a way that elements of each genre buttress the weaknesses of the other.
Acknowledgements

This project has indeed been one of the greatest challenges of my life and my journey has been made possible by knowing that I was never alone. My many thanks must first start with the person who has given me continual love and support. I am forever grateful to my mother, Sharon Hadley, for always supporting my academic endeavors and providing me strength and encouragement along the way. Mom, you mean the world to me and I appreciate all of your sacrifices.

Many thanks also go to my committee. Thank you to my esteemed thesis advisor, Dr. Stephen Depoe. You started out as my professor and it was through your teaching that I realized my own academic interests. As my advisor, you were never too prescriptive, but always willing to go the extra mile and assist me as needed. Your influence has and will continue to give me patience and purpose and your insights have been invaluable. The other members of my committee, Drs. Michelle Rodino-Colocino and Cynthia Berryman-Fink, each offered different yet insightful contributions to this endeavor. Thank you both for your assistance and guidance. This project has benefited from a combination of my committee’s insights and the flaws that remain are my own.

I would like to thank my friends, Marjie Webb, Autumn Garrison, Amber Erickson and Dale Pontz. I greatly appreciate your suggestions and for taking the time to listen to me read through various chapters just so I could hear myself think. Christine and Ryan Clark, thank you for keeping me grounded.

I have received support, encouragement, and help from many who remain unnamed here, not because they don’t deserve recognition, but because the list of people who’ve helped would
be longer than this thesis. Your names and deeds are forever inscribed on my heart. Many thanks to all of you.
Table of Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................. 2

Acknowledgments ............................................................................................... 4

Contents .................................................................................................................. 6

Chapter One: Introduction & Historical Background ........................................... 8

  Literature Review ............................................................................................... 9
    Definition of Documentary .............................................................................. 10
    Documentary Modes .................................................................................... 12
    Rhetorical Genres ....................................................................................... 16
    Rhetorical Situation ..................................................................................... 17
    Generic Rhetorical Hybrid .......................................................................... 18
    Conspiracy Argument ................................................................................. 19
    Diatribe ......................................................................................................... 23
  Research Questions .......................................................................................... 26
  Limitations ........................................................................................................ 27
  Justification for the Study ............................................................................... 28
  Design of the Study ......................................................................................... 29

Chapter Two: The Voice of Documentary .............................................................. 30

  Expository Mode .............................................................................................. 30
    Relationship One ......................................................................................... 32
    Relationship Two ......................................................................................... 33
    Relationship Three ..................................................................................... 35
    Relationship Four ....................................................................................... 36
    Relationship Five ....................................................................................... 38
  Participatory Mode .......................................................................................... 40
  Reflexive Mode ............................................................................................... 44
  Rhetorical Situation ........................................................................................ 48

Chapter Three: Unique Situations Call for Dynamic Solutions ......................... 54

  Conspiracy Argument ...................................................................................... 54
    Macro Principles ............................................................................................ 55
      Ambiguous Evil ......................................................................................... 55
      Pattern of Anomalies ............................................................................... 57
      Polarizing Positions .................................................................................. 59
      Social Strain ............................................................................................ 63
    Micro Principles ............................................................................................ 67
Chapter One: Introduction & Historical Background

In 2003 Michael Moore won the best feature documentary for *Bowling for Columbine* at the Academy Awards. During his speech, Moore asserted, “We live in the time where we have fictitious election results that elects a fictitious president. We live in a time where we have a man sending us to war for fictitious reasons. Whether it's the fictition of duct tape or fictition of orange alerts we are against this war, Mr. Bush. Shame on you, Mr. Bush, shame on you! And any time you got the Pope and the Dixie Chicks against you, your time is up” (Bleifuss, 2004). Moore’s comment that evening foreshadows Moore’s latest work, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, in that this study will examine the construction of reality.

Moore’s contentious career stemmed from his first film *Roger and Me* (1989), a feature-length documentary chronicling the efforts of the world's largest corporation, General Motors. As it turned out, the plant closing had occurred in his hometown of Flint, Michigan. In his quest to discover why GM would want to do such a thing, Moore, a Flint native, attempted to meet the chairman, Roger Smith, and was eventually successful. Moore’s second film, *The Big One* (1997), is a behind-the-scenes video diary of the promotional tour for his book *Downsize This!* In this film Moore visits several Fortune 500 companies in an effort to determine why corporations continue to downsize. He was eventually able to meet with the CEO of Nike, Phil Knight. In his third film, *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), Moore focused on America's obsession with guns and violence, starting with the Columbine High School shooting in 1999. During the film Moore visited K-Mart's corporate offices with two teenagers injured in the Columbine massacre. While there, they ask the retail chain to stop selling bullets for handguns. In *Bowling for Columbine*, Moore also investigated the media's role in the American climate of fear and anger and compared crime statistics in the United States with those of Canada.
Moore’s previous works centered on a specific public controversy, and the same can be said of his latest film, *Fahrenheit 9/11*. In this film, Moore considered the presidency of George W. Bush and where it had led the country. Moore criticized the administration's handling of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center. The film also traced why the U.S. had become a target for hatred and terrorism, and depicts the alleged relationship with the Bin Laden family held by both Bush administrations. The audience followed Moore throughout his interviews with Lila Lipscomb, whose son was killed in action in Iraq. Along the way, Moore commandeered an ice cream truck to drive around Washington while reading the U.S.A. Patriot Act through a loudspeaker, and stood outside the Capitol trying to persuade members of Congress to enlist their children in the armed forces. The aftermath of the 2000 election results, followed by September 11th, the war in Iraq, and the upcoming elections all provided Moore with a situational context for the film.

The primary focus of this project will be to examine Moore’s most recent work *Fahrenheit 9/11*, which was released in theatres on June 25th, 2004. This first chapter will focus on the method that will be implemented and a review of the literature will be provided. Within this chapter four research questions will also be introduced for review. Additionally, this chapter will review the limitations and justifications for this study. Lastly, a preview of each chapter will also be provided.

*Literature Review & Critical Method*

The point of this review will be to examine previous literature about documentaries, define rhetorical genres and explicate the differing viewpoints on rhetorical situation associated with genres, to introduce the rhetorical hybrid, and to provide definitions of two prominent genres: conspiracy and diatribe.
The term documentary has several synonyms such as independent film, ethnographic film, anti-government film, and journalistic film. This short list illustrates just how far-reaching the term "documentary" can be and how loosely it can be applied. Traditionally, documentaries were thought to have been filmed objectively in response to a specific situation or event (Nichols, 1991, 2001). The notion of objectivity is a focal point for this study, and as such, we must further understand the ways in which a documentary is defined and classified.

Bernstein (1998) asserts, “defining the documentary is difficult, whether documentary is understood in terms of its formal features, its assumptions about the construction of knowledge, its approach to narration, its assertions of authority, the expectations it evokes in the audience—or all of the above” (p. 398). John Grierson, founder of the British documentary movement of the thirties, defines documentaries as “the creative treatment of actuality” (Hardy, 1979, p. 15). According to documentary theorist Bill Nichols (2001), a documentary is a “representation of the world we already occupy. It stands for a particular view of the world, one we may never have encountered before, even if aspects of the world that is represented are familiar to us” (p. 20). Nichols (1991) writes, “Documentary directs us toward the world of brute reality, even as it also seeks to interpret it, and the expectation that it will do so is one powerful difference from fiction [italics added]” (p. 110). How does one go about defining a documentary?

**Definition of Documentary**

Previous scholars have utilized Nichols’ definition and typology of documentary modes as a means to assess and analyze documentaries, therefore we will use Nichols’ definition as a basis for this study. Nichols (1991, 2001) indicates that in order to gain a better understanding as to how documentary is defined, one must approach it from four different angles: institutions, practitioners, texts, and audience. Documentaries can be defined as institutional frameworks
given that they are the product of organizations and institutions (Nichols, 2001). Our assumptions about a documentaries’ degree of objectivity and credibility depend upon who define the film as part of the documentary genre (Nichols, 2001). Documentary film makers, the community of practitioners, comprise the second angle. These practitioners share a common language with regards to what they do and they hold their own assumptions and expectations about what they are producing (Nichols, 1991). According to Nichols (2001), this definition of documentary “contributes to its fuzzy but distinguishable outline…it confirms the historical variability of the form; our understanding of what is a documentary changes as those who make documentaries change their idea of what it is they make” (p. 26). A third aspect of defining documentary is in terms of the texts directly (Nichols, 2001). This means that documentaries can be considered a genre, similar to literary genres such as science-fiction or dramas (Nichols, 2001). In order to belong to a genre, the film must display characteristics that are currently shared by other films regarded as documentaries, which include: interviews, images that illustrate or complicate a point, as well as testimony provided by social actors (Nichols, 2001).

The final angle one must consider when defining documentary lies in the minds of the audience. The notion that the film in question is in fact a documentary “lies in the mind of the beholder as much as it lies in the film’s context or structure” (Nichols, 2001, p. 35). Nichols (2001) points out that as audience members, we bring an assumption that the sounds and images we are seeing were not conceived for the film, rather that their origin takes place in the historical world. These four angles provide an explanation as to how documentary may be defined. Although explanations of what constitutes a documentary vary, Nichols’ system for determining the recurrent features among films is especially useful.
Documentary Modes of Representation

Nichols (1991; 2001) has identified six modes of representation in which scholars may classify the organizational patterns of documentaries: poetic, expository, observational, participatory, reflexive, and performative. According to Nichols (2001), these modes of representation are sub-genres of documentary film that “establish a loose framework of affiliation within which individuals may work; they set up conventions that a given film may adopt; and they provide specific expectations viewers anticipate having fulfilled” (p. 99). Individual films can be characterized by a dominant mode, giving the film its structure, but may also contain a mixture or hybrid of modes (Nichols, 2001). Documentary filmmakers may blend modes together in order to represent a new ideology that tries to explain our relation to reality and also as a way of fulfilling an audience’s expectations (Nichols, 1991; 2001). Nichols (2001) points out that these modes do not take on an evolutionary status wherein one mode is superior to other, rather each mode stemmed from the filmmakers’ dissatisfaction with the previous mode and their desire to come up with different ways of representing the world and fulfilling an audience’s needs.

The first mode addressed by Nichols is the poetic mode. This mode eschews the "objective" reality of a given situation or people to grasp at an inner "truth" that can only be grasped by poetical manipulation (Nichols, 2001). The poetic mode stresses the mood, tone, and affect much more than displays of knowledge or acts of persuasion, and it also opens up the possibility of alternative forms of presentation of knowledge as opposed to the straightforward transfer of information (Nichols, 2001). This mode can be viewed as abstract and lacking specificity (Nichols, 2001).
The second mode addressed by Nichols’ is the *expository mode*. The expository mode is the one with which most individuals identify documentary. Within this mode the audience is addressed directly through titles or voices whose goals are to propose a perspective, progress an argument, as well as recount historical events (Nichols, 2001). These documentaries attempt to create an impression of objectivity by assuming that knowledge about the world is at the fingertips of the filmmaker (Nichols, 1991), thus giving the audience the sense that this film is rendering the truth. The editing pattern used within this mode arranges images in a way that illustrates a cause and effect relationship among various phenomena and often include a voice-over narration (Nichols, 1991, 2001).

Unlike the poetic and expository modes, where the filming of individuals/participants is sacrificed with the hope of constructing more substantially persuasive arguments, *observational modes* emphasize direct engagement with the everyday life of individuals (Nichols, 2001). According to Nichols (1991), "an observational mode of representation allows the film maker to record unobtrusively what people did when they were not explicitly addressing the camera…” (p. 33). In this mode the filmmaker remains hidden behind the camera, ignored by the surrounding environment. He/she neither changes nor influences the actions/events being captured and allows the subjects to interact with one another. Similar to the expository style, observation also maintains the assumption of easy access to knowledge (Nichols, 1991). Additionally, these films exhibit strength or legitimacy in providing the audience with a sense of the duration of actual events (Nichols, 2001).

The *participatory mode* emphasizes the interaction between the filmmaker and the subjects through filmed interviews or other forms of direct involvement (Nichols, 2001). The juxtaposition of conflicting testimony and the on-camera appearance of the filmmaker allow the
interactive film “to emphasize on the act of building knowledge, the process of social and historical interpretation” (Nichols, 1991, p. 49). The audience expects to witness the world as represented by someone who is actively engaging in it versus observing or assembling it (Nichols, 2001). Although the editing patterns within this mode do not offer up a cause and effect relationship among phenomena, as is seen in the expository mode, they do entail the juxtaposition and crosscutting among different and sometimes contradictory pieces of evidence (Nichols, 1991).

The fifth mode of representation is the reflexive mode. Reflexive documentary “arose from a desire to make the conventions of representation themselves more apparent and to challenge the impression of reality which the other three modes normally conveyed unproblematically” (Nichols, 1991, p. 33). The director emphasizes the process of making the film, the way in which images are constructed and the conditions of their reception (Nichols, 2001). This mode acknowledges the constructed nature of documentary and flaunts it by conveying to individuals that this is not necessarily "truth" but rather a (re)construction of it (Nichols, 1991). Rather than following the filmmaker in their interactions with others, Nichols (2001) asserts, “we now attend to the filmmaker’s engagement with us, speaking not only about the historical world, but about the problems and issues of representing it as well…the overall result deconstructs the impression of unimpeded access to reality and invites us to reflect on the process by which this representation is itself constructed through editing” (pp. 125-127).

The final mode Nichols’ addresses is the performative mode. Within this mode the expressive aspect of the filmmaker’s engagement with the subject and the audience’s responsiveness to this engagement is emphasized (Nichols, 2001). Nichols (2001) points out that within these films, actual occurrences become amplified by imagined occurrences. Films
situated in the performative mode are similar to that of the auto-ethnography because they show us what it is like to experience the world as others individuals do (Nichols, 2001).

Previous scholars have utilized Nichols’ typology of documentary modes as a means to assess and analyze documentaries. Orvell (1994) analyzed both Barbara Kopple’s documentary *American Dream* and Michael Moore’s *Roger and Me* employing this typology. Within his analysis, Orvell (1994) found that Kopple’s documentary fit within the traditional realms of expository and observational modes, whereas Moore’s documentary eschewed the traditional observational mode for a “more complex rhetoric, a hybridization of the interactive and the reflexive modes” (p. 10). Bernstein (1998) also examined *Roger and Me* utilizing Nichols’ typology and argues that although Moore did use a hybridization of techniques, they were of the expository and interactive modes, not the reflexive.

Moore opts for what Orvell refers to as “Documentary Satire.” Documentary satire stems from an expectation of the truth that does not deliver the straight truth, but rather the “oblique truth of satire” (Orvell, 1994, p. 16). On the other hand, Bernstein (1998) vehemently describes Moore as having “Documentaphobia,” due to Moore’s indication that he wished to avoid boring the public with a three-hour-movie. Bernstein (1998) contends: “a three-hour movie is a documentary in the expository mode, the much maligned ‘illustrated lecture’…the illustrated lecture is, ironically what Moore has produced” (pp. 409-10).

After having reviewed Nichols’ topology of documentary modes, we know that documentaries can come in a variety of modes and may no longer uphold the objective qualities audiences once expected, they are not narratives of “true” stories. Documentaries only give us photographic and aural representations or likeness of the world (Nichols, 1991). A documentary represents the “views of individuals, groups, or agencies from a solitary filmmaker.
Documentary also makes a representation, or a case, an argument about the world explicitly or implicitly” (Nichols, 1991, p. 112). Although a modal analysis will reveal some of the persuasive characteristics of the documentary and a partial standpoint of the filmmaker, Nichols’ work leaves out a meaningful examination of the documentaries persuasive elements. Therefore, we must also consider the ways in which a rhetorical approach will build upon and add to Nichols’ work. In order to understand the rhetorical goals of an artifact, it is the critic’s responsibility to identify the various types of rhetorical genres it is associated with.

Rhetorical Genres

Building upon the traditional conception of literary genre, Campbell and Jamieson (1978) indicate that rhetorical genres are “groups of discourse which share substantive, stylistic, and situational characteristics…these characteristics exist in a reciprocal dynamic relationship” (p. 417). According to Foss (2004) there are three goals of genre criticism. Description involves defining the genre and formulating theoretical constructs about its characteristic (Foss, 2004). Participation requires that one describes which artifacts participate in which genre (Foss, 2004). Lastly, application involves describing the effectiveness of a particular artifact in fulfilling the perceived situational demands. To study genre is to study the form and content of a message as appropriate to a rhetorical situation. For example, the Inaugural address is a distinct genre because a new president must begin creating consensus in order to have an effective first year in office (Campbell & Jamieson, 1986). To divide one’s audience ideologically from the outset is to invite political fights that will end the so-called "press honeymoon" early (Campbell & Jamieson, 1986). Additionally, the presidential inaugural can be fully understood as a genre only by seeing in it the imprint of the sermon (Jamieson, 1973).
Other examples of genre criticism include Ware and Linkugel’s (1973) analysis of the characteristics of self-defense speeches or apologia, Campbell and Jamieson’s (1986) analysis of presidential inaugurals and Murphy’s (1990) essay on Robert Kennedy’s speeches following the death of Martin Luther King Jr. The concept of genre also requires an understanding of situational features which produce particular rhetorical acts. Therefore it is important to discuss differing viewpoints toward the concept of the rhetorical situation.

Rhetorical Situation

In Nichols’ description of documentary modes, the notion of objectivity changed, as did the role of the audience. Like Nichols’s, the debate regarding the rhetorical situation between Bitzer and Vatz is also audience centered. These two differing views of the rhetorical situation can also be linked to Nichols’ modes of representation.

The first three modes, poetic, expository, and observational rely upon the historical world for their source material (Nichols, 2001). By drawing upon the historical world, these modes seek to represent the world and the events as they are happening rather than a world created or positioned by the filmmaker (Nichols, 2001). Thus, the filmmaker is viewed as attending to or responding to a particular situation. On the other hand, the latter three modes, participatory, reflexive, and performative allow the audience to see the ways in which the filmmaker controls the representation of reality. The audience becomes aware that that the filmmaker is responsible for assigning meaning and creating an alternative venue of thought.

Bitzer (1968) defines rhetorical situations “as a complex of persons, events, objects and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence” (p. 63). The rhetorical situation contains the following three constituents: exigence, audience, and constraints. Every situation requires an exigence, which Bitzer (1968) asserts, is an “imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an
obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be” (p. 63). The second constituent of the rhetorical situation is the audience. The rhetorical audience “must be capable of serving as mediator of the change which the discourse functions to produce” (p. 64). The third element of the rhetorical situation refers to the constraints. Constraints are elements that “have the power to constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence” (p. 64). Bitzer argues, “rhetorical discourse is called into existence by situation” (p. 63), essentially indicating that meaning resides within events.

Although Vatz (1973) does not deny that events/situations are real, he argues that the way describe them is where meaning resides. Vatz (1973) argues that “no situation can have a nature independent of the perception of its interpreter or independent of the rhetoric with which we choose to characterize it” (p. 154). Therefore, Vatz (1973) asserts, “meaning is not discovered in situations rather, it is created by rhetors” (p. 157). Vatz’s argument here is that we as individuals choose what to ignore and what to make salient, therefore we must assume responsibility for what we have created (Vatz, 1973). Furthermore, Vatz (1973) points out, “I would not say ‘rhetoric is situational’ but situations are rhetorical…[it is not that] the situation controls the rhetorical response, but the rhetoric controls the situational response…” (p. 159).

For Bitzer (1968) the situation holds meaning and for Vatz (1973) the rhetor creates it. To further the investigation/explanation of the situational response and its relation to this study, the generic hybrid will be discussed next.

Generic Rhetorical Hybrids

Nichols (2001) points out that documentaries “mix and match modes,” indicating that individual films can contain more than one mode. Similarly, rhetorical artifacts exhibit characteristics of multiple genres. When more than one genre is used together, the combined
genres then create a new complex rhetorical form known as the “rhetorical hybrid” (Jamieson & Campbell, 1982). Rhetorical hybrids are called into existence by complex situations where audience expectations may require a blending of two different generic elements (Jamieson & Campbell, 1982). A generic hybrid may contain one dominant genre that implements additional rhetorical functions to meet secondary needs demanded by the situation, or it may occasionally contain two whole genres that work together simultaneously in order to meet situational needs (Jamieson & Campbell, 1982).

Jamieson and Campbell (1982) analyzed Johnson’s November 27th, 1963 address to Congress, and found that although the eulogy genre predominated, the deliberative genre remained subordinate and served secondary purposes required by the situation and the perceived needs of the audience. Similarly, Carlson’s (1985) analysis of Adams’ Amistad Address is an example of a generic hybrid that fuses two genres, forensic and deliberative, together to appeal to “common values” of the audience in order to unify them towards agreement. To build upon the modal analysis, this thesis will also explore the extent to which elements of two genres appear in Fahrenheit 9/11. The two prominent rhetorical genres that will be examined in this paper are the conspiracy argument and diatribe.

Conspiracy Argument

The following discussion of conspiracy rhetoric is based on Hofstader’s (1964) depiction of the paranoid style. The paranoid style is characterized by Hofstader (1964) as the tendency in some political discourse to blame the deliberate, clandestine and unrestrained use of power for social evil. According to Hofstader (1964), it is the use of paranoid modes of expression by “normal” people that makes the phenomenon significant. Hofstader (1964) attempted to explain the proliferation of conspiracy theories as resulting from the fact that “anything that partakes of
political strategy may need, for a time at least, an element of secrecy, and is thus vulnerable to being dubbed conspiratorial” (p. 78). Hofstader (1964) identified the main practitioners of conspiracy discourse as political extremists, especially the radical right. Hofstadter (1964) also argued that some citizens accept conspiratorial claims because of their own paranoia; they see themselves as persecuted and powerless individuals who have to face an enemy that is "sinister, ubiquitous, powerful, cruel, sensual, luxury-loving" (pp. 31-32).

Goodnight and Poulakos (1981) observed that the “social agents in conspiratorial tales are often portrayed as twisted, abnormal, brutal, powerful, and clever beings” (p. 310). Acknowledging that the paranoid style had moved away from the ideological extremists towards more mainstream speakers and audiences, Goodnight and Poulakos (1981) analyzed the Watergate scandal and focused on how groups construct conspiracy in ways that change fantasy into reality. The struggle characteristically emerges between two parties, those who claim to be aware of a conspiracy and those who argue these claims to be preposterous and malevolently inspired (Goodnight & Poulakos, 1981). Depending upon the outcome of the struggle, the rhetorical ground of one group might be seen as "pragmatism" and the other as "fantasy." The struggles rhetors face can be broken down into three parts (Goodnight & Poulakos, 1981). The first is the possibility of conspiracy, which is the appearance of some type of unusual event or illegal act (Goodnight & Poulakos, 1981). The second struggle refers to the rhetorical proofs and social reality (Goodnight & Poulakos, 1981). This occurs when both sides begin to compete for the public’s belief by attempting to provide evidence and ascertain credibility, while simultaneously trying to establish their own definition of social reality (Goodnight & Poulakos, 1981). The last struggle addresses the fantasy aspects of conspiracy which indicates that the
world projected by individuals aware of the conspiracy can become fantasy if the “form is fully consummated” (Goodnight & Poulakos, 1981, p. 316).

Goodnight and Poulakos (1981) indicate, “when fears of conspiracy become all-encompassing, a rhetor, surrounded by subtle, powerful, manipulators and comprehending victims, makes assertions that are regarded as the product of a paranoid mind” (p. 316).

Goodnight and Poulakos (1981) assert, “if claims of a conspiracy are vindicated, then the rhetoric of the conspirators is revealed to be nothing more than the perpetuation of fantasy. The past motives, actions, and statements of the conspirators are seen as part of a twisted, secret world carved out by the genius of a master-mind and the loyalty of a few fanatics. Alternatively, if a speaker or group aware of a conspiracy is denied vindication, persistency in alleging conspiracy may itself eventually create a world where pragmatic assumptions about discourse become entirely inoperative” (p. 302).

Further refining the work of Goodnight and Poulakos, Zarefsky (1984) examined the use of conspiracy arguments in the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Zarefsky identified eight principles that form the basis for conspiracy rhetoric. These eight principles can be viewed as substantive and stylistics elements of a genre of conspiracy discourse and will be used to examine Fahrenheit 9/11 for elements of conspiracy. In order for a conspiracy charge to be credible, it must adhere to following four propositions: (1) Explain an ambiguous evil, helping the community find a clear target for accusation with the hopes that they might be able to thwart the evil influences plan; (2) Explain a pattern of anomalies, a rise of difficult-to-explain events that seem to project a pattern; (3) Polarize position, things are not really what they seem because the evil influence has been participating in a devious plot; and (4) Offer reassurance during times of strain, when life is difficult and times are had the argument seeks to shed light on complex
phenomena (Zarefsky, 1984, pp. 71-73). In addition to external events, Zarefsky (1984) points out that conspiracy argument(s) must also adhere to the following four dynamics: (1) *Successful conspiracy arguments shift the burden of proof to one’s opponent, while minimizing one’s burdens*, through inferences or residues the arguer places the blame on the opponent pointing out their wrongs while maintaining the position that they are simply exposing the situation; (2) *Motives are most persuasively proved by residues*, the argument will not be persuasive until the alleged conspirator is shown to have had a particular motive for participating in the devious plot; (3) *Inferences are a more persuasive form of evidence than documents*, the power of a document depends upon the context in which it is presented and the context is dependent upon the arguer. However, the debate itself furnishes the context for inferences and if the opponent objects to the debate they are also demeaning the judgment of the audience; and (4) *Counter-charges are the most effective responses to a conspiracy argument*, when a conspiracy argument is made the opponent may either deny it, offer an alternative explanation, or make a counter-charge against the arguer.

Conspiracy discourse becomes popular when it functions as a way of explicating patterns of anomalous events that cannot be explained by traditional political arguments (Young, Launer, & Austin, 1990, p. 90; Zarefsky, 1984, p. 72). Although Zarefsky’s eight principles provide insight as to how such arguments can gain acceptance, Young, Launer, & Austin, (1990) have identified circular reasoning, repetition of unproven premises, and false dilemmas as weaknesses associated with conspiratorial arguments. Nonetheless, if the previous eight principles do not support the conspiratorial argument, Zarefsky (1984) claims that the notion of the “self-sealing quality” enables all minute and rigorous details to be covered. “Given surface plausibility, the conspiracy argument’s theory of events is almost self-sealing. It is virtually impossible to
disprove and even discrepant evidence can be explained easily as the work of the clever conspirator who is trying to cover his tracks.” (p. 72). The inability to disprove further “seals” the case (Zarefsky, 1984).

The literature on conspiracy suggests that the conspiracy argument as a response to various societal or rhetorical problems should not be interpreted that the argument can or will solve the exigence in any concrete way (Goodnight & Poulakos, 1981; Miller, 2002; Young, Launer, & Austin, 1990; Zarefsky, 1984). This simply means that the use of this genre will probably not eliminate the appointed social evils. Rather, the conspiracy argument should be interpreted as a way of making sense of the problem or a way of simply understanding and dealing with the disruption of one’s social expectations. The conspiracy argument is not the only genre of interest. The next section will discuss the tactics and strategies used by rhetors when conventional methods do not seem to work.

_Diatribe_

The diatribe is an extreme and radical form of protest that is used when an individual views the entire society and its institutions as immoral, corrupt, and in need of reform (Windt, 1972). As is indicated by Windt (1972), diatribes are often used as a last resort for protesters because seemingly conventional approaches no longer work. In order for a rhetorical artifact to be classified as a diatribe, it must serve the following functions as outlined by Windt (1972; 1990): (1) portray a satirical mood of rhetoric which promotes exaggeration, mockery, sarcasm, and parody; (2) contain shock value such as ridicule, obscenity, and extreme behavior that redirects perspectives and gathers an audience; (3) assert inverted logic, the unexpected becomes expected; (4) illustrate obscene use of language; (5) commit moral dramaturgy that assaults moral sensibilities; (6) promote alienation; and (7) ridicule the very corruption that lies deep in
the body of the “sick commonwealth”. According to Windt (1990), “the diatribe is to rhetoric what satire is to literature” (p. 226).

In Windt’s (1972) article, the example he illustrates comes from the actions of the Youth International Party, the Yippies. At the Democratic Convention in Chicago in 1968, the group nominated Pegasus for President and embraced the slogan, “Why take half a hog when you can take the whole hog” (Windt, 1972, p. 61). Windt (1972) argued that in order to understand the Yippies and their antics one must gain perspective from the “archetypal moral protestors”, the Cynics of Greece (p. 61). The Cynics “never washed, never had their hair cut, wrapped themselves in rags and lived on alms like beggars” with Diogenes as their patron saint (Windt, 1972, pp. 62-63). It is said that Diogenes believed in “absolute humanism” and that “to live by men’s conventions is to embrace the death of a person, to defy society is to embrace life” (Windt, 1972, p. 63). Diogenes’ view of the world was pessimistic, and when he saw the officials leave a temple with a thief he was said to have stated, “the great thieves are leading away the little thief” (Windt, 1972, p. 63). Diogenes indicated that humanity was “natural and good” while society was “unnatural and corrupt” (Windt, 1972, p. 63). Thus, the Cynics would challenge the traditional forms of cultural transactions and ridicule basic values by cursing in public and stealing from the temple. Diogenes felt that stealing something from a corrupt institution was not a crime because the institutions were immoral (Windt, 1990). Diogenes even went as far as urinating on people and even masterbating in public (Windt, 1990). Each act was an attack and was intended to shock one’s sensibilities (Windt, 1972, 1990).

The Yippies embraced cynicism by rejecting the conventional standards of protest and maintained the mindset that individuals were not free because they had been “conditioned and defiled by corrupt institutions” (Windt, 1990, p. 233). During a march on the Pentagon the
Yippies chanted with worshippers “sustaining sounds of ‘Ommmmmmmmmmmmmmm’” as an attempt to “exercise the evil ‘vibrations’ arising from the military establishment” (Windt, 1990, p. 233). Apparently the Yippies’ leader Jerry Rubin was arrested for urinating on the Pentagon wall (Windt, 1990). The Yippies also participated in public sexual acts in an attempt to shock people into realizing “that the very same customs that suppress sex also sustain wars and exploitation” (Windt, 1990, p. 234). The underlying premise for these public sex acts was the belief that although sex was “natural and creative, war and money-grubbing are unnatural and destructive” (Windt, 1990, p. 234). The Yippies also refused to adopt conventional dress and thus they wore Indian costumes, Revolutionary War uniforms and even Santa Claus suits (Windt, 1990). As the inheritors of cynicism, the Yippies started a movement that would ridicule civic life in America (Windt, 1990).

However, just as the conspiracy genre contains drawbacks and limitations, so does the diatribe. Perhaps the greatest weakness of the diatribe is that its effectiveness is limited, signifying that once attention has been gained and criticism voiced, the true usefulness of the diatribe dissipates (Windt, 1972; 1990). The diatribe relies profoundly on the use of shock and obscenity. However, after repeated use the acts are no longer shocking and are given less attention. The focus is no longer placed upon the act, but the rhetor. Windt (1990) asserts, “moral dramaturgy must eventually give way to a conventional rhetorical form of serious reforms” (p, 227).

Few individuals other than Windt had examined the rhetorical implications of the diatribe. Pearce, Littlejohn, and Alexander’s (1987) study indicated that members of the Christian Right occasionally use the diatribe for any extended period of time. Nelson and Maddox (1996) employed the diatribe to examine the nearly two-decades-old group MOVE. In
their study, they found that obscenity permeated the rhetoric of the MOVE members with regards to their dealings with the establishment and that their whole lifestyle was deemed indecent and depraved, all of which confirmed for them the rightness of their actions (Nelson & Maddox, 1996). Nelson and Maddox (1996) maintained that MOVE members have little interest in bringing people together, but instead worked to polarize and stress the irreconcilable differences between them and the establishment. According to MOVE, “nothing worthwhile [can] be achieved by compromising with pure evil” (Nelson & Maddox, 1996, p. 6).

A variation of the diatribe is the rhetoric of vilification. Vanderford (1989) focused on the relationship between vilification and the functioning of social movements in relation to the abortion controversy. Vilification, according to Vanderford (1989), “is a rhetorical strategy that discredits adversaries by characterizing them as un­genuine and malevolent advocates. Rather than differentiating opponents as good people with a difference of opinion, vilification delegitimizes them through characterizations of intentions, actions, purposes and identities.” (p. 166).

In sum, this literature review has examined the previous literature about documentaries, defined rhetorical genres and explicated the differing viewpoints on the rhetorical situation. This review has also introduced literature on the rhetorical hybrid and has defined the genres of conspiracy argument and diatribe. The next section will identify four questions of concern for Fahrenheit 9/11.


text continues...
rely upon blending different modes of representation to represent new ideology that attempts to explain our relation to reality while fulfilling the needs of the filmmaker and the audience’s expectations. Thus, it is important to explore the following:

RQ1: Which mode or modes of documentary is exhibited in Fahrenheit 9/11? To what extent do the mode(s) reflect a particular view toward the rhetorical situation?

According to Jamieson and Campbell (1982) often times situations arise that call for a dual response. This response in part must fulfill the perceived needs of the situation, but must also entertain audience expectations. This study will explore the extent in which Fahrenheit 9/11 responded to the needs of the situation and the audience and examine the generic elements used to do so. Therefore, it is also important to consider the following:

RQ2: To what extent does Fahrenheit 9/11 contain elements of both conspiracy argument and diatribe?

RQ3: To what extent does Fahrenheit 9/11 work as a generic hybrid based on different situational components and/or the ways in which elements of one genre support or reinforce elements of the other?

The critical responses to the film should serve as an evaluation of compatibility for the generic elements used in Moore’s rhetorical hybrid. Therefore it is also important to review the critical responses associated with Fahrenheit 9/11.

RQ4: How can the critical responses to Fahrenheit 9/11 be related to its distinctive substantive, stylistic, and situational characteristics?

**Limitations of the Study**

One limitation of this study is that there is only one interpreter of the artifact. Therefore, there is no other individual assessing the reliability of the author’s interpretation of the findings within this study. Criticism is complicated by the fact that interpretation can mean many different things to many individuals. By this I mean that even though I will be providing a
plethora of examples from the film for each research question, it is possible that someone could classify my grouping of examples differently.

Secondly, because this study focuses on only one of Michael Moore’s documentaries, I cannot claim that Fahrenheit 9/11 is either like or unlike any of Moore’s previous films.

Lastly, I will only review a small sample of the critical responses to Moore’s film due to the extremely large amount of coverage. There are far too many magazines, online sources, blogs, newspapers, etc. to consider. In order for the scope of this project to remain manageable, I must adhere to a limited amount of responses.

Justification of the Study

The significance of this study will reside in the examination of both conspiracy and diatribe genres and in its examination of the rhetorical hybrid. The hybrid will also contribute greatly to rhetorical criticism given that the very nature of the hybrid allows a critic to capture both the idiosyncrasies and formalities of rhetorical artifacts. The hybrid should lend itself to an analysis without having the results trivialized by a critical “cookie-cutter.” Moreover, no one has examined the ways in which the generic elements in the hybrid work to buttress the weaknesses each genre may have. Therefore, this study should lend itself to future hybrid studies.

Additionally, this study will compensate for the inadequate amount of research on the diatribe and the rhetorical hybrid. Since not many scholars have assessed the potential each has to offer rhetorical criticism, this study hopes to support the exploration of future hybrid studies within our discipline. Moreover, this study will further our limited understanding of the rhetorical dimensions of documentaries.
Design of the Study

Following an explanation in the present chapter of the literature review and research questions, Chapter Two will review the literature on the documentary modes of representation and the concept of the rhetorical situation. This review will aid in the identification of the various documentary modes Moore employees within his film as well as address the link between these modes and the rhetorical situation.

Chapter Three will provide a review of the literature on conspiracy arguments and the diatribe, as well as the rhetorical hybrid. Within this chapter each generic element will be examined in order to determine whether or not Fahrenheit 9/11 fulfilled the rhetorical goals required of each genre. The rhetorical hybrid will also be directly applied to the film in order to assess the ways in which these two genres work together to create a unique and complex rhetorical form. Chapter Three will also address whether or not the hybrid promotes or deters the support of each genre’s weaknesses.

Lastly Chapter Four will include an evaluation of the rhetorical hybrid and its overall effectiveness in relation to various critical responses. Additionally the chapter will review the research questions from this chapter and provide a summary of the study’s major findings. This chapter will then conclude by addressing the future of documentaries and providing details about the direction Moore’s career is taking.
Chapter 2: The Voice of Documentary

Nichols’ (2001) suggests, “Documentary has never been only one thing” (p. 26). Every documentary contains its own individual voice, and Fahrenheit 9/11 is no exception. This chapter will identify the modes of documentary exhibited by the film as well as address the extent to which these various modes reflect a particular view toward the rhetorical situation.

Three modes emerged from Fahrenheit 9/11: expository, participatory, and reflexive. Of the three modes, the reflexive proved to be dominant given the films underlying political premise and the date of the films release. The order of discussion about each mode will start with the expository because the expository mode lays out five key foundational cause-and-effect relationships from which each of the other modes draws.

Expository Mode

Documentaries that represent the expository mode piece together fragments of texts from the historical world in order to propose a perspective or advance an argument (Nichols, 2001). This mode profoundly relies upon commentary as a means to organize images and illustrations, as well as the audience’s interpretation of what they are seeing (Nichols, 2001). The audience takes its “cue from the commentary and understand[s] the images as evidence or demonstration for what is said” (Nichols, 2001, p. 107). This mode adopts either a voice-of-God commentary where the speaker is heard but never seen, or a voice-of-authority commentary where the speaker is both heard and seen (Nichols, 2001). Within this mode the images exemplify a cause and effect relationship among various phenomena (Nichols, 1999, 2001). The cause-effect linkage is made possible through evidentiary editing. This type of editing affords the filmmaker the opportunity to sacrifice temporal continuity by using arbitrary images as long as those images chosen help advance the argument (Nichols, 1991, 2001). The documentaries representing this
mode attempt to create an impression of objectivity by assuming that the knowledge about the
world is at the fingertips of the filmmaker (Nichols, 1991), thus indicating that the film in
question is rendering the truth.

Throughout *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Moore pieces together different fragments of various
footage, interviews, news coverage, home videos, and commercials in order to propose his
perspective about the past four years of U.S. history. Additionally, Moore employs voice-over-
commentary as a way of organizing the various fragments of footage being shown. Similarly to
his other films, *Roger and Me*, *The Big One*, and *Bowling for Columbine*, Moore opts for a
blending of both commentary styles. Generally speaking, either style of commentary, voice-of-
God or voice-of-authority, is presumed by the audience to be objective and above the images that
they are seeing (Nichols, 2001). Essentially, this allows the commentator to judge the images and
not become tangled within them. By using the voice-of-God commentary, Moore appears to be
doing nothing more than “showing the audience what is or has happened,” versus voicing his
personal stance or opinion. As images flash across the screen of various situations and events,
Moore acts as a narrator guiding the audience through a story. This type of commentary
continues all the way through the film until the end. Furthermore, to the extent that Moore’s
long-time advocacy for political issues makes him a more readily known speaker than an
anonymous commentator would be, he also fulfills the function of a voice of authority.

Unlike traditional films, expository documentaries rely more upon spoken word as a
means of distributing informing logic, thus images and illustrations used within the film serve a
supporting role (Nichols, 2001). Therefore, evidentiary editing is used as means to maintain the
continuity of the argument (Nichols, 2001). Moore uses this type of editing through his
juxtaposition of various clips of footage. Within *Fahrenheit 9/11*, the footage as edited suggests
several cause-effect relationships that mainly stem from one occurrence—the election of George W. Bush as President in 2000. Throughout the film the audience is made aware of Bush’s relationships and actions and how they have affected the U.S. The film is rhetorically organized to support this thesis.

There are five key cause-effect relationships Moore introduces to the audience, which lay the foundation for the film’s argument. Before establishing these linkages, it is important to point out that although these relationships presented themselves in a temporal sequence, some of the supporting material for each claim was spread throughout different segments of the film. Moore spreads the supporting material throughout the film as a way to demonstrate the interrelatedness of his arguments and the footage, as well as a strategy for allowing the audience to connect all of the pieces together for themselves. Therefore the reader should be aware that certain relationships contain examples of footage used in the film that may not have occurred in a chronological order. Since these relationships represent some of the most complex sequences of the film, the following expositions are worth considering in some detail. Each relationship will first be identified and will then be followed by examples from the film as support for each relationship.

*Relationship One: Bush was Unfairly Elected*

The first controversy addressed in the film centers on the idea that Bush was “falsely” elected as President in 2000, therefore blaming him for the current state of the nation. During the beginning of the film, the audience is reminded of the 2000 election by viewing various snippets of news station coverage. In the first part of the news coverage, Al Gore is being called the next President given his win over Bush in Florida. Suddenly, Moore interrupts, informing the audience that the Fox News Channel had called the election in favor of George Bush. Images
and sound clips of apologetic anchormen decidedly project Bush as the winner of Florida and the next President. A close-up of a gentleman working a phone desk during election night is shown and Moore introduces him as John Ellis, Fox News phone worker and cousin of Bush. As a news clip of Bush cackling crosses the screen Moore questions, “How does someone like Bush get away with something like this” (Moore, Czarnecki, & Glynn, 2004, hereafter referred to as Fahrenheit 9/11). Pictures of Jeb Bush and Katherine Harris come across the screen and Moore states, “Well first, it helps if your brother is the governor of the state in question…Second, make sure the chairman of your campaign is also the vote countin’ woman and that her state has hired a company that’s gonna knock voters off the rolls who aren’t likely to vote for you” (Fahrenheit 9/11). Although the votes were recounted and prove that Gore got the most votes Moore tells the audience, “It won’t matter, just as long as all your daddy’s friends on the Supreme Court vote the right way” (Fahrenheit 9/11).

Once Moore establishes the unethical way Bush got into office, the audience is shown coverage of his inauguration day. The audience watches as thousands of protestors curse, “Hail to the thief!” and pelt eggs at Bush’s Limo. News clips show a decline in Bush’s approval ratings while Moore narrates, “He was already beginning to look like a lame duck president. With everything going wrong, he did what any of us would do, he went on vacation” (Fahrenheit 9/11).

**Relationship Two: Bush’s Vacation**

Bush’s vacation is the second key cause and effect relationship of the film. Moore implies that because Bush was on vacation for a prolonged amount of time and didn’t do any real work, the U.S. had to deal with a horrific event that could have possibly been stopped. Various news clips begin to show Bush golfing, fishing and playing with his dogs while Moore tells the
audience, “In his first eight months in office before September 11, George W. Bush was on vacation, according to the Washington Post, forty-two percent of the time” (Fahrenheit 9/11). Although news reporters insisted that people thought he was “loafing,” Bush claimed to be getting work done. After the opening credits are shown, the screen fades to black and the audience listens to sound bites of the planes hitting the towers and the crowd’s reaction. Clips of that day’s horrific events fade to a school room where Bush is informed by his Chief of Staff about the events that have transpired. On the screen the text shows a minute by minute play of Bush’s actions—nothing—and Moore questions, “As Bush sat in that Florida classroom, was he wondering if maybe he should have shown up to work more often? Should he have held at least one meeting since taking office to discuss the threat of terrorism with his head of counterterrorism? Or maybe Mr. Bush was wondering why he had cut terrorism funding from the FBI, or perhaps he just should have read the security briefing that was given to him on August 6th, 2001” (Fahrenheit 9/11).

Clips of Bush on his ranch with his aides are shown while the commentary questions whether or not the title of the report was too vague. This clips cuts to National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice’s testimony before the 9/11 commission with her commenting, “I believe the title was ‘Bin Laden Determined to Attack Inside the United States’” (Fahrenheit 9/11). Seemingly, Moore is indicating that because Bush spent more time doing leisurely work than actual work, he should partially be blamed for the September 11th attacks. While juxtaposing news clips of Bush fishing and sitting in the Florida classroom, Moore questions who Bush thought could have “screwed” him and who he should blame it on, which leads into the next cause and effect relationship.
Relationship Three: The Bush/Saudi Family Relationship

The third cause-effect linkage that exists in the film stems from the relationship the Bush family has with the Saudis. Moore argues that because the Bush family has an allegiance with members of the Saudi royal family, the choices he and his administration make are for the good of the Saudis, not necessarily the USA. All commercial and private airline traffic was grounded after the September attacks, and Ricky Martin confusingly shrugged to reporters because he couldn’t fly. With the music playing, *we’ve got to get out of this place, if it’s the last thing we ever do*, an interview with Senator Byron Dorgan indicates that some planes flew to pick up Osama bin Laden’s family and transport them out of the U.S. Images of the Bushes are shown with the bin Laden family while Jim Moore, an investigative reporter, contends, “A lot of us have suspected through the years that there has been Saudi oil money involved in all of these companies—Harkan, Spectrum 7, Arbusto Drilling, all of the Bush Companies” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Images of U.S. citizens are juxtaposed with shots of Saudi Royals as Moore indicates that although Bush was being paid $400,000 a year to be President of the United States, “another group of people invest in you, your friends, and their related business $1.4 billion over a number of years, who you gonna like” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Moore cuts to a news clip of George H.W. Bush greeting the Saudis while he asks, “Is it rude to suggest that when the Bush family wakes up in the morning they might be thinking about what’s best for the Saudis instead of what’s best for you or me” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). The song “Shiny Happy People” by R.E.M is cued while Bush and his cabinet members hold hands with the Saudi elite and smile for photos.

The newspaper headline Bush Opposes 9/11 Panel” scrolls across the screen while Moore explains that because Bush did not want anyone to find out about the relationship he had with the Saudis he tried to stop Congress from setting up an investigation about 9/11. Moore informs the
audience that although an independent commission did complete an investigation, approximately 28 pages of the report had been censored. Moore cuts to the streets of Washington D.C where he and Craig Unger talk about the trillions of dollars the Saudis have invested in banks. Craig Unger tells the audience, “Well, in terms of investments on Wall Street, American equities, it’s roughly six or seven percent. They own a fairly good slice of America” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*).

Ostensibly because of this relationship, the war would have to change gears.

Footage from the Afghanistan invasion plays in the background as Moore states that the U.S. did not began bombing Afghanistan until four weeks after the September attacks. Moore switches to various news clips of Bush claiming that they were going to “smoke out” the enemy. Bush’s counterterrorism chief appears in an interview on “Good Morning America” indicating that there were only about 11,000 troops in Afghanistan and that it took nearly two months before the Special Forces even came into the area where bin Laden was. Moore asks the audience, “Two months? Who in their right mind would do that?...Or was the war in Afghanistan about something else” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Moore informs the audience that once the invasion was complete, Hamis Karzai was installed as its new president, and that Karzai was also a former advisor to Unocal. Moore’s next relationship is linked to the third, given its connection with corporations and globalization. However, the relationship is significant enough to warrant a new cause-effect linkage.

*Relationship Four: Oil & Gas*

The fourth cause-effect linkage that Moore introduces to the audience is that access to oil and natural gas supplies is more important than terror. Moore implies that because countries like Afghanistan and Iraq had what our country needed or wanted, we would go to any length to get it—including war. It almost seems as if Moore is claiming that the September attacks left the
doors wide open for the administration. Illustrations of oil rigs, maps of pipelines, and shots of the Taliban in Texas are shown as Moore indicates that the Taliban leaders had flown to Texas to discuss the building of a pipeline through Afghanistan to gather natural gas from the Caspian Sea. As Karzai signs an agreement Moore states, “Faster than you can say ‘Black Gold, Texas Tea,’ Afghanistan signed an agreement with their neighboring countries to build a pipeline” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*).

Supporting the notion that the war was really linked to oil and gas versus terrorism, Moore shows images of the Oregon coastline open and unprotected. In this segment Moore tells the audience that because of budget cutbacks the shores of our borders go unprotected. Moore interviews two police troopers, one that indicates he only gets to check the border once or twice a week and the other who indicates that he doesn’t have the manpower to check out every call he gets about suspicious activity and vehicles. Footage of the economic conference shows the groups of industrial conglomerates (Microsoft, DHL, and Haliburton) that have come together to talk about how much money could be made in Iraq. Youssef Sleiman of the Iraq Initiatives Harris Corporation is shown standing at a podium addressing the conference, “Once that oil starts flowing and money coming, it’s going to be lots of money. It’s the second largest oil reserve of oil in the world…and it’s going to get better! Start building relationships because it’s going to get much better as the oil flows and their budget increases, and the good news is, whatever it costs, the government will pay you” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). News clips show the interview of Harold Moss who claims, “The United States is now a major player in the Iraqi oil business. American troops guard the oil fields as Texas oils workers asses their potential” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). This clip is followed by an oil worker who claims, “So it’s a safe environment to work in. We don’t feel any risk at all. We feel we’re being well protected here or
we wouldn’t be here” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Through these contrasting situations the audience is shown that the war is about oil and profit and not about terror.

**Relationship Five: Violation of Rights**

The fifth cause and effect relationship that Moore introduces is that the war has enabled the government to impinge upon the rights of the people. In the middle of the film Moore shows various news clips about possible terrorist attacks that range from pen guns and explosive model airplanes to potentially hijacked ferries and cattle. In an interview with psychiatrist and Congressman Jim McDermott, Moore asks if fear really does work. McDermott replies, “Fear does work, yes. You can make people do anything if they’re afraid” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Moore asks McDermott how one could go about making people afraid, and McDermott refers to the terror alert color chart and the fact that the current administration had been “playing us like an organ” by continuously raising and lowering the color scale (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). In correlation with this phenomenon, Moore juxtaposes various news clips of the administration during speeches where the President tells individuals that September 11th has changed us and that it is no longer safe, and then demands that individuals fly and enjoy the destination spots of America. Moore indicates that America’s new found fear opened up a new market for the economy, because fear equals consumption. The Zytech safe bunker and escape parachute, two new products on the market, are shown to demonstrate this. However, consumption isn’t the only thing Moore insinuates that the government is pushing upon those who are fearful.

After 9/11, the U.S.A Patriot Act was adopted by Congress. The audience is informed through a news clip that the Patriot Act allows for searches of medical and financial records, computer and telephone conversations, and even the books that individuals check out of the library. Testimony from two individuals indicates that they don’t mind if certain rights are taken
away and that perhaps the act should be in place for the safety of the country. Moore, however, wants the audience to question whether or not giving up certain liberties is good or bad and for whom.

Members of Peace Fresno, a community group in California, are shown gathered in a living room eating cookies. Moore tells the audience that the group was given an early lesson about the Patriot Act when they found out that one of their members, Aaron Stokes, was sent in by the local police department to infiltrate the organization in order to check for terrorist action. Moore cuts to an older man named Barry walking across a park and shows scenes of him at the gym. Moore allows him to explain that while working out, he called Bush an obscene name for bombing all over the world for oil profits. Shortly thereafter, members of the FBI came to his home to question him about his statements and anything he might know about potential terrorists. Apparently a member of the gym had turned Barry in for talking like a terrorist.

Moore then cuts to Congressman Jim McDermott saying, “I mean, they had…they had all this on the shelf somewhere, ideas of things they would like to do. And they got 9/11 and they said, ‘That’s our chance! Go for it’” (Fahrenheit 9/11). Moore switches to a home interview with a woman who shares her experience about the time she had to drink her breast milk at the airport because security thought she was posing a terrorist threat. The images change, and the audience watches as a woman drops five matchbooks and two lighters into an airport security container and asks if she can bring these items onto the plane. Airport security tells her that she is fine as long as she takes only four books of matches and two lighters. The image cuts to Senator Byron Dorgan and his interview about Richard Reid, the shoe bomber who would have blown up an airplane with his shoe bomb if he had a butane lighter. Through these images and
news clips Moore is able to suggest to the audience that the administration is using the war as an excuse to infringe upon our constitutional rights.

These five cause and effect relationships arise from Moore’s use of voice-over narration and the fragments he juxtaposes. Although these five relationships emerged as key cause and effect themes within the expository mode, they also simultaneously worked together to provide the audience with a plausible chronological ordering of events. These will become the basis for the conspiracy argument as we’ll see later in Chapter Three. As Nichols claims, “Common sense makes a perfect basis for this type of representation about the world since common sense, like rhetoric, is less subject to logic than to belief” (Nichols, 2001, p. 109).

Participatory Mode

The second mode to emerge was the participatory mode. This type of documentary mode allows the audience to witness the world as it is represented by someone who is actively engaging in it (Nichols, 2001). As a result, the audience is able to observe the actions and responses of the filmmaker. However, not all participatory documentaries stress the continuous interaction between the filmmaker and subjects (Nichols, 2001). Thus the filmmaker may choose to bring a broader perspective to the documentary through the interview (Nichols, 2001). Unlike voice-over commentary, the interview brings different accounts together in one story (Nichols, 2001). In the participatory mode, interviews “generally serve as evidence for an argument presented as the product of the interaction of filmmaker and subject” (Nichols, 1991, p. 48). Therefore interviews may hold greater authority in the argument of the film because the filmmaker is specifically addressing individuals that appear in the film versus addressing the audience through commentary. Interviews give viewers the sense that they are witness to a form
of dialogue between the filmmaker and the subject that stresses a situated engagement or particular place in time (Nichols, 2001).

In his first film *Roger and Me*, Moore makes the audience aware of the fact that he is representing his own point of view during the prologue of the film (Bernstein, 1998). Indeed, the title itself suggests that the film will take place in the participatory mode of documentary (Bernstein, 1998). In *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Moore positions himself as the interviewer and allows for the interviewees to *speak for* themselves.

This film heavily relies on the use of interviews as a means of additional support for the claims made through the images and voice-over commentary. Although Moore relies upon interviews as evidence for his argument, the audience is continually reminded of his presence and persona by the sound of his voice. Some of the interviews in the film also take place as “masked” interviews. According to Nichols (2001), masked interviews are most commonly found in the observational mode and allow the filmmaker to work in a participatory manner with the subjects, so that they may discuss the general topic and then film the interview as if the camera happened to be “on scene”.

The interviews in *Fahrenheit 9/11* are dispersed throughout the film to act as support for the film’s thesis. The interview subjects range from members of Congress and retired FBI agents to Lila Lipscomb, a mother who lost her son in action in Iraq. These interviews support the film’s central arguments and the cause-effect linkage between the war and the people. Moore uses interviews from citizens to advance the argument that the Patriot Act infringing upon individual’s civil liberties. In another example, during a visit to his hometown of Flint, Michigan Moore interviews a group of young men about the war and finds out that military recruiters have been coming to the indigent parts of town in hopes of enlisting them. Such interviews allow the
audience to make the connection that the situation is valid because it is in fact happening right in front of them. Although some of the interviews used within the film came from news clips, they, too, supported the thesis of this film.

The interviews in *Fahrenheit 9/11* also promote the audience’s identification with victim’s of the 9/11 tragedy, which in turn also helps to humanize Moore as the interviewer. For example, in *Fahrenheit 9/11* the audience is invited to experience the life of Lila Lipscomb. She’s an ordinary individual that viewers can relate to. The cameras follow Moore as he interviews Lila about her views on the military and politics. As a Jobs Central worker, Lila feels that the military is a good option for people that are unemployed or for students that can’t afford college. Her son and daughter both are in the military and she and Moore agree that it’s families like hers that are the backbone of America; the working class. Later in the film Moore visits with Lila and her family to talk about the death of her son. The audience watches as Lila reads his last letter aloud and bursts into tears, “I want him to be alive. And I can’t make him alive…A parent is not supposed to bury their child” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). The footage of Moore’s interview with Lila seems designed to resonate among members of the audience.

Some individuals may have experienced the loss of a loved one or some may have family stationed in Iraq or at least know someone that does. The scenes of Lila’s life become amplified as the audience remembers or imagines their own loss. Witnessing this testimony allows the audience to make a connection with Lila and the filmmaker.

There are also a few instances where Moore interacts with other individuals and avoids the use of voice-over commentary for direction. Each of these interactions allows Moore to represent his own direct encounter with the surrounding world. For the first time, the audience is able to see and hear Moore act and respond in the same historical arena as his subjects.
Moore’s first interaction takes place on Capitol Hill, where he interviews Corporal Abdul Henderson of the United States Marine Corps. Through their interaction, the audience soon learns that Corporal Henderson has already fought overseas in Iraq. Moore asks whether or not Corporal Henderson would go back to Iraq if he was called up. The Corporal tells Moore that he would not, and that he would be willing to deal with the repercussions associated with that because he felt that Iraq posed no threat to him or his country.

In Moore’s second interaction, the audience finds him in Flint, Michigan at the home of Lila Lipscomb, executive assistant to the president of the Jobs Central Agency and mother of children who have fought in the military. In the first part of his interview with Lila he learned that she believes that the military is a great option for people that reside in the city of Flint, due to the rate of unemployment. In his second interaction with Lila, Moore and the audience is made aware that both of her children, daughter and son, had served in the military. During Moore’s interaction with Lila, the audience learns that her son Sergeant Michael Pederson was sent off to fight in Iraq and that she and her husband had received word that he was killed. In this interaction Lila reads her son’s final letter to Moore and the audience. Sgt. Pederson indicated that he missed home and that he felt Bush had the troops deployed for no real reason.

In their third interaction, Moore meets Lila in Washington D.C. and the segment climaxes as Lila approaches a protestor of the war. The protestor calls Bush a terrorist and tells Lila that he has killed children. A woman approaches and confronts Lila telling her that Bush isn’t a terrorist and that everything has been staged. Lila is infuriated and tells the woman her son was killed in Karbala, and as she walks away the woman tells her to blame al Qaeda. As Moore rushes over to Lila she says that the al Qaeda were not the ones making the decision to send her son to Iraq.
After the second interaction is finished, Moore refers back to the first. At this point he and Corporal Henderson walk around Capitol Hill beseeching members of Congress to sign their children up for the military. As it turns out the attempt was unsuccessful and the voice-over narration begins again. Because participatory documentaries stress the actual encounter of the filmmaker and the subject (Nichols, 2001), these interview/interaction segments affirm Moore’s sense of “engagement with the immediate, intimate, and personal” as it has occurred (Nichols, 2001, p. 113). The bodily presence of Moore, rather than his absence, places him in the scene. Additionally his appearance places “emphasis on the act of gathering information or building knowledge, the process of social and historical interpretations, and the effect of the encounter between people and filmmakers” (Nichols, 1991, p. 49). Through personal interaction and testimony, Moore asks the audience to view the events and images not just as taped footage, but as actual on-scene events.

In order to bring a broader perspective to his film, Moore used several different types of interviews to bring different accounts together in one story. According to Nichols (2001), interviews allow filmmakers to “enrich commentary with the grain of individual’s voices” (p. 123). Rather than simply relying upon generalizations supported by images and illustrations, Moore uses interviews as way to generate a perception of objectivity within his film and the minds of his audience, in order to situate the film in a given moment and distinct perspective.

**Reflexive Mode**

As a result of the film’s overarching theme and profound use of rhetorical questions, the reflexive mode proves to be dominant. The reflexive mode in documentary “desires to achieve a heightened form of consciousness by readjusting the assumptions and expectations of the audience” (Nichols, 2001, p. 128). In the participatory mode, viewers follow the filmmaker and
monitor their engagements with other social actors. However, it is within the reflexive mode that the viewer becomes concerned with the filmmaker’s involvement with them (Nichols, 2001).

Documentaries can take either a formal or politically reflexive perspective. The formal perspective of reflexivity garners attention about the viewer’s assumptions and expectations of the documentary form itself, whereas the political is concerned with the audience’s assumptions and expectations about the world around them (Nichols, 2001). Politically reflexive strategies seek to “remove the ideological encrustations that support a given social order, particularly those practices, experienced in everyday life” (Nichols, 1991, p. 67). Viewing the documentary as a political strategy “reminds us how society works in accord with conventions and codes we may too readily take for granted” (Nichols, 2001, p. 128). Politically strategic documentaries attempt to stimulate an “aha!” effect within the audience, pointing out the way things are, while simultaneously foreshadowing the way they might become (Nichols, 2001).

It would be naive to contend that Moore does not desire to readjust the assumptions of the audience. For this reason, Fahrenheit 9/11 utilizes politically reflexive strategies in an attempt to achieve a “heightened form of consciousness” from the audience. Moore does so by shifting the audience’s level of awareness through the combined use of rhetorical questions and edited footage. Thus, it is through the use of rhetorical questions and cause-effect relationships that the expository and reflexive modes are linked together. While the expository mode establishes cause and effect linkages that include frequent use of rhetorical questions as a means of advancing the filmmaker’s argument, the reflexive mode utilizes the same relationships and questions as a vehicle for change—a way to shift the audience’s level of awareness. The underlying premise of the film is that the public has been asked to accept the current administration’s ideology and to overlook the ills of society and the possibility for change. Throughout the course of the film,
Moore provokes awareness by juxtaposing footage and commentary in order to induce an “aha” effect into members of the audience.

The same five cause-effect linkages discussed earlier in the chapter also fall into the politically reflexive mode. The first and most significant is that because Bush was wrongfully elected into office society is in dire need of help. From the beginning Moore asks the audience to question what they think is real, starting with the 2000 election. All of the scenes and interactions that follow are associated with and linked to the first segment. The second shocking piece of information is that prior to the September attacks, Bush was on vacation. The third linkage introduced is the business relationship between the Bush family and the Saudis. The fourth linkage is that oil and profits, not terror, are the cause for the war. Although, their was an attack on U.S. soil, the goal of the war switched from hunting terrorists in Afghanistan to guarding oil fields in Iraq. The final linkage introduces the audience to the notion that the war has allowed the administration to take away rights from citizens. In order for the American people to remain safe, they must first give up their constitutional rights. Moore utilizes these five relationships as a means to induce an Aha! effect within the audience.

As a result of juxtaposing these images and introducing these relationships the questions become: What is the bigger picture? Are they giving us all the answers? Why haven’t we learned about any of this before? Why hasn’t any of this surfaced in the news? Why am I just finding out about this?

*Fahrenheit 9/11* suggests that reality is often not as it seems. For example, something very uncanny takes place in the beginning and end of this film. Prior to the footage of 9/11, Bush and his current administration are shown combing their hair and getting into make-up moments before television addresses/interviews. John Ashcroft jovially demands, “make me look
young” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). While Donald Rumsfeld asks an aide, “do you suppose he’s pretty confident on those numbers on Iraqi security forces” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Throughout the ending segment, Moore blends images of the rich elite, working class, and the same administration members taking off their ear pieces while laughing and smiling. Has the Bush administration been putting on a theatrical production? At the end of the film, Moore asserts,

> George Orwell once wrote that it’s not a matter of whether the war is not real or if it is…The war is not meant to be won, it is meant to be continuous. A hierarchical society is only possible on the basis of poverty and ignorance…The war is waged by the ruling group against its own subjects and its object is not the victory over either Eurasia or East Asia, but to keep the very structure of society intact. (*Fahrenheit 9/11*)

This film proposes that the White House and Pentagon were taken over by a malicious individual and administration whose goal is to serve the global interests of the corporations, not the people. It suggests that when a political economy creates incalculably increasing wealth surrounded by disastrously increasing poverty, a continual war with an invented foreign enemy is required in order to maintain its own internal order. Speaking to the press at the White House, referring to Osama bin Laden, Bush stated, “Terror is bigger than one person. And, uh, he’s just…he’s uh, he’s a person who’s now been marginalized, so I don’t know where he is, nor…you know I just don’t spend that much time on him, hell to even be honest with you” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Moore seems to suggest, shouldn’t we start questioning the “reality” portrayed by Bush and the Administration?

What can the audience do now that they are aware of these exigencies? Moore points to the viewers as those who can bring about social change. As a politically reflexive documentary, *Fahrenheit 9/11* “points to us as viewers and social actors, not to films, as the agents who can bridge this gap between what exists and the new forms we can make from it” (Nichols, 2001, p. 130). *Fahrenheit 9/11* reminds the viewer that when courage is shared one can fight against the
odds. Thus, it is up to the viewers to stop Bush from fixing the next election by asking questions about the unjustified war in Iraq and by holding Bush and his administration accountable for events following the 9/11 tragedy. Utilizing elements of the politically reflexive mode allows Moore the opportunity to astound members of the audience by showing them the current state of the nation and foreshadowing what could happen unless action is taken.

Although the expository mode seeks to represent the world as it is happening, the latter two modes, participatory, and reflexive allow the audience to see the ways in which the filmmaker controls the representation of reality. Even if a documentary is filmed in the participatory mode and the audience observes the interaction, the truth that resides is the truth of a “form of interaction that would not exist were it not for the camera” (Nichols, 2001, p. 118). Thus, the historical world is merely providing a “meeting place” for the negotiation that occurs between the filmmaker and subject (Nichols, 2001). In the reflexive mode, the audience is aware of the filmmaker’s involvement with them and their relation to the documentary and what it may represent (Nichols, 2001). Politically reflexive documentaries call on the viewing audience as the key for social change. Moore utilizes this mode as a way to cast doubt upon the dominant view of events. The representation created in this mode of documentary reminds the audience that “the world is more that the sum of the visible evidence we derive from it” (Nichols, 2001, p. 134).

**Rhetorical Situation**

*Fahrenheit 9/11* exhibited an amalgam of three modes: expository, participatory, and reflexive. Moreover, the reflexive mode predominates. Every documentary has its own distinct voice, attesting to “the individuality of the filmmaker” (Nichols, 2001, p. 99). The voice of the documentary is the voice of the filmmaker “setting out to take a position regarding a specific
aspect of the world and to convince us of its merits” (Nichols, 2001, p. 49). Filmmakers are often drawn to different modes of representation when they desire to engage the audience in questions or particular issues that pertain to the world we share (Nichols, 2001). Why do filmmakers choose various modes of representation? Furthermore, do filmmakers choose different modes because documentaries are strategic efforts to respond to rhetorical situations? In light of these questions, it is important to discuss the ways in which the concept of the rhetorical situation can further shed light on the question of Moore’s choice of representation.

Within the communication discipline, various perspectives exist regarding the concept of the rhetorical situation. In Lloyd Bitzer's essay, "The Rhetorical Situation,” he proclaimed that "rhetorical discourse comes into existence as a response to situation, in the same sense that an answer comes into existence in response to a question" (1968, p. 63). Thus, situations are “publicly observable historic facts in the world we experience” (Bitzer, 1968, p. 66). Conversely, Richard Vatz’s article, “The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation,” challenged the validity of Bitzer’s definition and replaced the situation-based definition with rhetor-based definition. Vatz indictis Bitzer's definition of the rhetorical text as a process that "disengage[s] the "meaning [that] resides in events," and argues, to the contrary, that "statements do not imply 'situational characteristics at all': the statements may ostensibly describe situations, but they actually only inform us as to the phenomenological perspective of the speaker" (Vatz, 1973, p. 154).

These two differing views of the rhetorical situation can also be linked to Fahrenheit 9/11 in that they help to explain Moore’s blending of the expository, participatory, and reflexive modes. If, according to Bitzer, the situation exists before the rhetoric, and to Vatz, the rhetoric creates the situation; then ultimately Moore is taking on a Vatzian perspective because he is essentially asking the audience to question Bush’s Bitzerian view of terrorism as an exigence.
Bush wants the public to believe that 9/11 was an act marked by terrorism and that he and the administration have been doing all that they can to handle the situation. Following Bitzer, Bush argues that 9/11 is an exigence brought on by evil acts of terrorists and nothing more.

However, following Vatz, we select certain facts to represent an event, and those facts acquire what Vatz calls "salience" (1973, p. 157). Therefore, every act of communication is an act of interpretation. Basically this means that we can be certain that the representative medium of language will always play a part in the dissemination of "reality". Thus, Fahrenheit 9/11 offers an alternative view of “reality,” asking the audience to detach themselves from the dominant views of their culture. In the film Moore introduces clips from a photo op on the golf course with Bush stating, “We must stop the terror. I call upon all nations to do everything they can to stop these terrorist killers. Thank You. Now watch this drive” (Fahrenheit 9/11).

Likewise, according to Moore, if the administration had felt that “our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts,” then why did John Ashcroft tell Thomas Pickard of the FBI that he did not want to receive any more information on the terrorists in early July, 2001? Could it be that not all reality is as it seems?

Through the fusion of documentary modes, Moore contrasts Bush’s exposition of events with his own. The expository mode relies heavily upon the historical world for source material (Nichols, 2001). By drawing upon the historical world, this mode attempts to represent the world and the events as they are happening rather than a world created or positioned by the filmmaker (Nichols, 2001). The expository mode emphasizes “the impression of objectivity and well-substantiated judgment” (Nichols, 1991, p. 35), thus the audience views the documentary as rendering the truth. Essentially Moore utilizes this mode to lay the groundwork for the film, and as a way to establish his credibility. These fragments from the historical world work together in
the film to establish his view of a situation marked by imperfection. Bush fixed the last election and now he and his malicious administration have been cheating the American people and treating them like puppets.

In order to locate the film “on scene” and into the historical world, Moore uses elements from the participatory mode. From this mode the audience expects that “what [they] learn will hinge on the nature and quality of the encounter of filmmaker and subject rather than on generalizations supported by images illuminating a given perspective” (Nichols, 2001, p. 116). Therefore the interviews not only filled in the gaps left behind from the expository mode, they also aided in the dissemination of “reality.”

As a political strategy, the documentary invokes a heightened form of awareness, hoping that perhaps what the audience once rendered as truth might now be viewed as the “unreality” of events. The reflexive mode allows Moore to combine the historical values of the expository and participatory mode into a new way of seeing, opening up “the gap between knowledge and desire, between what is and what might be” (Nichols, 2001, p. 130).

The 2004 election season was filled with controversies over purple hearts, war heroes, faulty decisions made by Bush and the administration, and the war in Iraq. With the talk of an “anti-government” movie in the air, many activist groups led fierce attacks. In particular, the California-based organization Move America Forward (MAF), headed by former GOP Assemblyman Howard Kaloogian, announced the start of a campaign urging movie theaters to reject the film due to its antipatriotic themes and profound use of propaganda (Marinucci, 2004).

The desire of the audience to see the film also grew out of a series of constraints that began in early 2004 when the film’s distributor was told by the parent company, Walt Disney, that they would not distribute the film. Michael Eisner indicated that he did not want the studio
putting out a partisan political film that might offend the families that visit their amusement parks (Rutenberg & Holson, 2004). A complaint was also filed with the Federal Elections Commission (FEC) claiming that advertisements for the film should be stopped because they were “political ads” and violated the law (Moore, 2004). Conservative groups adopted a range of strategies attempting to undermine the reach and impact of the film. However, their strategies seemed to backfire. When Fahrenheit 9/11 was released into theatres on June 25th, 2004, only a few months before the upcoming election, it grossed $23.9 million in tickets sales during its first weekend, making it the top rated film in the country (Moore, 2004).

These constraints did not work and the controversy surrounding the film only made people want to see it more. During the first six weeks of its showing here in the U.S., the film grossed around 100 million dollars (Berger, 2004). Therefore, the individuals seeing this film were more than just a “body of mere hearers or readers” but were those who were capable of being “influenced by discourse” (Bitzer, 1968). The controversy of the film also aided Moore in the dissemination of a new “reality” of events. Thus Fahrenheit 9/11 can be viewed as a strategic response and alternative read to the post 9/11 situation, as well as tool for political activism.

The rhetorical situation is an important tool for analyzing Fahrenheit 9/11 because it allows us to uncover significant events, patterns, connections, and groupings within the film. Additionally, the differing views of the rhetorical situation also help to explain Moore’s blending of the expository, participatory, and reflexive modes. Although Moore uses images and illustrations from “real” public events, it is still he who creates the finished product. Documentary modes merely establish a loose framework for filmmakers, and although these modes offer a set of guidelines that a given film may adopt, they do not describe or dictate every
aspect of the film’s organization. Thus, it is Moore who controls the organization of the scenes and commentary, and decides how to go about advancing a particular argument. For that reason documentaries can mix and match modes as desired by the filmmaker (Nichols, 2001).

Likewise, filmmakers may also combine elements of various modes as a way of meeting the viewers’ expectations (Nichols, 1991; 2001). Consequently, the fusion of multiple modes is similar to that of the rhetorical hybrid, given that the hybrid fuses together multiple generic elements in order to meet audience expectations (Jamieson & Campbell, 1982). The relationship between the fusion of modes and the rhetorical hybrid will be further discussed in Chapter Three. To understand these modes and their elements as they apply to the film’s argument aides in the understanding of what motivates or causes the argument in the first place, the standpoint of the filmmaker, who the audience is, and how they might react to it. By analyzing and understanding the rhetorical situation, we gain critical insight into the entire context of the film.
Chapter 3: Unique Situations Call for Dynamic Solutions

Documentary filmmakers rely upon a blending of different modes of representation in order to represent a new ideology that tries to explain our relation to reality and also as a way of fulfilling an audience’s expectations (Nichols, 2001; 1991). Rhetorical hybrids are called into existence by complex situations, where audience expectations may require a blending of different generic elements (Jamieson & Campbell, 1982; Carlson, 1985). This chapter will investigate the extent to which Fahrenheit 9/11 contains elements of the conspiracy argument and diatribe genres. This chapter will also examine the ways in which the film functions as a hybrid based on different situational events and how the needs of those events are fulfilled by the two identified genres. Additionally, this chapter will explore the notion that elements of one genre may in fact work to reinforce or buttress the weaknesses of the other.

Conspiracy Argument

Moore proposes that the White House was taken over by a malevolent individual and administration whose goal is not to serve the people of their country; rather, they are more interested in the global interests of corporations. By looking through the lens of the conspiracy genre, we will be able to identify the ways in which Moore strives to make his argument legitimate and sound. As previously stated in chapter one, there are eight principles that comprise the genre of the conspiracy argument. The first four principles refer to the context and situation, thus explaining how conspiracy arguments are made legitimate and the latter four refer to the structure of the individual arguments themselves (Zarefsky, 1984). In this section we will revisit the eight principles and determine which elements of this particular genre were utilized in Fahrenheit 9/11.
Macro Principles

Explaining an ambiguous evil. The first principle indicates that in order for a conspiracy argument to become widely accepted, it must explain an “ambiguous evil.” Zarefsky (1984) indicates that the arguers identify “agents who have a clear motive to afflict society” and that the argument itself “sets out the means by which they [evil agent] are doing so” (p. 71). Thus, this type of identification provides society with a target for whom to blame (Zarefsky, 1984).

In Fahrenheit 9/11, Moore identifies the evil agent at the beginning of the film, claiming it to be none other than President Bush. Moore places Bush in the limelight and emphasizes that the Bush family and the administration should share the blame for what has taken place post 9/11. However, it is Bush himself who remains at the center of the controversy, carrying along the motives of profits and big business. Moore uses candid “off-camera” segments of Bush to further push the “evil person” idea. One of the most profound examples of this in the film occurs when Congressman Jim McDermott and Moore are discussing the mixed messages the administration has been giving people when it comes to safety. McDermott asserts, “It’s like training a dog. You tell him ‘Sit down,’ and you tell him to roll over at the same time, [the] dog doesn’t know what to do” (Fahrenheit 9/11). This scene is then juxtaposed by a clip of Bush on golf course talking to the press. Bush states, “We must stop the terror. I call upon all nations to do everything they can to stop these terrorist killers. Thank you. Now watch this drive” (Fahrenheit 9/11). As Bush swings the golf club the scene fades back into the McDermott interview. McDermott further indicates, “They will continue, in my view, as long as this administration is in charge, of every once in a while stimulating everybody to be afraid” (Fahrenheit 9/11).
Another example can be found at the beginning of the film. Moore cuts between clips of what he projects happened on election night with news clips of Bush laughing. Immediately following the previous scenes, a clip of the Bush brothers are shown sitting on a plane with then Presidential hopeful George Bush claiming, “You know something, we are gonna win Florida. Mark my words. You can write it down” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*).

One more example of this can be found in the film when Bush is speaking to the Press at the White House about Osama bin Laden. Bush states, “Terror is bigger than one person. And, uh, he’s just…he’s…he’s uh, he’s a person who’s now been marginalized, so I don’t know where he is, no…you know I just don’t spend that much time on him, hell to even be honest with you” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Immediately following that clip Moore narrates, “Didn’t spend much time on him? What kind of President was he?” Moore cuts to a clip of Bush during a “Meet the Press” interview. Bush claims, “I’m a war President. I make decisions here in the Oval Office, uh, in foreign policy matters, with war on my mind” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*).

Additionally, the entire film is set-up in such a way that it provides an overview of Bush’s plans. Throughout the film Moore illustrates the argument that Bush was a failed businessman with deep connections to the royal family of Saudia Arabia and the Bin Ladens, that Bush was elected due to fraudulent circumstances and proceeded to blunder through his duties while ignoring warnings of the looming betrayal by his foreign partners. When that treachery hit with the 9/11 attacks, Moore explains how Bush failed to take immediate action to defend the nation, only to later cynically manipulate the situation to serve his wealthy backers’ corrupt ambitions. The same five cause and effect relationships from Chapter Two also serve as the blueprints for Bush’s plans.
Explaining a pattern of anomalies. The second principle states that an argument may become accepted when it explains a pattern of anomalies (Zarefsky, 1984). Individuals become engrossed with an argument due to its ability to explain “paradox and incongruity” (Zarefsky, 1984). Zarefsky (1984) points out that when a large number of events occur and seem to develop a pattern, the need for an explanation of those events grows stronger.

In 2000-2004, according to Moore, there were a number of events that individuals were beginning to question. Did Bush steal the election? Why have we not found Osama bin Laden? Why did Bush not want 9/11 to be investigated? Why are we at war with Iraq?

Again, it is the same five key cause and effect relationships identified in Chapter Two that aid in the explanation of this principle. Fahrenheit 9/11 starts out by recapping the events that took place during the 2000 election. Several media reports indicate that Gore is the winner of Florida, thus indicating that he will be the next President. Immediately Moore juxtaposes scenes of news anchors claiming that they had made a mistake and that Bush was in fact the winner of Florida. Following these scenes, Moore points out that this happened due to the fact that his cousin was calling the shots in the Fox newsroom that evening. In days to come the votes in Florida were being recounted, and Moore points out that it would not make a difference given that George Bush’s brother was the Governor of the state in question and his campaign chairman had hired a company to “knock off” or get rid of voters. Even though Gore had won the popular vote nationwide, Moore asserts, it did not matter as long as, “All of your daddy’s friends on the Supreme Court vote the right way” (Fahrenheit 9/11). Following the recap of the election, the rest of the film is arranged in such a way that draws attention to fact that one event leads to next, thus producing a pattern. This pattern is key, because it helps to legitimize the conspiracy argument.
With the “stolen” 2000 election serving as the starting point, the rest of the dominoes fall into place. Bush is on vacation too long, ignoring important briefings about the state of the nation, which in turn leads to the September attacks. In the first few days after 9/11, no one doubted Bush when he claimed that it was a terrorist act, but concern grew when he would not allow Congress to form an investigation about the events. However, when a private investigation was completed, 28 pages were censored by the White House. Again, no one doubted that the country needed to invade Afghanistan in order to capture Osama Bin Laden, yet concern grew when we stopped looking for him. Moore infers that the reason Bush stopped the search was because of his relationship with the Saudi elite. Moore indicates that the Saudis had given millions to the Bush family through James R. Bath, a friend and military comrade of George W., in order to support various endeavors such as the Arbusto Drilling Company. Once the search for Bin Laden had stopped, the administration selected a new target, Iraq. The target then became Saddam Hussein and Iraq. Many citizens grew concerned and questioned why we stopped searching for the man in charge of the attacks, and the response they received was that Saddam was developing weapons of mass destruction, even though during the beginning of the term the administration reassured America that he was unarmed. Moore indicates that Bush had his eye on Iraq and Saddam prior to his arrival in Washington.

Moore claims that the real reason for the war was oil and profits, while also indicating that the desire for profits was a motive for Bush, long before he got into office. In 1997 when Bush was governor of Texas, Taliban leaders from Afghanistan flew to the US to meet with Unocal executives to discuss building a pipeline that would bring natural gas from the Caspian Sea. The company Vice President Cheney headed, Halliburton, was given the drilling contract.
Moore further indicates that Kenneth Lay, lead campaign contributor for Bush and head of Enron, would also benefit from this project.

Additionally, the final cause and effect linkage points out that due to the war, citizens’ constitutional rights were being taken away. Likewise, Moore provides the audience with background information about Bush, indicating that his motive to steal the election for the benefit of his “family” and the Saudi elite for copious profits was already predetermined. Moore uses *Fahrenheit 9/11* as a canvas for painting a picture that demonstrates how all of these anomalies are interrelated, therefore rendering this principle as a dominant element utilized in the film.

The film reassures the audience that what they thought might have been occurring, was occurring indeed. It is within this principle that minute details and discrepant evidence become key, because anything can be explained “as the work of the clever conspirator” who is trying to conceal the situation (Zarefsky, 1984). As such, the argument of events, and in this case Moore’s argument, is virtually “self-sealing” (Zarefsky, 1984). For the conspiratorialist, this means that the more things change, the more they confirm his/her view of the truth (Zarefsky, 1984).

*Polarizing positions resolve ambiguity.* Conspiracy arguments also become accepted when polarizing positions are used to resolve ambiguity (Zarefsky, 1984). This principle follows the idea that things are not really as they seem, given that person X is participating in a devious plot. The argument’s use of polarization provides individuals with a clear choice of alternatives (Zarefsky, 1984). According to Zarefsky (1984), the basis for inducing polarization is dependent upon that which is *secret*.

In *Fahrenheit 9/11* Moore utilizes this principle and reveals several “secrets” to the audience. The following are examples of “secrets” revealed by Moore. When Moore interviewed
North Dakota Senator Byron Dorgan, he indicated that after 9/11 some airplanes were authorized by the government to pick up members of Osama bin Laden’s family, and several others from Saudi Arabia, and transport them out of the country. Immediately following was another interview with retired FBI agent Jack Cloonan, previously a senior agent on the joint FBI-CIA al Qaeda task force. Cloonan asserted that as an investigator he would not have wanted the bin Laden family to leave. He indicated that in order to follow proper procedure, the task force should have handed out subpoenas and had them “get on the record” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*).

Additionally, Moore reveals that the Saudis currently have $860 billion invested in America. In the film, Craig Unger, author of *House of Bush House of Saud*, stated, “In terms of investments on Wall Street, American equities, it’s roughly six or seven percent of America. And most that money goes into the great blue-chip companies. Citigroup, Citibank, is, uh, the largest stockholder is a Saudi. Uh, AOL TimeWarner has big Saudi investors” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). During their discussion Unger claims that if the Saudis were to pull their money out of the U.S., a major economic crisis would occur.

In front of the Saudi embassy, Moore suggests that Saudi Prince Bandar was one of the best protected ambassadors in the U.S. because the State Department provides him with a six-man security detail. Moore also indicates that the Bushes consider Bandar family and two nights after the September attacks Bandar was invited over to the White House for dinner. Moore points out that even though bin Laden was a Saudi and that Saudi money had funded al Qaeda, and fifteen of the nineteen hijackers were Saudis, the Saudi ambassador was still dining with the Bushes.

Moore also asserts that if the public knew that bin Laden’s family had a business relationship with Bush’s family, it would not look very good for Bush’s reputation. Moore
indicated that he had a copy of Bush’s military records from 2000, completely uncensored, unlike those that he released in 2004. The difference between the two was clearly apparent; a magic marker had been used to cover up the name James R. Bath. Moore asks, “Why didn’t Bush want the press and the public to see Bath’s name on his military records?” (Fahrenheit 9/11). With his own reply Moore claims, “Perhaps he was worried that the American people would find out that at one time James R. Bath was the Texas money manager for the bin Ladens” (Fahrenheit 9/11).

Another secret revealed in the film occurs when Charles Gibson, the host of ABC News’ “Good Morning America,” interviewed Bush’s counterterrorism chief Richard Clarke. In their interview Clarke reported, “The president, in a very intimidating way, left us, me and my staff, with the clear indication that they wanted us to come back with word that there was an Iraqi hand behind 9/11. Because they had been planning to do something about Iraq from before the time they came in office…he didn’t ask me questions about al Qaeda. Donald Rumsfeld said, when we talked about bombing the al Qaeda infrastructure in Afghanistan, he said there were no good targets in Afghanistan. Let’s bomb Iraq. And we said, but Iraq had nothing to do with this. And that didn’t seem to make much difference” (Fahrenheit 9/11).

Moore shows close-ups of FBI documents with July 10th, 2001 as the date, noting that students of Osama bin Laden were attending civil aviation universities. Moore asserts, “His own FBI knew that summer that there were al Qaeda members in the U.S., and that bin Laden was sending his agents to flight schools around the country. But Ashcroft’s Justice Department turned a blind eye and a deaf ear” (Fahrenheit 9/11). Moore then asserts that although the flight school situation was ignored after 9/11, Ashcroft came up with some new ideas for how to protect America starting with the Patriot Act. The Patriot Act allowed for searches of medical
and financial records, computer and telephone conversations, and even for library books. In an interview with Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin, she asserted that the Patriot Act contained several troubling ideas, “First of all, the definition of ‘terrorist’…and…it’s so expansive that it could include people who…” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Moore stops her and asks if it could include people like him and she laughs. Moore juxtaposes this scene with an interview with Congressman John Conyers who claims that many bills are placed on their desks during the night and that Congress does not read most of the bills because it would entail too much work on their part.

Moore asks that if terrorism was in fact key to the country, then why would the stretch of highway where the Pacific Ocean meets the borders of Oregon go unguarded? In interviews with Oregon State Troopers Joshua Brooks and Andy Kenyon, the audience is made aware that the Oregon shores are not closely watched or monitored due to state funding and cutbacks. Kenyon tells Moore that people call in all the time about suspicious activity, but that he does not have the time to check it out due to other priorities. Kenyon states, “One night I asked, ‘How many people do we have in this state of Oregon on duty tonight? And we had eight troopers…on…for the entire state of Oregon.’ I think you know, Oregon is a prime example that homeland security is not as secure as what, I think, people would like to believe” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*).

Another secret is revealed when Moore reveals to the audience that although Bush had professed his love and support for the troops fighting overseas, he proposed cutting combat pay by 33 percent and assistance to their family by 60 percent. Moore also reveals that Bush had opposed a $1.3 billion increase in veterans’ benefits, a $1.3 billion in veterans’ health care and that he had also closed seven veterans’ hospitals. Moore adds that Bush had also tried to double
the prescription drug costs for veterans and opposed full benefits for part-time reservists. After
this narration a picture of Staff Sergeant Brett Petriken’s grave site is shown and Moore states,
“[He] was killed on May 26, the army sent his last paycheck to his family. But they docked him
for the last five days of the month that he didn’t work because he was dead” (Fahrenheit 9/11).

Although the five cause and effect linkages also fit into this category as well, the above
are some additional secrets that Moore reveals to the audience. The use of revealing secrets
throughout the film literally makes the choice for audience members blatantly clear: How can
you trust the President or the administration when all along they are the ones who have been
participating in this scheme and trying to cover it up? How can we trust them if they are
concealing information from us? How can we trust the people that we have elected if they do not
even read the legislation that reaches their desks? And, if in fact they have been concealing all
of this, what else might they have under lock and key? Moore also feeds upon those individuals
that garner the idea that if something is coming from the government or the established media,
those sources more than likely keep secrets from them, therefore they must seek an alternative
source for the truth. Moore’s argument forces a wedge between his and Bush’s varying
viewpoints, thereby giving the audience an alternative view of thought.

Acceptance during times of social strain. Lastly, conspiracy arguments are more
generally accepted during times of social strain (Zarefsky, 1984). Zarefsky (1984) points out
that although it’s startling to think that someone is scheming up a malevolent plot, it is also
reassuring to find out in “reality” what has been going on. This sense of reassurance, Zarefsky
(1984) asserts, allows individuals to make sense of various phenomena and “be on one’s guard”
(p. 73).
One might argue that calling America’s situation in 2001-2004 a social strain is an understatement. While the Bush Administration had given a roadmap for the solution of the Palestinian problem, the 9/11 events appear to have produced an unforeseen roadmap for the deterioration of the American economy. The federal government enjoyed a projected 10-year budget surplus of $5.6 trillion at the time when President Clinton left office (Khan, 2003). However, the Bush Administration was confronted with a sizable annual budget deficit within just less than three years. Many people felt as if we were a country at war for all of the wrong reasons with thousands of soldiers and Iraqi people dead. According to an ABC News Washington Post poll (2004), more than half of Americans, 52 percent, stated that the Iraq war was not worth fighting. Seven in 10 called U. S. casualties “unacceptable.” Health care was not adequate for the majority of Americans and thousands of individuals were hard pressed when it came to finding jobs. According to Moore, the administration was engaging in irresponsible foreign and economic policies, as well as social and environmental policies—America had hit a slump. Moore utilizes these elements of social strain in his film to further garner legitimacy for his argument.

Had all citizens found themselves between a rock and a hard place? Fahrenheit 9/11 indicates that not all of them had. With the war focused on Iraq, the film suggests that those in the corporate sector were doing quite well, thus the rich were getting richer and the poor poorer. In Moore’s interview with Dan Briody, author of The Halliburton Agenda, Briody indicated that he had wanted to examine which companies were actually gaining from 9/11. What he found was a multinational conglomerate that invested heavily in government-regulated industries such as telecommunication, health care, and specifically defense. This company was revealed to be the Carlyle Group; the same company that had once employed both Bush Senior and Junior, and
also included the bin Laden family among its top investors. The Carlyle Group also owned United Defense, the makers of the Bradley armored vehicle, which grossed $237 million just six weeks after 9/11.

As a scene of an economic conference is shown, Moore narrates, “In the middle of the war, Microsoft, DHL, and other corporations invited Halliburton to a conference to figure out how much money could be made in Iraq.” (Fahrenheit 9/11). Youssef Sleiman of the Iraq Initiatives Harris Corporation takes the podium and reassures small business owners and big business owners alike that, “Once that oil starts flowing and money coming, it’s going to be lots of money. It’s the second largest reserve of oil in the world, there’s no question about how much money is there. The good news is, whatever it costs, the government will pay you” (Fahrenheit 9/11).

With regards to oil and profits, one U.S. soldier in Iraq stated, “I make, anywheres…between two and three thousand a month. A Halliburton employee out here driving a bus can make all between right and ten thousand a month. Explain that one to me. For forty hours a week, driving the same two-and-a-half-mile route. Go figure. Where do you…where’s the justice in that?” (Fahrenheit 9/11). Moore sets up the film in such a way, that it questions just that, in this Country’s time of social strain, where is the justice?

A real attack on American soil profoundly shook most Americans, and Fahrenheit 9/11 suggests that Bush and the administration knew this and that they used fear to their advantage. Since the Department of Homeland Security began its color-coded alerts a little over three years ago, it has never designated the United States to be at less than yellow--at "significant" risk of terrorist attack. A shoe-bomber arrest, an orange alert for Christmas, checkpoints on highways, reports of gun pens like those in James Bond movies, talks of hijacked ferries are all constant
drumbeats in the film that remind us of our vulnerability. Facing a shattered economy, the Bush Administration has fanned these anxieties, sending us to buy safety bunkers, warning us away from public monuments and then later suggesting the opposite. In the film, Moore juxtaposes various news clips of the administration sending contradictory messages to the public. For example, the segment starts off with Bush stating, “The world has changed after September the 11th. It’s changed because we’re no longer safe” (Fahrenheit 9/11). In the next scene Bush claims, “Fly and enjoy America’s great destination spots” (Fahrenheit 9/11). This image cuts to Donald Rumsfeld asserting, “We have entered what may very well prove to be the most dangerous security environment the world’s known” (Fahrenheit 9/11). During a featured public service announcement, Homeland Security Chief Tom Ridge asserts, “Every family in America should prepare itself for a terrorist attack” (Fahrenheit 9/11).

Each of the segments below follows in the same pattern; go enjoy America, America’s not safe. In Fahrenheit 9/11, Barry Glassner, author of The Culture of Fear indicated that when people are afraid they desire to be protected and reassured. Essentially what this means is that when the White House tends to those fears by laying out a plan to protect Americans, however misdirected, people do not want to see those leaders undermined. Thus it’s often shocking to find out that those whom you trusted were the ones who caused or had been part of the problem.

By the same token, it’s also quite relieving to find out where the “root of the evil” has been coming from. The mere thought that our President has the interests at heart is quite appalling. Therefore, according to Zarefsky (1984), individuals should be on “their guard.” Instead of letting tid-bits of information drift past us, we should consider everything and the potential of it’s meaning, don’t get duped. Things are not always as they seem, but now we know how we can prepare for future events and that we can change the situation. Moore utilizes this
principle throughout the film as a means for gaining legitimacy to his claim by offering reassurance and “clarity” about particular phenomena to the audience and as a call to action. During times of social strain, people are looking for an answer. *Fahrenheit 9/11* provides the audience with an explanation for the current state of the Nation.

*Micro Principles*

After having examined the macro level of the conspiracy argument, we can utilize the four remaining principles in order to assess the micro level, or structure of the argument itself. Although external events provide arguers with a context for their claims, it is the choices that the arguer makes during the construction of his/her argument that will either heighten or impede the “perceived” strength of the argument (Zarefsky, 1984).

*Shifting the burden of proof.* The first strategy the arguer may choose in order to make the conspiracy charge credible is to shift the burden of proof away from themselves and onto their opponent (Zarefsky, 1984). Given Moore’s previous works, he is well known for his amusing “meet and greets” with various social actors. However, in *Fahrenheit 9/11* Moore tends to ride this film out as the narrator and allow for the images and participants’ interviews to speak for themselves. Although Moore does interact with individuals and is seen throughout the film, he does not partake in as many shocking image events. Moore seems to be taking a backseat to his previous style of interaction, functioning as a storyteller.

By acting as a storyteller of events, Moore shifts the burden of proof onto the shoulders of Bush, the administration, and the media. At the micro level this is accomplished through the use of rhetorical questions and any denial or challenge of the conspiracy claims can be interpreted as work of the clever conspirator who wishes to cover up his tracks (Zarefsky, 1984), thus the burden is consequently shifted from Moore until solid “evidence” can be proved.
However, even if the administration dubs the conspiracy theory as outrageous, even ludicrous, and states that the individual crying wolf has a history of “nutty” accusations, the blame can never really be shifted given this genre’s strategy that even “discrepant evidence” and denial is “self-sealing.” This storyteller status also shifts the burden from Moore, because he is washing his hands clean by disseminating the information that he knows so that those in the “dark” can become aware.

Motives are proved by residues. The second way in which one’s argument can be credible is if the motives are proved by residues (Zarefsky, 1984). What this means is that the argument will more than likely not be persuasive unless the alleged conspirator is shown to have had a motive for participating in the devious plot. This principle is asking, “What motive did you have to do X if you were not expecting that X would occur?” Or it might also ask, “What motive would you have to do X if you were in fact not part of the conspiracy?” Zarefsky (1984) argues this method of argument is superior because one’s opponent must resort to an alternative explanation. But if an alternative explanation is given, the argument can cover-up of the truth.

Moore profoundly relies upon the use of rhetorical questions and the juxtaposition of images as his way of arguing by residue. His use of these questions starts from the very beginning of the film. Fireworks and confetti fly through the air as Al Gore cheers at a podium with a Florida Victory sign hangs in the background while Moore questions as to whether or not the turn of events that from that moment on have either been a dream or reality.

In reference to Bush’s military records Moore asks, “Was he [Bush] thinking, you know, I need a big black magic marker?” (Fahrenheit 9/11). Immediately following this question Moore informs the audience that he had a copy of Bush’s records prior to the release to the public in 2004 and the name covered up was James R. Bath, who a friend of Bush and a money
manager for the bin Ladens. With regards to this business relationship Moore indicates that the bin Laden family had invested $1.4 billion in business related matters for Bush and his friends. Immediately following Moore asks, “Is it rude to suggest that when the Bush family wakes up in the morning they might be thinking about what’s best for the Saudis instead of what’s best for you and me?” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*).

From a clip of “Good Morning America,” Richard Clarke indicated that the President had botched the response to 9/11 because U.S. Special Forces did not even get into the area where bin Laden was for two months. While showing footage of Bush hunting for a press photo op Moore asks, “Two months? A mass murderer who attacked the United States was given a two-month head start? Who in their right mind would do that? Or was the war in Afghanistan really about something else?” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Following these questions picture of oil rigs, a map of a pipeline, and images of the Taliban in Texas are shown. Moore indicates that in 1997, while he was governor of Texas, Bush met with Taliban leaders to discuss building a pipeline that was bring natural gas from the Caspian Sea. In another scene Bush is shown speaking to the press at the White House about bin Laden and tells them that he does not “spend that much time on him.” In a shocked voice Moore asks, “Didn’t spend that much time on him? What kind of President was he?” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*).

After an assessment of the Patriot Act in a combination of various scenes Moore inquires, “Okay, let me see if I got this straight…old guys in the gym, bad. Peace groups in Fresno, bad. Breast milk, really bad. But matches and lighters on the plane? Oh, hey, no problem! Was this really about our safety or was something else going on?” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Following this narration Moore indicates the Pacific Shoreline is only guarded by one State Trooper, and he is only part-time.
These residues are just a few examples of those that are used throughout the film. The concurrence of images allows the audience to piece together fragments of information so that they may ultimately form questions and answers such as the following: If Bush did rightfully win the election then why would numerous independent investigations prove that Gore got the most votes? If Bush and his family do not have monetary ties with the Saudi elite then where did the money for all their big projects come from? If Bush is not tied to the September attacks then why stop Congress from performing an investigation? If bin Laden is responsible for the attacks, then why stop searching for him and change the target to Saddam and Iraq? Moore is asking the audience, what motive does Bush have to do all of these things if he in fact is not part of the conspiracy claims? How does Bush get away with something like this?

Inferences are more persuasive. Because inferences tend to be a more persuasive form of evidence than actual documents, given that the power the document holds is dependent upon the context in which it is placed, they also boost credibility (Zarefsky, 1984). Even though the arguer is the one who chooses the context, the opponent can dismiss it as evidence if they redefine the context (Zarefsky, 1984). Inferences, however, allow for the arguer to take ambiguous and insignificant events and make them part of the larger picture (Zarefsky, 1984).

In Fahrenheit 9/11 Moore reinterprets various events in order to make them fit into a larger pattern. At the beginning and the end of the film Moore places in images of the Bush administration preparing for various news conferences. By themselves, they seem to be blameless clips of preparation. While in the grand proposal, they suggest that something bigger has taken place. These segments suggest an unreality of events and imply that what has been revealed to Americans is simply pompous journalism. Essentially, Moore asks the audience to not accept the mainstream media coverage at face value.
In Washington in front of the Saudi Embassy, Moore and interviewee Craig Unger are questioned by members of the secret service. Moore tells the agent that he did not realize that secret service agents were used to guard foreign embassies and the agent replied that they are usually not. Moore further indicates that Saudi Prince Bandar is provided a six-man security detail, which makes him the most protected ambassador in the U.S. This clip may seem unnecessary to include, however when Moore asserts, “Considering how he and his family and the Saudi elite own seven percent of America, it’s probably not a bad idea” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*).

The audience now begins to see the argument unfold. This snippet of information further strengthens the notion that there is “Something rotten in Denmark,” so to speak. Prior to this scene Moore points out that he and Craig Unger are in the center of three important American landmarks: the Watergate hotel and office building, The Kennedy Center, and the Embassy of Saudi Arabia. That comment alone suggests an extreme implication—that each of these places are or were involved in a conspiracy claim.

Through the use of inferences, Moore is able to piece together segments that might come across as insignificant, in effort of making them part of the bigger picture. What do Peace Fresno, a community group in California; Barry Reingold, a retired phone worker and health club member; and Susan Hambelton, mother all have in common? From the onset one might think absolutely nothing. On the contrary, in *Fahrenheit 9/11* these three are all linked together by Moore to demonstrate the ways in which the Patriot Act has not been used to seize terrorists. The Patriot Act is revealed through these segments as a joke. So what if people get together in Fresno, California to talk about political issues, or if someone disagrees with the Bush administration’s handling of 9/11, what’s the big deal? The big deal is that the Patriot Act gives
the administration the right to pilfer through people’s lives. Moore reveals that the Patriot Act is nothing more than a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

Additionally, Moore shares footage of Iraq in early March of 2003. Why would pictures of laughing groups of people, weddings, and children playing be important for this film? What point could Moore possibly make from something insignificant such as this? When you juxtapose these images with Bush’s televised address to the Nation on March 19th, you begin to see how these images fit into the bigger picture. While these images are shown Bush states, “At this hour, American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people, and to defend the world from grave danger. On my orders, coalition forces have begun striking selected targets of military importance to undermine Saddam Hussein’s ability to wage war” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Just as Bush’s last sentence is finished, the images of a little girl landing at the end of a slide are contrasted with images of explosions all over Baghdad. These cheerful images represent a country that posed no threat to the U.S.; rather it was the U.S. that posed threat to Iraq. Bush and the administration claimed that Iraq was developing weapons of mass destruction and were harmful people that posed a threat to America. If we look at those images closely, the people however, in them look and act a lot like us. Do giddy children really pose a threat to the U.S.? Are these happy people really out to get us? This juxtaposition functions in such a way that it dislodges Bush’s view of reality.

A lot of interesting footage comes from Bush’s vacations. Moore uses various scenes of Bush on his ranch in Texas near the beginning of the film as evidence for the claim that 42 percent of his first year in office he was on vacation rather than doing work in Washington. In one scene a clip is shown of Bush’s reaction to the press watching him play golf. Bush states, “If I hit every shot good, people would say I wasn’t working” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Over a shot of
Bush in a cowboy hat sawing a fallen tree Moore asserts, “It was not surprising that Mr. Bush needed some time off. Being President is a lot of work” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). This scene ends and the next clip is of Bush signing autographs and being surrounded by reporters. One of the reporters asks, “What about these folks that say you’re loafing here in Texas, that you’re taking too long of a vacation?” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Bush replies, “They don’t understand the definition of work, then. I’m getting a lot done. Secondly, you don’t have to be in Washington to work. It’s uh, it’s amazing, uh, what can happen with telephones and faxes and uh…” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). The next few clips that are shown in the segment are of Bush on his ranch with his dogs informing reporters that one of his dogs, Barney, was stuck in a hole because he was trying to chase an armadillo. Moore uses these scenes to infer that each time the press was there, it never seemed like Bush was truly getting any “real” work accomplished.

Moore relies upon various types of evidence—documents, military records, interviews, media clips/footage, and inferences—in order to support his claims. The visual evidence in the film is woven together in such a way that the artifact itself supplies the context for inferences. Although Moore may tell the audience that Gore won more votes than Bush, that Bush was dillydallying and taking too many vacations, that the Bush family had a business relationship with the Saudis, and that the war in Iraq had left American’s blind sighted to the infringement of their rights—he never states outright that the real cause of the war is for oil and profits. He leaves the dots for the audience to connect. Thus the inferences in this film are quite simple, if you have A, B, and C, then D surely must follow, even if there is no evidence for D.

*The response of the opponent.* Although the last principle deals more so with the response of the opponent, it is also considered part of the conspiracy argument. When an arguer claims the existence of a conspiracy the opponent may respond in one of three ways: they may
deny the claim entirely and dismiss it, they may offer an alternative viewpoint of the events or
details, or they may make a counter-charge that the one introducing the conspiracy is really the
true conspirator (Zarefsky, 1984). If the first response is chosen then it must be joined with a
successful transfer of the burden of proof as well (Zarefsky, 1984). If the second is chosen it
may work in some questionable circumstances but will be hard to uphold in response to
documentary evidence (Zarefsky, 1984). But, if the third is chosen, it will allow the opponent to
afflict the arguer with the same difficulties he/she faces (Zarefsky, 1984). Zarefsky (1984)
argues that counter-charges are among the most effective responses to a claim of conspiracy.

In Fahrenheit 9/11 Moore asks Bush a question and he replies, “Get a real job will you?”
(Fahrenheit 9/11). In essence this small response, not geared toward Fahrenheit but nonetheless
still significant, could imply that Moore’s work holds no real significance. In essence this could
be viewed as a counter-charge that emphasizes that Moore should be at fault as well. In
Fahrenheit 9/11 there is no other response as to what Bush thinks about Moore. In fact, Bush
allows other individuals to respond for him, as will be discussed below and again in the critical
response section of Chapter Four.

Although this next response was not inside the film, it’s still important to include in this
section. According to a CBS News report (2004), the White House and Republican National
Committee took a “no comment” approach to the release of Moore’s documentary. White House
Communications Director Dan Bartlett slammed the allegations in the film as "outrageously
false" and the president's father, former President George Bush, described the documentary as a
"vicious personal attack" on his son (Malone, 2004). Responses of this type are by no means
strategic responses in light of the charges. These responses do not deny the charges, do not offer
an alternative view of the situation, nor are they able to make a solid counter-charge against
Moore. This lack of response allows for the burden of proof to remain on the shoulders of the Bush administration and consequently confers strength to the conspiracy argument. The audience may begin to question that if these claims are not true then why is their no other response given by officials?

**Conspiracy and Documentary Modes**

Given the film’s considerable use of the conspiracy genre, it’s no wonder that the expository mode laid the framework for the film. Consequently these two share several similarities. Both the expository mode and conspiracy genre rely upon cause and effect relationships among various phenomena in order to advance a particular argument. Likewise, the five key cause and effect relationships identified in chapter two were spread throughout the film in order to demonstrate the interrelatedness among phenomena; this interrelatedness also refers to the conspiracy argument’s ability to explain a pattern of anomalies. Moreover, the expository mode and conspiracy argument both rely profoundly on the use of rhetorical questions. Using rhetorical questions allow the arguer the ability to prove ones motive, advance an argument, and make persuasive inferences. In the expository mode the audience takes its “cue from the commentary and understand[s] the images as evidence or demonstration for what is said” (Nichols, 2001, p. 107), and the same can be said for the images used in a conspiracy argument.

Additionally, the conspiracy genre can also be linked to the politically reflexive mode. Moore does not ask the members of the audience to readjust their assumptions about the documentary form itself; rather he asks them to trust the form and the claims being presented. Moore does, however, ask the audience to realign their assumptions about the Bush administration and post-9/11 events. As stated in Chapter Two, politically strategic
documentaries attempt to stimulate an “aha!” effect within the audience, pointing out the way things are, while simultaneously foreshadowing the way they might become (Nichols, 2001). The conspiracy argument, in the same way, does in fact point out the way things currently are and foreshadows what might happen if individuals do not deem the argument as reality or what might occur if action is not taken.

These eight principles work together in order to create the genre of the conspiracy argument. In this film and by its very nature, the conspiracy argument allows for, and even explains, the lack of conclusive evidence to support Moore’s claims. By analyzing Fahrenheit 9/11 according to these principles, it becomes clear that the conspiracy argument is a dominant genre in this film. It’s no wonder, considering that the conspiracy argument has long been referred to as a “staple of American politics” (Zarefsky, 1984, p. 63). The next section will discuss the second genre of interest and the ways in which rhetors apply themselves in order to embody the various ideas that they are trying put forth.

**Diatribe**

According to Windt (1972, 1990) the diatribe is an extreme form of protest utilized when all other conventional methods have failed. When rhetors view the entire society and its institutions as corrupt and in dire need of reform, they employ the diatribe as the vehicle for radical critique (Windt, 1972, 1990). On occasion, rhetors use themselves in order to embody the ideas that they are trying to put forth, so that the spotlight may be focused on them and their message (Windt, 1972, 1990). Windt (1990) asserts, “The diatribe is to conventional speech what Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland are to conventional life” (p. 225). The goal of the diatribe is an attempt to simultaneously criticize, entertain, shock, and convey cynically humorous impressions of public figures (Windt, 1990).
Perhaps one of the most important elements of the diatribe is shock. Not only does it gather an audience’s attention, but it also rearranges an individual’s perspectives (Windt, 1990). In Windt’s opinion, people rarely become concerned with problems until something outrageous or shocking happens that points out just how appalling the predicament is (Windt, 1972, 1990). According to Windt (1990), the diatribe is intended to produce shock by “satirizing fundamental values and expectations and by dramatizing the chasm that exists between ideals and practices” (p. 226).

The diatribe also ridicules traditional and basic values in order to create a new rhetorical form (Windt, 1990). In public speaking classes students are taught to draw upon the beliefs of the audience as resources for proofs and to try to appeal to the audience through reason and emotion, without offending beliefs and feelings. Those who participate in the diatribe do not seek identification with their constituencies, rather they wish to criticize and attack traditional perspectives and beliefs (Windt, 1990). Thus, the conventional is already a part of the fraudulent society and to identify with ones constituencies would be to give in to the very corruptness one is trying to fight (Windt, 1990).

In the New York Times, Moore was quoted claiming, “This film is not political for Democrats. This is not an anti-Bush diatribe. It is, I hope, a skillfully made film that documents our time” (Rutenberg & Holson, 2004, p. 30). In a way, Moore was correct given that Fahrenheit 9/11 does not entirely entertain the genre of the diatribe. Unlike his previous films, Fahrenheit 9/11 contains no funerals for candy bars, no meet and greets with NRA members or CEOs, and definitely no trips to the headquarters of K-Mart.

There are, however, a few instances in which elements of inverted logic, parody, and shock are used in the film. In Permanence and Change, Burke (1954) argued that it is difficult to
persuade people to question critically their most valued assumptions about everyday life. Burke called these valued assumptions "pieties," or "the sense of what properly goes with what" (p. 74). Traditional logic often is not an effective tool to argue against pious assumptions because people often hegemonically refuse to question deeply held cultural assumptions. To persuade people to question their pieties, a rhetor needs to adapt a more complicated strategy than traditional logic.

In other words, people may become angry and upset when a rhetor challenges the assumptions that help bind together their symbolic understanding of the world. A Christian may become upset when it is suggested that the Santa Claus myth promotes blind obedience to a paternal figure; to this individual, Christmas is congruous with joy, not patriarchy, and to suggest otherwise may be emotionally disturbing, regardless of the logic of the argument. Therefore, many members of the audience may be shocked and appalled by Moore’s juxtapositions, simply because they feel that you should not suggest the President would be unjust and to do so is unpatriotic and incongruous. In order to argue against an individual’s valued assumptions, a rhetor (Moore in our case) must invent a creative way to compare two concepts that seem unrelated; A and B, which previously seemed incongruous, strategically must be compared so that they seem alike (Burke, 1954). Perspective by incongruity is powerful because, if it is successful, it will jar people into new perceptions about the way reality can be constructed and may encourage those people to question their previously valued assumptions. Simply put, the perspective-by-incongruity encourages people to reclassify their outlook on the social world (Burke, 1954).

After analyzing the film, it is apparent that Moore relies upon four different strategies of the diatribe. These strategies include: the juxtaposition of images/narration, the juxtaposition of images/music, comedic spoofs, and self-persuasion. Under each strategy each segment also
follows Burke’s perspective-by-incongruity, thus pushing the audience to reevaluate their assumptions about Bush and the administration.

**Juxtaposing Images/Narration**

The first element of diatribe can be identified through Moore’s juxtaposition of images and narration. A juxtaposition of this type can come across as shocking because it seems as if the rhetor is revealing hidden information, along with the notion that you should not critically analyze “popular culture.” In *Fahrenheit 9/11* Moore arranges footage in such a way that astounds the audience.

For example in the beginning of the film Moore combines footage of Bush and various cabinet members in makeup, moments before television addresses/interviews. John Ashcroft laughs and asks the cameramen to make him look younger and complains about noise in his earpiece while Donald Rumsfeld asks an aid, “Do you suppose he’s pretty confident on those numbers on Iraqi security forces?” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). The images fade to black and audio of planes hitting the towers can be heard. A reporter claims that something has happened at the World Trade Center and people from the crowd shout, “Oh my God. Oh my. Let’s go. Come on. Let’s go” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). The images fade up from black into footage of the crowd below the towers watching in horror. This segment is both shocking and hurtful. How could the administration be laughing and worrying about the way they look during times of peril and disaster? If you or I have received a phone call that a loved one was in an accident, I hardly think we would worry as to whether or not our hair looked alright before leaving the house.

Also, early in the film, Moore shows footage of Bush sitting in a classroom reading with the children when his Chief of Staff whispers something in his ear about the towers being hit. Text scrolls across the scene of different time slots indicating that Bush did not react at first, and
simply went on reading *My Pet Goat* with the children. While Bush remains seated and looking around the room Moore asserts, “Should he have held at least one meeting since taking office to discuss the threat of terrorism with his head of counterterrorism?” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). The scene fades into an image of Richard Clarke testifying in front of Congress. Moore continues by stating, “Or maybe Mr. Bush was wondering why he had cut terrorism funding from the FBI, or perhaps he just should have read the security briefing that was given to him on August 6, 2001” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). The image of Richard Clarke fades into footage of Bush on his Ranch with his aides holding the briefing and finally into Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice’s testimony before the 9/11 Commission. Rice stated, “I believe the title was ‘Bin Laden Determined to Attack Inside the United States’” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). These scenes are just as astounding as the first segment discussed. Moore suggests “how could Bush not have read the briefing given to him, and why did he initially remain seated in the classroom for so long?”

This next combination of images also shocks the audience. News clips are shown of warheads being loaded onto ships which are intercut with images of Bush getting into makeup at his desk just before addressing the nation on TV. A woman’s voice calls out four minutes, three minutes, and thirty seconds. All the while images of aircraft carriers are getting ready for battle whilst Bush practices faces before going “live.” The woman’s voice returns, fifteen seconds, ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one…Bush begins his address, “My fellow citizens…” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). The scene cuts to shots of Baghdad where kids are playing, weddings are taking place, and people are laughing. Over the footage of Iraq Bush continues, “At this hour, American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people, and to defend the world from grave danger. On my orders, coalition forces have begun striking selected targets of military importance to undermine Saddam
Hussein’s ability to wage war” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). The speech stops and just as a little girl lands at the end of a slide massive explosions land all over Baghdad. News clips of and Iraqi man holding a dead baby near a pickup truck full of dead Iraqi bodies asks, “What’s this baby’s crime? Was he going to fight the soldiers? Cowards!” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). This segment is placed together by Moore as an attempt to provoke the audience into questioning the *real* motives of the Bush administration. We’re bombing what seems to be a peaceful and innocent country similar to ours, what’s wrong with this picture?

Interestingly, the previous scene is then juxtaposed with interviews of different U. S. soldiers and their naiveté. One soldier on the street claimed, “When war happens and the fighting starts, you know, it’s kinda like we’re pumped up and motivated and ready to go” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Another soldier indicated, “It’s the ultimate rush. Cause you know you’re going into the fight to begin with and then you got a good song playing in the background…and, uh, that gets you real fired up. Ready to do the job” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). After these two interviews images of dead and maimed Iraqi soldiers glare while another U.S. soldiers states, “We picked, uh…”'The Roof Is on Fire,’ because, uh, basically it symbolized Baghdad being on fire, and uh, at the time we wanted it to burn to get Saddam and his regime out” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). The same soldier begins to sing to the camera, “The roof, the roof, the roof is on fire, we don’t need no water, let the motherfucker burn, burn motherfucker burn…” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). The interviews with the soldiers are then juxtaposed with a news clip of Rumsfeld claiming, “The targeting capabilities and care that goes into targeting is as impressive as anything anyone could see” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). His statement is them followed by an image of an Iraqi baby’s head being sewn up without anesthesia. Suddenly the audience sees nightscope footage and hears audio of a soldier killing an Iraqi walking across an area. The soldier states, “Got him,
good. The second one, get the other one” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Rumsfeld’s interview interrupts this segment and he continues by saying, “The care that goes into it, the humanity that goes into it” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Younger adults listening to music to get them pumped up for killing? There’s humanity when one targets other soldiers for death? Moore asks his audience to pose the question, “Is war really humane?”

Additionally, in some segments of the film Moore takes several images in which the same phrase or statement is said and links them together in a montage. He links these images together to demonstrate how the administration has been manipulating citizens. The first takes place when Bush refers to the great lengths that Saddam Hussein has taken in order to build weapons of mass destruction. Colin Powell asserts, “Saddam Hussein is determined to get his hands on a nuclear bomb” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Three clips of Bush are shown saying the words, “Nuclear Weapons” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). A satellite photograph of an area in Iraq is shown and Powell states, “Active chemical munitions bunkers…Mobile production facilities” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Bush then claims, “We know he’s got chemical weapons” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Again in three different fused scenes Bush declares, “He’s got ‘em” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Moore interjects by indicating, “Huh…that’s weird. Because that’s not what Bush’s people said when he first took office” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). In footage of a press conference Powell argues, “He has not developed any significant capability with respect to weapons of mass destruction. He is unable to project conventional power against his neighbors” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Additionally Rice maintains, “We are able to keep arms from him. His military forces have not been rebuilt” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). In scenes immediately following, Vice President Cheney professes in an interview, “There was a relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Various news clips of Bush repeating his stump speech appear with these names, “Saddam, al Qaeda,
Saddam, al Qaeda, Saddam, The al Qaeda, Saddam, Saddam, Saddam, al Qaeda” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Moore uses these segments to suggest to the audience that perhaps the only relationship that existed between the two was the one created by the administration.

These are some examples of how Moore juxtaposes various segments of footage and commentary together in such a way that might appall members of the audience and make them begin to rearrange their previous notions about government officials and the war in Iraq. Throughout the segments above, Moore attempts to disconnect Bush’s rhetoric from reality. The next element of the diatribe can also be viewed as a subset to the first.

**Juxtaposing Images/Music**

The second strategy occurs through Moore’s juxtaposition of music and images. At the beginning of the film Moore shows news clips of inauguration day and Bush’s limo being pelted by eggs, Moore then switches to clips of Bush’s approval rating showing it drop to an almost low 10 percent. Moore narrates, “He was already beginning to look like a lame duck president. With everything going wrong, he did what any of us would do, he went on vacation” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). The music is cued and the audience hears, “Vacation, all I ever wanted. Vacation, have to get away. Vacation, meant to be spent alone” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). This music is then juxtaposed with images of Bush fishing, playing with his dogs and golfing. “Oh no!” cries Bush as he slices his golf shot (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Moore suggests that Bush’s vacation was time for him to get away from the matters of the world such as work and suspicious terrorist activity.

The next segment where images and music are combined takes place during Moore’s explanation of the relationship that the Bush family had with members of the Saudi elite. Images of Bush senior greeting the Saudis appear and he states, “Good morning, everybody. We’ve had a very nice reunion with friends” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Moore narrates, “Is it rude to suggest that
when the Bush family wakes up in the morning they might be thinking about what’s best for the Saudis instead of what’s best for you or me? Because 1.4 billion doesn’t just buy a lot of flights out of the country. It buys a lot of love” (Fahrenheit 9/11). The music is cued over images of Bush and cabinet members with the Saudi elite holding hands and smiling for photo ops. The song is REM’s *Shiny Happy People* and the lyrics state, “Shiny happy people holding hands. Shiny happy people laughing. Everyone around, love them, love them. Put it in your hands. Take it, take it. There’s no time to cry. Happy, happy. Put it in your heart. Where tomorrow shines, gold and silver shine” (Fahrenheit 9/11).

The third segment where a music/image juxtaposition occurs takes place during a scene where soldiers are praying over dead American soldiers at a funeral. Moore narrates, “But one story the media wasn’t covering was the personal story of each and every soldier who was killed in the war. The government would not allow any cameras to show the coffins home. This kind of story is a downer, especially when you are getting ready for a party on a boat” (Fahrenheit 9/11). Images are shown of Bush flying in on a jet to an aircraft carrier and then interacting with troops, the music is cued and the lyrics say, “Look at what’s happened to me. I can’t believe it myself. Suddenly I’m up on top of the world. It should’ve been somebody else. Believe it or not, I’m walking on air: I never thought I could feel so free—flying away on a wing and a prayer. Who could it be? Believe it or not, it’s just me” (Fahrenheit 9/11). Interestingly, this is the theme song to the 1980s comedic sci-fi *The Greatest American Hero*. A special "power suit" that only works on him is given to the teacher, Ralph Hinkley, by aliens. In the sitcom, Ralph is paired up with the gumshoe FBI agent, Bill Maxwell, who keeps them both busy with various scenarios. The suit of "unearthly powers" gives the power of strength, flight, invisibility, flames, telekinesis, the vision of events without being there, and the protection from bullets and fire.
Interestingly, Bush is not wearing a suit and tie in this clip, rather he is dawning a military jumpsuit. Perhaps Moore is mocking Bush as someone who feels he too has unearthly powers. Moore also uses this song with these images in order to give the impression that Bush was boasting about his new popularity while the *truth* was being hidden from Americans.

The next significant musical cue in the film occurs during a raid in Iraq on Christmas Eve. Before entering a house one soldier indicates, “Every house here has the right to have weapons. Maximum—excuse me—one AK 47. We always expect the targets to be armed” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Another soldier cocks his gun and shouts, “Rock ‘n’ roll” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Two soldiers stand together and show their tools for the raid while one asserts, “Bolt cutters. He’s got everything to crack doors open” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). The music is cued as images of soldiers in tanks during a nighttime patrol appear. “You better watch out, you better not cry. You better not pout, I’m telling you why. Why? Santa Claus is coming to town. Gather round. He’s making a list, checking it twice. He’s gonna find out who’s naughty and nice. Santa Claus is coming to town. He sees you when you’re sleeping. He knows when you’re awake. He knows if you’ve been bad or good. So be good for goodness sake. You better watch out” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). The music plays while soldiers kick in the door of a residence in Baghdad. The raid continues as the soldiers look for Suheib al Douri. A man is shown on his stomach in the floor and an Iraqi woman asks what he has done because he is a college student. An interview with a soldier back at the command post interrupts the scene as he maintains, “We have to…we have to bring the ideal of democracy and freedom to the country and show them that the American people are not here to…to rule Iraq” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Back at the apartment the Iraqi women sit on the couch crying and repeatedly asking the soldiers what Suheib did. The music is cued again, “He’s making a list, checking it twice. He’s gonna find out who’s naughty
and nice. Santa Claus is coming to town” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). The scene ends with a soldier dressed up as Santa and handing out gifts.

As with many movies we see at the theatre, they all end in music during the ending credits. Usually the songs are upbeat and make you feel happy about the film you’ve just seen. Although Moore does incorporate a song that is quite fitting with his film, the song is a little harder to digest. The song chosen was Neil Young’s *Rockin’ In the Free World*. Young's lyrics are considered to be an indictment of the politics of the ‘80s. The song's lyrics contain the words, “We got a thousand points of light. For the homeless man. We got a kinder, gentler, machine gun hand.” The lyrics are a direct reference to President George Bush Senior’s campaign pledge to create a compassionate citizenry volunteering to help cope with society's ills. The "thousand points of light" symbolize the American citizen's spirit and a shining example of giving selflessly to care for one another's neighbor and brother. Along with "a kinder, gentler hand", Bush Sr. believed that each American could contribute to helping make the United States -- and the world -- a better place to live and work.

The song is strongly Democratic and contains pro-American ideals, because it is a condemnation of the supply-side/trickle down politics of President Ronald Reagan. "Reaganomics" involved massive tax cuts in the wealthiest brackets which supporters claimed would trickle down to lower brackets. In fact, the policies led to huge federal deficits and exploding unemployment and social decay, particularly in large urban American cities. The economic realities of the ‘80s, along with increasing social problems -- such as homelessness and drug abuse -- made Young mock the campaign promises of President Bush Sr. as hollow rhetoric. The lyrics of "Rockin' In The Free World" also refer to the rampant consumerism of American culture and the rise of the disposable society based on waste and pollution. “We got
department stores and toilet paper. Got styrofoam boxes for the ozone layer. Got a man of the people, says keep hope alive. Got fuel to burn, got roads to drive.” The lyrics "Got a man of the people, says keep hope alive" refer to the Reverend Jesse Jackson's signature phrase to "Keep hope alive." Young contrasts President Bush Sr.'s rhetoric and Rev. Jackson's religion as solutions to society's ills, when in actuality, they were nothing more than "feel good" slogans with little results to show. Thus Moore uses this song as a way of mocking the hollow rhetoric of our current president and administration. In today's post-9/11 world, the lyrics seem prophetic and even more meaningful than when originally written on the eve of the '90s.

Comedic Spoofs

However, music and images are not the only type of shock and awe that Moore utilizes. According to Windt (1990) the cynics recognized that comedy often forces one to think and that often the result of such serious thinking must be relieved by laughter otherwise the result would end in tears. Similarly Moore employs comedic spoofs as a way of parodying or mocking the administration in order to push the audience to reflect on the current situation and the information that they are being given.

Near the beginning of the film, the audience is made aware that members of the bin Laden family were escorted by planes out of the U.S. two days after the September attacks. Jack Cloonan, retired FBI agent, indicated that the proper thing for an investigator to do would be to hand out subpoenas and keep bin Laden’s family members in the country until everyone had been accounted for and questioned. Following this interview clips from the TV show “Dragnet” appear as Moore narrates, “I don’t know about you, but usually when the police can’t find a murderer, don’t they want to talk to the family members to find out where they think he might be?” (Fahrenheit 9/11). Moore’s voice fades and a man in the clip asks, “Well, if you should
hear anything, let us know, will you? You willing to come downtown and give us a statement?” (Fahrenheit 9/11). The other man asks if it’s going to take long and tells the officer that his time is worth money and that he pays the cop’s salary. The cop tells the man to sit down because he is going to earn his money through interrogation. With dragnet scenes in the background Moore states, “Yeah, that’s how cops do it. What was going on here?” (Fahrenheit 9/11). This clip helps the audience process information and come to the realization that something is obviously in the works. Moore asks: Why didn’t we subpoena the bin Laden family? After all, we would only be asking them the same questions we would anyone else in this situation.

After footage of the Good Morning America interview with Richard Clarke in which he disclosed that Rumsfeld wanted to bomb Iraq, a burning map of Afghanistan was shown along with the opening scene from the television series Bonanza. Various leaders’ faces such as Bush, Rumsfeld, Cheney, and Tony Blair were superimposed on the bodies of the characters in the opening sequence. News footage from the Afghanistan invasion interrupts the parody and immediately replaces it with various clips of Bush declaring, “I’ll smoke them out of their holes. We’re gonna smoke’em out. Smoke him out. Smoke him out of his cave” (Fahrenheit 9/11). Interposing the news clips is footage from a western film where a cowboy states, “Let’s rush him and smoke him out.” (Fahrenheit 9/11). Moore’s use of the western Bonanza serves the purpose of mocking the administration and their lack of true leadership. After all, their tough talk was being modeled after TV westerns.

The third parody/mocking of the administration takes place only a few minutes after the first. Colin Powell asserts, “The United States is prepared to lead a Coalition of the Willing” (Fahrenheit 9/11). While talking to reporters Bush claimed, “When I say we will lead a Coalition of the Willing to disarm him if he chooses not to disarm, I mean it” (Fahrenheit 9/11).
One reporter asked who was in the Coalition of the Willing and Bush told the reporter that they would find out later. An image of a globe spinning appeared while an announcer stated, “The Coalition of the Willing…roll call!” (Fahrenheit 9/11). The announcer began to call off each country and during each announcement various clips were used to represent the country in a mocking manner. “The Republic of Palau! (young girls hula dancing), The Republic of Costa Rica! (guy driving a cart with two oxen), The Republic of Iceland. (black-and-white film footage of a Viking ship), Romania! (footage of vampires waking from their coffins), The Kingdom of Morocco (musician playing)” (Fahrenheit 9/11). Moore interrupts the announcer to narrate, “Morocco wasn’t officially a member of the Coalition, but according to one report, they did offer to send two thousand monkeys to help detonate land mines” (Fahrenheit 9/11). Bush follows claiming, “These are a men of vision” (Fahrenheit 9/11). The announcer continues, “The Netherlands! (someone smoking a huge pipe)” (Fahrenheit 9/11). Monkeys at a boardroom table are shown and Bush states, “And I’m proud…I’m proud to call them allies” (Fahrenheit 9/11). The announcer finishes by calling on last country, “Afghanistan!” Moore asserts, “Afghanistan? Oh yeah, they had an army…our army! I guess that’s one way to build a coalition—just keep invading countries. Yes, with our might coalition intact we were ready” (Fahrenheit 9/11). In front of reporters Rumsfeld declares, “One could almost say it’s the mother of all coalitions” (Fahrenheit 9/11). Obviously this segments were placed together as a way of mocking the “mother of all coalitions”.

Although no cartoons or superimposed images were used in this scene, it can still be considered humorous. During the segment on the Patriot Act in the film, Moore interjects an interview with Florida Republic Congressman Porter Goss. In the interview Goss states, “There is nothing to be ashamed of here. There is full transparency. There is nothing about the…
uh, Patriot Act that I am ashamed of in any way, shape, or form. I have a 1-800 number, call me” (Fahrenheit 9/11). The words “NOT REALLY TRUE” flash across the screen. Goss continues, “I’m the guy you call if there is a violation or abuse” (Fahrenheit 9/11). Additional words read, “BUT, HERE’S HIS PRIVATE OFFICELINE…” Goss claims, “If you got a poster child on this, I wanna see it, that’s what I do” (Fahrenheit 9/11). The numbers “202-225-2536” appear as Goss maintains, “I am hired by the people of the United States to provide oversight. I provide oversight” (Fahrenheit 9/11). These types of parody not only provide comic relief, but they also help Moore advance his message by eroding the legitimacy of the individuals he mocks. However, there is still one additional element of the diatribe that Moore employs.

**Self-Persuasion**

The cynics believed that the only bona fide type of persuasion was self-persuasion led by the way of example (Windt, 1972, 1990). What would a Michael Moore film be without some form of self-persuasion? One might argue that it is perhaps his signature technique just as it was for Diogenes the cynic. These are the scenes in which Moore stops acting like a storyteller and starts becoming a participant. Even though Fahrenheit 9/11 does not contain the typical dose of Moore-ism, there are still a few segments in which to illustrate. Moore-ism refers to the antics used by Moore for shock value. For example, in Moore’s film The Big One, Moore holds a funeral for the Baby Ruth candy bar because one of the production plants had closed down.

The first and most uproarious takes place when Moore commandeers an ice cream truck. During an interview with Congressman John Conyers, Conyers reveals to Moore that Congress does not read most of the bills because it entails too much on their part. Astounded, Moore approaches an ice cream truck in D.C. During this scene Moore states, “I couldn’t believe that virtually no member of Congress had read the Patriot Act before voting on it. So I decided that
the only patriotic thing to do was for me to read it to them” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). The truck begins to travel around the Capitol as Moore reads the Patriot Act on the loudspeaker, “Members of Congress, this is Michael Moore. I would like to read to you the U.S.A Patriot Act. Section 1, Section 210 of this code reads as follows…Section 2703 C…” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Would members of Congress rallied together to hear Moore read the bill to them? No, and even entertaining the mere thought is absurd. In order to garner attention and make the administration look like fools, Moore goes to great lengths to take part in the unusual and unexpected.

According to Windt (1972), Diogenes “walked barefoot in the snow, slept in abandoned tubs, and was known to have a lighted lamp in broad daylight announcing, ‘I am looking for an honest man’” (p. 62). Indeed in *Fahrenheit 9/11* Moore seemed to be looking for that same honest man. Nearing the end of the film, Moore and USMC Corporal Henderson walk on Capitol Hill with the hopes of enlisting members for the military. Moore asserts, “I guess I was tired of seeing people like Lila Lipscomb suffer. Especially since, out of the 355 members of Congress, only one had an enlisted son in Iraq. I asked Corporal Henderson to join me on Capital Hill to see how many members of Congress we could convince to enlist their children to go to Iraq” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Corporal Henderson and Moore approach Congressman John Tanner and ask him if he has any kids. Tanner indicates that he does and Moore asks him if there was any way that he could get them to enlist in the military. A stunned Tanner replies, “One of ‘em’s go two children…” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Moore emphasizes, “Oh, yeah, well, see, there’s not that many Congressman that have got kids over there…and in fact, only one. You know, so we just thought maybe they, you know, you guys should send your kids there first you know. What do you think about that idea?” (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). Tanner claims that he does not disagree with Moore and he takes some brochures for himself and other fellow members of Congress. Moore
approaches another Congressman and states, “I’m Michael Moore. I’m trying to get members of Congress to get their kids to enlist in the army and go over to Iraq” (Fahrenheit 9/11). Dumbfounded, the Congressman looks at Moore and walks away. Throughout the segment, Corporal Henderson and Moore try to chase down other congressmen, however no one will stop. At the end of the day, of course not a single member wanted to sacrifice their child for the war in Iraq.

Diatribe Mirrors the Documentary Modes

The diatribe seeks to shock and re-direct perspectives, as does the reflexive mode of documentary. The diatribe and the reflexive mode have similar goals; each set out to remind us how society works in agreement with conventions we may too readily take for granted. Likewise, both seek to point out or remove “ideological encrustations” that support a given social order. Furthermore, documentaries that are filmed in the politically reflexive mode are done so in order to obtain a “heightened form of consciousness” from the audience by shifting levels of awareness (Nichols, 1991). The same can be said for the diatribe, given that one of its primary elements is shock. Shock appeals not only attract attention, they can also aid in the redirection of audience perspectives (Windt, 1972, 1990). Chapter Two indicates that Moore employs the reflexive mode so that he may juxtapose footage and commentary in order to induce and “aha!” effect in members of the audience—the same can be said for the use of the diatribe.

Moreover, various elements of the diatribe also relate to those of the participatory mode. The participatory mode emphasizes the interaction between the filmmaker and the subjects through filmed interviews or other direct involvement (Nichols, 2001). Additionally the editing patterns used in this mode entail the juxtaposing and crosscutting among different and contradictory pieces of evidence (Nichols, 1991). The diatribe emphasizes the interaction
between the rhetor and his/her subjects, given that the cynics believed in self-persuasion as the true form of expression. Thus, the diatribe relies upon the rhetors’ interactions with individuals. The diatribe also utilizes the same strategy of juxtaposing images, songs, and commentary in order to stir up the audience. Additionally the diatribe allows Moore to morph into the bare feet of Diogenes, as does the participatory mode. This mode and the diatribe allow the audience to witness the world as it is represented by someone who is actively engaging in it. Moore utilizes the diatribe as a way to mock/parody political figures/ideas as well as re-direct traditional perspectives.

Windt (1990) quotes cynic Ken Kesey, from novelist Tom Wolfe, about the ideal diatribe: “Don’t argue about corrupt ideas, ridicule them. Don’t placate degenerate emotions, provoke them, bring them to the surface. Don’t merely criticize society; create a counter society of radically different individuals” (p. 237). Ideally, the diatribe seeks to overthrow the corrupt and create dramatic change (Windt, 1972, 1990). The Cynics, the Yippies, and the recently studied members of the group MOVE have not been able to overthrow society, but have tried to polarize and stress the irreconcilable differences between them and the establishment. Does the ideal diatribe exist? Or do the very strategies that compose the diatribe also compromise its potential and longevity? In the next section, we will discuss the ways in which the diatribe and conspiracy argument genres work come together as a unique and dynamic rhetorical form combating the weaknesses of each genre.

* A Functioning Hybrid

In Chapter Two we learned that documentary filmmakers often opt for an amalgam of documentary modes in order to fulfill the expectations of the audience, or produce a desired effect. Similarly, Jamieson and Campbell (1982) indicate that rhetors also tend to rely upon a
fusion of rhetorical genres in order to meet the needs of the rhetorical situation. Thus, documentaries and rhetorical artifacts may mix and match genres strategically in order to meet/fulfill a particular perceived need or requirement. If the blend satisfies expectations, the artifact is often viewed as successful (Jamieson & Campbell, 1982; Carlson, 1985). In fact, Jamieson and Campbell (1982) believe that “hybrids are important keys to understanding the coherence of complex rhetorical forms.” (p. 147). They argue that without the hybrid, “a critic would be less likely to capture the dynamics of human rhetorical invention operating in such [various] situations” (Jamieson & Campbell, 1982, p. 157).

As we already know, rhetorical hybrids are called into existence by complex situations where the audience’s expectations may require a blending of two different generic elements, and that this blending can be comprised of either one dominant and subordinate genre or two whole genres (Jamieson & Campbell, 1982). So what was Moore’s rhetorical situation? To what extend does Fahrenheit 9/11 work as a generic hybrid based on different situational components?

The film suggests that the 2000 election was stolen by Bush and that the country has been in a downward spiral since he took office. Perhaps the aim of Fahrenheit 9/11 is to stop Bush from fixing the 2004 election as he fixed the last. Moore focuses on the unjustified war in Iraq and also implies that it is the poor who make the most sacrifices. Consequently, this warrants the questions: how much more can our country take? If we ignore this question will there be a future for our civilization? What might the world look like after four more years of George Bush? Moore takes the stance that ordinary Americans have probably only been exposed to the mainstream media in which America fights evildoers around the world, and thus he hopes to puncture the image of the president as a take-charge leader. Thus, unlike the traditional
generic hybrid that is saturated in Bitzerian exigencies, Moore responds from a Vatzian perspective. Moore wants the audience to be aware that there are alternative venues of thought.

In the foreword of the reader that accompanies the film, Moore (2004) asserts, “Besides the fact that documentaries generally don’t use actors, they are a style of filmmaking that is different from fiction features in that they are written after the movie is shot. You enter the editing room with hundreds of hours of footage, and then you must decide what your story is and construct—write—it. We can’t tell George Bush what to say or John Ashcroft what to sing. But what we do with what is said requires a lot of noodling—to determine where it all fits into the basic story we are trying to tell. This is then all woven together with the narration that I write.” (p. xvi). The voice of the documentary is the voice of the filmmaker “setting out to take a position regarding a specific aspect of the world and to convince us of its merits” (Nichols, 2001, p. 49). Fahrenheit 9/11 is an excellent example of a hybrid shaped by the situation, the needs of its audience, and its filmmaker.

To accomplish his goal and advance his argument Moore must address an audience comprised of those who are either in favor or opposed to the Bush administration. Moore had also hoped to address the undecided voters in the audience. These audiences caused Moore to carefully and strategically consider the premises upon which he built his argument. Not only did Moore need to respond to the upcoming November election, he also had to redirect the perspectives of the audience by offering an alternative view of events.

In order to address these situations, Moore needed a strategy that would allow him to become a People’s Tribune, a strategy that would enable him to visibly show Bush as an political cretin out for the good of the corporation, as well as a strategy that would enable him to shift the audiences perspectives away from the current administration’s ideology. According to
Goodnight and Poulakos (1981), “Conspiracy suspicions are voiced in terms which attribute social evils to powerful, secret alliances” (p. 303). Thus, with a particular evil in mind, Moore began to “noodle” his story.

In order to address the upcoming election, *Fahrenheit 9/11* employed all of the principles of the conspiracy genre as mapped by Zarefsky. In order to legitimize his argument, Moore identified the ambiguous evil as Bush and explained how various events stemming from the 2000 election and post 9/11 were linked to him. Moore then further legitimized his argument by offering a clear-cut choice in alternatives for viewers by revealing secrets about the administration. Moore also utilized social strain in his favor as a way of providing a clear picture of the world through his argument. Social strain was also used by Moore as an attempt to define the situation. Moore was also able to minimize his own burden by shifting the burden of proof through the use of the self-sealing quality and his storytelling style. Although Moore did provide some historical documents in the film, he mainly argued by residues questioning what motive Bush would have to partake in any of the accused activities if he was not part of the alleged conspiracy. The residues in the film often took the shape of rhetorical questions. This technique proved to be superior given that the administration did not comment about the film, thus lacking an alternative explanation for the conspiracy argument. Lastly, the use of inferences allowed Moore to take ambiguous and insignificant events and make them part of the larger picture. By engaging in conspiracy rhetoric, Moore hopes to re-define some aspects of social reality.

Even with some of the most seemingly concrete evidence, convincing a public or undecided voters which supports the Bush administration that the President and his administration were the architects of a conspiracy inundated by unethical behavior and corruption is no easy task. Referring back to Burke, many individuals are resistant in changing
their valued assumptions, so, in order for Moore to shift the audience’s perspectives he utilized a second rhetorical genre that would provoke extreme reactions from the audience. Thus, he laced his segments with parody, wit, humor, absurdity, criticism, and shock. Moore relied upon evidentiary editing techniques in order to sustain the continuity of his argument. As such, this editing style juxtaposed footage, news clips, music, and sound bites as a way to create and maintain cause and effect relationships. Moore also went out into the streets and participated with his subjects in order to show how the conspiracy argument applied to real-life—that he was not just taking a bunch of obscure footage and throwing it into the melting pot. All of these elements enabled Moore to enliven his argument.

The blending of the two techniques starts to eat away at our valued assumptions leaving us with questions such as: Why did the networks never show footage of Bush in the Florida classroom for seven minutes while the schoolchildren read a story about a pet goat? It’s been available on the internet and is at least as interesting as the footage of Saddam Hussein which networks never tire from running. Perhaps, if the pet-goat footage had been widely shown like the Saddam Hussein footage—or the presidential candidacy-ending footage of Howard Dean screaming after losing a Democratic primary—Bush would have had a lot more trouble presenting himself as a “war president” or tough guy defending the country from terrorists. Perhaps Bush would have been portrayed as that guy who listened to a pet goat story while America burned—behavior that is at least unpresidential as screaming boisterously in the face of defeat at the primaries. This type of footage is exactly what Moore brings to the forefront of his arguments. Moore has managed to take some vital issues and images out of obscurity and toss them into the mainstream.
The diatribe’s effectiveness depends on the desire to criticize and overturn the entire apparatus in which business is conducted in society. Moore created this film with the hopes of stopping Bush from hijacking the 2004 election. As the 2004 election approached, Bush was placing a huge bet that Americans would back him as a “war president” able to defend the nation against Islamic fundamentalism. In order to jar Americans, Moore created an alternative and subversive read to this idea—Fahrenheit 9/11. Moore wants individuals to look at the President with doubt and understand that Iraq was a war of choice rather than necessity. Moore wants the millions of individuals who believed what they were told from mainstream media about 9/11, about Iraq, and about Bush himself to come to the realization that they had all been lied to. Fahrenheit 9/11 is an example of a work which mastered the constraints of more than one situation at a time. Thus, this film can be viewed as a rhetorical hybrid.

The reason the people in the audience gets so drawn in is because the hybrid Moore created keeps us involved as extras in the story—we are the American people, this is happening to us. The diatribe erodes the legitimacy of Bush and the administration, allowing for the conspiracy argument to remain possible and plausible.

Supporting the Weaknesses

In the small sample of research on the rhetorical hybrid, no scholar has indicated whether or not the two fused genres work in such a way that they buttress the weaknesses of the other. Mainly the articles focus on the dynamic fusion and how it filled the needs of the audience, situation, and the rhetor. However, I feel that it is also important to address the internal dynamics of the hybrid. Regardless of the strong elements in the conspiracy and diatribe genres, each contains its own weaknesses.
Goodnight and Poulakos (1981) indicate that conspiracy rhetoric is a struggle to define the “grounding of discourse.” (p. 301). They argue that the struggle emerges between two parties, those that claim to be aware of a conspiracy and those who argue the claims to be absurd and maliciously inspired (Goodnight & Poulakos, 1981). Depending upon the outcome of the struggle between these two parties, the rhetorical ground of one party may be viewed as “pragmatism” whilst the other is labeled as “fantasy” (Goodnight & Poulakos, 1981). If the conspiracy claims are vindicated then the rhetoric of the conspirator will be revealed as a perpetuation of fantasy and the conspirator’s “motives, actions, and statements…are seen as part of a twisted, secret world carved out by the genius of a master-mind and the loyalty of a few fanatics” (Goodnight & Poulakos, 1981, p. 301-02). However, if the conspiracy is denied such vindication, the conspiracy argument will eventually “create a world where pragmatic assumptions about discourse become entirely inoperative” (Goodnight & Poulakos, 1981, p. 302). In other words, the conspiracy argument could become slighted as being too fantastic.

The diatribe, Windt (1972, 1990) argues, is limited in its effectiveness. Once attention has been gained and criticism voiced, the true usefulness of the diatribe dissipates (Windt, 1972; 1990). The diatribe relies profoundly on the use of shock and obscenity, however after repeated use the acts are no longer shocking and are given less attention. Simply put, the shepherd can only cry wolf so many times before the townspeople agitated and anesthetized to the calls.

Interestingly, when the two genres are combined, the weaknesses of each may tend to diminish. In order for Moore’s argument to remain plausible and pragmatic, he needed a way to expose the “wizard behind the curtain,” and he did so through the use of the diatribe. Just when the argument began to cross the pragmatic/fantasy boundaries, Moore juxtaposed the scene, threw in a song, or utilized a comedic spoof.
The small jolts of the diatribe not only added fuel to the fire, but maintained the usefulness of the diatribe. The conspiracy argument laid out the pattern and the diatribe invoked shock and inverted logic as a means to further the argument and sustain its credibility. Thus, the conspiracy argument provided the diatribe with longevity and the diatribe provided the conspiracy with plausibility; the strong suits of each genre buttress the weaknesses of the other.

This chapter identified the ways in which *Fahrenheit 9/11* contained elements of both the conspiracy argument and diatribe genres. Additionally we applied the generic hybrid and assessed the ways in which these two genres worked together to fulfill the needs of the situation and the audience. We also examined the ways in which the two genres were comparable to the hybrid of documentary modes. Through this analysis we have a better understanding as to how the generic elements work together in order to further the film’s argument. This chapter has also provided insight as to what motivates or causes the argument in the first place, the standpoint of the filmmaker, and who the audience is. It is quite obvious that Moore can not tolerate Bush’s style of government.

Every so often the people need a “common Joe” to make common sense out of what is happening in the world today. The people need a variety of sources for alternative thought. Perhaps if there had been cameras around back in the day, Thomas Paine might have made a documentary instead of writing a pamphlet urging independence from England. In the next chapter we will examine the critical responses to *Fahrenheit 9/11* and evaluate the effectiveness of the rhetorical hybrid and discuss the future of the documentary.
Chapter 4: Propaganda or Democratic Self-Expression?

_Fahrenheit 9/11_ is arguably one of the most controversial documentaries ever made. In the weeks after its release, supporters and critics alike vehemently debated its merits and flaws. Moore was praised by some for dishing out such a “gutsy interpretation” of events (Toplin, 2005). Others lambasted him for distorting evidence and serving up propaganda (Toplin, 2005). Executive director of Move America Forward, a pro-Bush group, Siobhan Guiney stated, “Moore is critical of what's happening right now, and there's no problem with being critical — but his movie is not a documentary, it's a piece of propaganda” (Michael Moore in the crosshairs, 2004, para. 7). Criticism does not seem to daunt Moore, unless someone dares to call _Fahrenheit 9/11_ propaganda, or insinuate that it promotes a particular doctrine. “It's a non-fiction film, and non-fiction is a very big tent — and that can be anything from C-SPAN to a film with a point of view, such as mine. Propaganda is a vile term,” states Moore (Arnold, 2004, para. 6). This final chapter will examine the critical responses associated with _Fahrenheit 9/11_ and evaluate the rhetorical hybrid’s effectiveness in conjunction with the responses. This chapter will also revisit the research questions posed in Chapter One and will provide a summary of the major findings. Lastly, this chapter will conclude by providing insight about the future of documentaries along with the route Moore’s career is taking.

**Critical Responses**

Moore’s originally planned distributor, the Walt Disney Company, refused to allow its Miramax division to distribute the film. This is quite interesting, given that Disney had previously released Moore’s political film, _The Big One_ (Levin, 2004). Moore speculated that this decision was made in order to protect Disney’s tax breaks in Florida (Levin, 2004). Others argue that perhaps Disney felt that distributing the film was too risky due to the upcoming
Presidential elections (Levin, 2004). Disney claimed that it was because *Fahrenheit 9/11* didn’t fulfill the family values of the company (Levin, 2004). The Disney executives also pointed out that they had an agreement with Miramax that would allow them to block films that fell into the NC-17 rating (Rutenberg & Holson, 2004). Disney claimed that the dispute over the film was concerned as to whether or not *Fahrenheit 9/11* fell into this category (Rutenberg & Holson, 2004).

With the upcoming election only five months away, the film was also dismissed as "propaganda" by the Republican Party. Moore's controversial documentary created a political firestorm even before its official opening. A conservative grassroots organization announced the Tuesday prior to the film’s release that they were going to start a campaign urging movie theaters to reject the film (Marinucci, 2004). The California-based organization, called Move America Forward, was headed by former GOP Assemblyman Howard Kaloogian. "It's political propaganda," Kaloogian said of the film, which he labeled anti-American (Marinucci, 2004, para. 3). Kaloogian stated that Moore had a right to his views, but that "we also have a right to tell movie theater owners and the industry that this is not the fare that passes as entertainment -- let alone documentary" (Marinucci, 2004, para. 4). The organization also set up a web site, MoveAmericaForward.org, in an attempt to attack the film. Those that managed the website encouraged:

Americans who found in Moore’s movie *Fahrenheit 9/11* an attempt to undermine the war on terror, to let movie theatre operators know about their objections. Think about it...If you walked into a Wal-Mart store and saw they were selling merchandise that attacked the military, our troops, and America’s battle against Islamic terrorism, wouldn’t you complain to the store manager or write a letter and ask that they not sell that product because it was undermining our national effort (Bliefuss, 2004).
In a response to these efforts, one of the film’s distributors Lion’s Gate, asserted, “It is unfortunate that people who don't want to see this film are trying to interfere with the rights of people who may want to decide for themselves. Regardless of a person's political perspective, we hope that everybody can agree that censorship is antithetical to the American way” (Marinucci, 2004, para. 7). The grassroots group was soon exposed as a front for the GOP-linked political PR firm Russo Marsh and Rogers (Malone, 2004). It would seem from the critiques below that the attempts to prevent the screening of the film succeeded only in fuelling controversy over the film and the mainstream media’s interest in it.

Also in June 2004, Matthew Felling, the media director of the Center for Media and Public Affairs which is a nonpartisan research and educational organization that conducts scientific studies of the news and entertainment media, said: "Of course, this movie is going to be Michael Moore's version of what he thinks President Bush is up to and what he thinks his capabilities are. We already know that he does not think that he is really cut out for the job. So Michael Moore will pick out everything he can to support that argument and we can only hope that Americans are well-versed enough in the successes of the Bush administration that they can balance it out on their own" (Malone, 2004, para. 14). The head of another independent conservative group, Citizens United, David Bossie, noted, “Well, clearly this is nothing more than a two-hour political commercial. It is nothing more than an attack ad on President Bush. It is nothing more or less and so I think that people who go to see it will have already made up their minds and they are just making a donation to Michael Moore and to the John Kerry [presidential] campaign" (Malone, 2004, para. 11).

Other groups attempted to have advertisements promoting the film banned 60 days before the November election due to election campaign restrictions. The group Citizens United
contended that the commercials for *Fahrenheit 9/11* fell under federal campaign-finance law (First Amendment Center, 2004). Regulations prohibit the use of corporate money to air ads identifying a presidential candidate in the 30 days before his/her party's nominating convention and 60 days before the November 2 election (First Amendment Center, 2004). In early August 2004, the FEC unanimously decided to reject Citizens United's complaint, saying that it "cannot entertain complaints based upon mere speculation that someone might violate the law" (Source Watch, 2005).

Conservative internet watchdog groups such as Moorelies.com and Moorewatch.com claim to “expose the truth about America’s fakest pseudo-muckraker.” One strategy advocated by moorewatch.com, was to promote the downloading of pirated copies of the movie, thereby depriving Moore of the box-office sales. As an *Australian Financial Review* journalist reviewing this strategy dismissively wrote, "We've been downloading Fahrenheit 9/11 for four hours now, and we've downloaded a whopping 16 megabytes. At this rate it will take us just 250 hours to steal the movie. Take that! Mr. Moore!" (Source Watch, 2005, Right-wing attacks, para. 2).

Moore realized that *Fahrenheit 9/11* was going to stir up controversy and in light of that on his homepage, Michaelmoore.com, he dedicated various sections of his website for “factual back-up.” In this section of his website, he breaks the film down into six different sub-sections. The first factual back-up sub-section deals with “the facts in Fahrenheit 9/11 from the 2000 election to George W. Bush's extended visit to Booker Elementary on the morning of September 11th”. The second sub-section contains information about “Bush's failure to meet with Richard Clarke, to the August 6th memo, and ends with the Saudi flights out of the US after 9/11.” The third sub-section covers information “from Osama's relations with his family through Bush's military records and ends with Bush's business history, including Arbusto, Harken and the
Carlyle Group.” The fourth sub-section deals with information “regarding the Carlyle Group and Saudi money in the United States and its connection to the Bush family, their friends and associates.” The fifth sub-section covers information about “Saudi Arabia's involvement in 9/11 through the natural gas pipeline in Afghanistan.” Lastly, the sixth sub-section covers information about the “Patriot Act and the War in Iraq.” It seemed that Moore was prepared in advance to back-up the information/arguments he presented in the film. On his site he under a section titled, “Michael Moore responds to the wacko attacksos,” he claimed, “One thing you get used to when you're in what's called ‘the public eye’ is reading the humorous fiction that others like to write about you” (Michaelmoore.com).

There is also a link on Moore’s site for other books related to the political topics he discussed in the film. Moore also includes a link to a book which serves as an accompaniment to the film, titled, The Official Fahrenheit 9/11 Reader. In this book, Moore provides a section for the entire screenplay, a section for back-up information and evidence, a section on the public’s thoughts about the film, and a section containing a few essays and critiques about the film. The section on the public’s thoughts about the film was a compilation of emails that Moore had received from viewers. To no surprise, all of the emails essays had a positive read to them.

As Election Day 2004 loomed closer, Moore's point of view was met by plenty of challengers, both on film and on DVD. Some critics began to impugn Moore's patriotism, thus Moore himself was the target of several politically motivated documentaries. These alternate views attempted to rebut Moore’s criticism of the Bush administration's handling of the war in Iraq, as well as the premises of his other movies. Counter titles included: Michael & Me, released on August 2nd, 2005, which countered Moore's Oscar-winning documentary about the gun industry, Bowling for Columbine; Fahrenheit 9/11; Michael Moore Hates America,
released on October 4\textsuperscript{th}, 2005, which interviewed people Moore has featured in his movies; and \textit{Celsius 41.11}, released on October 26\textsuperscript{th}, 2004, billed as "The Truth About the Lies in Fahrenheit 9/11" from the conservative Citizens United group.

Mainstream journalists also grew concerned with the film. \textit{San Francisco Chronicle}'s Ted Goodman (2004), pointed out that it is not that journalists do not like Moore’s work, it is that they are frustrated by moviegoers believing that Moore is the only one breaking news. Journalists feel that they have been dishing out the facts all along, only in a more lackluster fashion (Goodman, 2004). Koppel asserted, “What concerns me here is that I've seen '9/11.' It's a terrific piece of entertainment. There are even some interesting facts in it. But it is to the documentary what the (Oliver Stone) 'JFK' film was to history. And what is alarming about that is that it becomes increasingly difficult because, I'll be quite honest -- and I'll only talk about 'Nightline' -- 'Nightline' is not nearly as entertaining as ‘Fahrenheit 9/11’” (Goodman, 2004, para. 9). In 2004, George Stephanopoulos recalled speaking with random individuals about why they had seen Moore’s documentary, with the majority response being that they wanted to get the facts (Goodman, 2004). Stephanopoulos indicated, “At least a few of them [individuals he spoke with] had the sense that if it's coming from the government, if it's coming from established media, they must not be telling us something, and we have to go to this alternative venue to get the facts, and I think that's a challenge for all of us" (Goodman, 2004, para. 6).

Moore also attended the 2004 Republican National Convention as a guest columnist for \textit{USA Today} (Leibovich & Farhi, 2004). Apparently, from the moment he entered the Convention, he began to cause a ruckus. Leibovich and Farhi (2004) reported that, “For more than two hours, he created a comet's tail of commotion. Holding a rolling news conference as he dragged a clot of some 70 reporters past a growing wave of security officials and hostile
conventioneers, Moore came close to disrupting the entire” (para. 3). Dan Willard, an alternative Maryland delegate for Rockville, shouted, “Moore, you loser! Get out” (Leibovich & Farhi, 2004, para. 4). Owen Ullman, the deputy managing editor for USA Today, claimed “We invited Mr. Moore to write a column for us, and he asked if he could unobtrusively observe the convention. We did not anticipate that many would consider him the story and that it would create such commotion” (Leibovich & Farhi, 2004, para. 24).

Even parents took their concerns with academic institutions. One parent of a student at a Utah college offered a check for $25,000 to the student government association if they would cancel Moore’s scheduled appearance (Toplin, 2005). Controversy even erupted here at the University of Cincinnati. In October 2004, Moore came to UC’s campus to speak to students about getting out and voting. The controversy stemmed from the fact that part of the money funding this event was to come from the student’s general tuition fees and that his visit was not reported to the Federal Elections Commission (FEC). David Hardy, a lawyer and co-author of the anti-Moore book Michael Moore is a Big Fat Stupid White Man, filed a complaint with the FEC, likening Moore’s visit to that of a “Kerry stump speech” (Rovito, 2005). Greg Hand, associate vice president of Public Relations for the university stated, “Students are allowed to bring anyone they want to campus and the university may not interfere” (Rovito, 2005, para. 12).

Some groups welcomed the film’s release and openly hoped it would have an impact on the 2004 presidential election. The anti-Bush group MoveOn.org urged its members to see the film, calling it a “powerful movie that lays bare the cynicism and greed behind Bush’s war policy” (Malone, 2004, para. 13). MoveOn also organized nearly 3,000 "Turn Up the Heat" house parties on the Monday June 28th following its first weekend in theaters (McCabe & Perez, 2004).
Michael Moore has been both idolized and demonized. Christensen (2005) says it best: “To some he is the savior of a dying American political left: a progressive man with a rare combination of personality, political awareness, marketing skills, artistic talent, bravery and populism. To others, however, Moore symbolizes everything that is wrong with the United States: hatred of his own country, disrespect for the President, advocacy of weak ‘liberal’ politics and the embrace of anti-Christian values” (p. 22). On the other hand, perhaps the film helped to bring anti-Bush voters to the polls, thus decreasing the margin of victory (Toplin, 2005). In my opinion, I think that the negative criticism surrounding the film only helped to promote the film. In addition, the criticism also furthers Zarefsky’s notion of the self-sealing quality, in that any type of rebuttal is viewed as the clever conspirators merely trying to cover their tracks.

People on both ends of the political spectrum expected that Fahrenheit 9/11 would have an impact on the way individuals voted. Republican critics attempted to void the influence of Fahrenheit 9/11 by attempting to pressure theatre chains not to screen the film, ban advertising for the film, and even try to stop Moore’s planned appearances on college campuses. Referring to the controversy surrounding Fahrenheit 9/11, John O’Conner, co-founder of the journal of Film & History, points out, “The situation provides an interesting reminder of the original definition of documentary film proposed in the 1930s as productions that would move audiences to social or political action” (2005, p. 7). John Grierson defined documentary as “the creative treatment of actuality” (Hardy, 1979, p. 15). Nichols (1991) writes, “Documentary directs us toward the world of brute reality, even as it also seeks to interpret it, and the expectation that it will do so is one powerful difference from fiction [italics added]” (p. 110).
Seemingly that is what Moore was attempting to do all along, motivate audiences to action. Robert Toplin, professor of history, in reference to *Fahrenheit 9/11* stated, “Moore confessed that he had planned carefully during the period of production to design a narrative that could arouse viewers’ emotions. He wished to do more than just entertain audiences, he wanted to inspire them to take action” (2005, p. 9). Moore claimed, “My mantra in the editing room has been: We’ve got to make a movie where, on the way out of the theatre, the people ask the ushers if they have any torches” (Toplin, 2005). Moore further asserted, “I believe the film [*Fahrenheit 9/11*] is going to bring hundreds of thousands of people to the polls who otherwise were not going to vote. I think it’s going to have a tremendous impact in that way” (Germain, 2004, para. 4).

The controversy surrounding *Fahrenheit 9/11* guaranteed that the documentary was given a great deal of press attention and free advertising. Moore's film was a commercial success. In May 2004, it won the prestigious Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival and grossed $23.9 million in ticket sales in its first weekend, making it the top-rated film in the country even though it only opened in 868 theatres (Uhde, 2004). Its receipts during the first weekend alone made it the highest-grossing documentary film in history (Uhde, 2004). Thus, *Fahrenheit 9/11* represents a momentous test case for discussing the influence of movies on public opinion.

The Historians Film Committee Panel presented a paper titled, “Michael Moore: Cinematic Historian or Propagandist?” at the 2005 American Historical Association meeting. The panelists included four historians, Robert Toplin from the University of North Carolina, Steven Mintz from the University of Houston, Ron Briley from the Sandia Preparatory School, and Ken Nolley from the Willamette University (O’Conner, 2005). John O’Conner, Co-Founder of the journal indicated that there were three underlying areas the historians were
concerned with: 1) what did the film have to say or what was its overall point of view; 2) the current style of production utilized by Moore, given his previous method of “gotcha journalism” and; 3) the ways in which the political intent of a film can shape individual’s evaluation of it as an indicator of the public’s state of mind at the current time (2005, p. 7).

Toplin (2005) argued that many of Moore’s critics “act as if they are interested primarily in maintaining fine standards of documentary procedures, but the true nature of most debate are really about politics, not aesthetics” (p. 8). Toplin (2005) pointed out, “His [Moore] partisan outlook is a familiar one in the documentary format. Most notable single-production, non-fiction films (such as Atomic Café, Harlan County, U.S.A, and Hearts and Minds) communicate strong points of view” (p. 8). Toplin argued that the debates over the potential impact of the film were central to public disputes about the film’s significance. He explained that the Democrats hoped it would influence opinion, while the Republicans were worried that the film would harm the President’s reputation during a time when he was occupied in a tight race for re-election (Toplin, 2005).

Mintz (2005) indicated that recently their had been a rising trend in documentaries, when previously they had been thought of as “box office poison” (p. 10). Mintz (2005) asked, “What accounts for this sudden change? Was is simply a matter of temporary circumstances connected with the 2004 presidential election? Or were deeper forces at work? And what is Michael Moore’s role in the surging popularity of the documentary” (p. 10). Mintz (2005) indicated that the surge was in part due to the growing desire for “authenticity” which was evident in reality TV shows. Mintz also added that “reality shows may have had a deeper impact by increasing the audiences’ comfort with ‘post-modern’ cross-cutting narratives, multiple points of view, and lower production values” (2005, p. 10). Mintz (2005) admitted that the reasons individuals like
Moore is because he created a persona, “the unsophisticated working class stiff who revels in his amateurishness and his sophomoric sensibility”, which audiences have found entertaining.

According to Mintz (2005) Moore’s films raises an important issue about the documentary filmmaker’s obligation to be objective. Mintz (2005) asserted, “Only the willfully naïve fail to recognize that the documentary tradition has always involved argument and opinion. By their very choice of subject and their selection of what materials to include and exclude, documentary filmmakers shape the presentation of their subject and therefore convey a political perspective…It is Moore’s skill as a filmmaker, his ability to attract a mass audience, and the presumed credulity of viewers that have evoked outrage from his critics” (p. 11).

In Ron Briley’s article (2005), he indicated, “If one accepts the definition of propaganda as the systemic propagation of a given allegiance or value system, then Moore may qualify as a propagandist. On the other hand, if we are going to pin the propaganda label on Moore, then it would seem only fair to place a similar description on Pentagon press conferences, the reporting of embedded journalists, and what passes for ‘fair and balanced’ reporting on such news networks as Fox” (2005, p. 11). Briley (2005) stated that the real issue should not be whether or not Moore is politically partisan, but rather how strongly Moore has made his case against the President. Briley (2005) argued that we should not focus so much of our attention on who is or is not a propagandist, but that we should pay attention to the troubling questions raised by Moore—regardless if we buy into his political ideology.

Nolley’s main argument is that it the conservatives should stop narrowing their focus on the “textual accuracy” of Moore’s film and focus more on the political context from which it came (2005, p. 16). He suggested that the conservatives examine their own rhetoric for the same problems they condemn Moore of (Nolley, 2005). Nolley (2005) maintained that although we do
need more passionate films such as *Fahrenheit 9/11*, we also need films with “more care and rigor” than Moore has produced. Nolley (2005) also argued that Moore’s film is “a loose, circumstantial argument that relies heavily on the weak suggestions that association equals influence and collaboration” (p. 16). Nolley’s criticism seems to be based on the expository documentary mode.

*Hybrid Compatibility*

The foci of this study has been to find out what made *Fahrenheit 9/11* so interesting, why did so many people watch it, and to understand/reveal what Moore did to motivate audiences. Moore indicated that his goal when making *Fahrenheit 9/11* was to get people out to the polls and vote, specifically those that may not have been interested in voting before. Moore also said that when he makes films he wants people to get fired up and essentially motivate them to action. I agree that Moore’s rhetorical hybrid was compatible.

The fusion of the conspiracy argument and diatribe was compatible and thus allowed for the two genres to compliment each other. As we learned in Chapter Three, the conspiracy genre served to provide the audience with a logical pattern and explanation of events, while the diatribe ousted the administration’s arguments. The diatribe de-legitimized the administration’s argument by framing them as clowns and fools. Thus it would seem that diatribe served as a buffer for some of the “fantastic” ideas within Moore’s argument, and further provided the claims with plausibility. In return, it seems as if the conspiracy argument was able to increase the longevity of the diatribe.

Since the film was released in June of 2004, there were only five months before the Presidential elections. Moore’s hybrid provided a suitable strategic response to the complex demands of the situation, the upcoming election, because he utilized the eight principles of the
conspiracy argument and then blended the argument with elements of the diatribe when the situation called for it. It seems as if Moore was hoping the audience would be made aware that Bush and the current administration had been participating in malevolent acts, by providing the audience with an alternative read to various events leading up to the war in Iraq along with the war itself. The discussion of the rhetorical situation would suggest that Moore was attempting to question Bush’s view of terrorism as a situation by rousing controversy and asking individuals to question whether or not they had been given all of the “facts”. Moore was attempting to raise awareness.

More often than not rhetorical criticism has been disparaged for categorizing artifacts according to their commonalities and is thus viewed as that of taking a cookie-cutter approach. Either something fits a various grouping of distinctive elements or does not. There’s always been somewhat of an “inclination to minimize idiosyncrasies and magnify the commonalities” (Jamieson & Campbell, 1982, p. 156) in our discipline.

I would argue that a fervent critic realizes that although commonalities are key, not everything is going to fit into one neat box. Thus, the hybrid offers the critic the opportunity to focus on both the frequent and the inconsistent. This allows for the critic to determine the extent to which different generic elements are either well-matched or unsuited in various artifacts. The generic hybrid should serve as valuable tool for future rhetorical studies in documentaries and public opinion. The hybrid is an important tool for understanding the dynamics operating in a given situation or artifact and the possible ability to “predict” their appearance in the future (Jamieson & Campbell, 1982, p. 147). Furthermore, “The rhetorical hybrid represents a fusion of elements that however transitory, stands as a potential kind of response to situations that
future rhetors perceive in similar ways” (Jamieson & Campbell, 1982, p. 157). In order to further understand this compatibility, we must examine the critical responses to the film.

Reviewing the Findings of the Study

Chapter One identified four research questions to be addressed throughout this study. The first research question asked was, “Which mode or modes of documentary are exhibited in Fahrenheit 9/11 and to what extent do the modes reflect a particular view toward the rhetorical situation?” The answer was provided in Chapter Two, where I identified the three emergent documentary modes: expository, participatory, and politically reflexive.

From the expository mode, five cause-effect linkages emerged. The first and most significant linkage stems from Bush’s “false” election into office. All of the other linkages presented are associated with the first. The second linkage that emerged was the notion that Bush spent too much time on vacation, and not enough time on the country. The third emergent linkage represented the business relationship that the Bush family had with the Saudis. The fourth signified that oil and profits, not terror, were/are the cause for the war in Iraq. The last emergent linkage introduced the audience to the idea that the war had allowed the administration to take away basic rights from citizens.

Within the participatory mode, Moore relied heavily upon the use of interviews. The interviews in Fahrenheit 9/11 were dispersed throughout the film to act as support for the film’s thesis. The interview subjects ranged from members of Congress and retired FBI agents to Lila Lipscomb, a mother who lost her son due to the war. Moore also interacted with various subjects in the film. Participatory documentaries stress the lived encounter of the filmmaker and the subject (Nichols, 2001). Therefore, the interview/interaction segments affirm Moore’s sense of “engagement with the immediate, intimate, and personal” as it occurred.
Of the three modes, the politically reflexive proved to be dominant, given that the underlying premise of the film was that the White House and Pentagon were taken over by a malevolent individual and administration whose goal is to serve the global interests of the corporations, not the people. This was measured simply by the number of segments from the film that ended up in this category. This mode also proved to be dominant in that there is strong call on the viewing audience as the key for social change. This chapter also addressed the concept of the rhetorical situation how it shed light on the question of Moore’s choice of representation. Not only did Moore want to respond to a perceived situational exigence, he also wanted to redirect the opinion of the audience members. Moore takes on a Vatzian perspective because he asks the audience to question Bush’s Bitzerian view of terrorism as a situation. Thus, *Fahrenheit 9/11* offers an alternative view of “reality” that asks the audience to detach themselves from the dominant views of their culture. As Izod & Kilborn (1998) write, "The political dimension of the reflexive project lies partly in the way such films imply that people's memory perception and interpretation of events are distorted by the stereotypes ... that circulate in our culture" (p. 430). This is exactly the point expressed by Moore. Moore attempts to discourage his audience from accepting the predominant point of view by casting doubt on prevalent assumptions about political and social problems in contemporary America.

The second research question asks, “To what extent does *Fahrenheit 9/11* contain elements of both conspiracy argument and diatribe?” Within Chapter Three, the eight macro and micro principles of the conspiracy argument were addressed. Examples and excerpts from the film were provided as evidence for each principle. Moore attempted to lend credibility to the conspiracy charge, by building the foundation of his argument on the following four macro principles. (1) It *explained an ambiguous evil*: President Bush, the administration, and his
family were all to blame. (2) It explained a pattern of anomalies: Bush stole the 2000 election, Bush took too many vacations and ignored his real work, Osama bin Laden was never captured, the focus of the war switched to Iraq, talks about a natural gas pipeline, and the readjustment of constitutional rights. (3) It polarized positions: Moore utilized secrets kept by Bush and the administration to portray that he was participating in a devious plot, which provided the audience with a clear alternative. (4) The film also offered reassurance during times of strain: America had hit a slump because the surplus was now a deficit, our country was at war, health care problems were getting worse, and individuals were being played with by the Department of Homeland Security. Moore utilizes the principle of social strain throughout the film as a means for garnering legitimacy to his claim by offering reassurance and “clarity” about particular phenomena to the audience and as a call to action. During times of social strain, people are looking answers. Fahrenheit 9/11 provides the audience with an explanation for the current state of the Nation.

Moore’s work also adheres to the our remaining micro principles of a conspiracy argument. (1) Moore’s conspiracy argument was able to shift the burden of proof to one’s opponent, while minimizing his own burdens: Moore did this by minimizing his interactions with individuals during the first half of the film, allowing for subjects’ stories to be presented in an unhampered manner. Additionally, Zarefsky’s self-sealing quality was also enacted, in that any accusation against the film and its contents could be viewed as the conspirator trying to cover his tracks. (2) Moore also employed the notion that motives are most persuasively proved by residues: What motive did Bush have to do X if he was not expecting that X would occur? Moore profoundly relied upon the use of rhetorical questions and the juxtaposition of images as his way of arguing by residues. (3) Moore took into consideration that inferences are a more
persuasive form of evidence then documents: Since inferences allow for the arguer to take ambiguous and insignificant events and make them part of the larger picture, Moore reinterpreted various events in order to make them fit into the larger pattern he was trying to present. An example of this included a scene of groups of people laughing, weddings, and children playing juxtaposed with Bush’s address to the nation that the military would be disarming Iraq. (4)

Counter-charges are the most effective responses to a conspiracy argument: In Fahrenheit 9/11 there were obviously no counter charges provided by Bush or the administration. However, after the film’s release, the White House and Republican committee took a “no comment” approach.

Chapter Three also discussed the third research question “to what extend does Fahrenheit 9/11 work as a generic hybrid based on different situational components and/or the ways in which elements of one genre support or reinforce elements of the other?” What we found was that the diatribe seemed to stem from the conspiracy argument. In order for Moore’s argument to seem plausible and pragmatic, he needed a way to expose the “wizard behind the curtain,” and he did so through the use of the diatribe. Moore was able to expose the administration as hoodwinks through ironic antics. For instance, the audience is made aware that members of Congress don’t necessarily read legislation that reaches their desks, so Moore commandeers and ice cream truck and ends up reading the patriot act to them. Essentially the conspiracy argument provides the pattern while the diatribe adds fuel to the fire.

Lastly this chapter, Chapter Four, addresses the final research question, “How can the critical responses to Fahrenheit 9/11 be related to its distinctive substantive, stylistic, and situational characteristics?” The controversy surrounding the film after its release indicates that the hybrid blend of the conspiracy argument and diatribe was indeed compatible. The conspiracy argument laid out the pattern and the diatribe invoked shock and inverted logic as a
means to further the argument and sustain its plausibility. The controversy persists because the conspiracy argument stipulates that the clever conspirators will continuously try to cover their tracks. Some might argue that Moore’s hybrid blend was not effective because Bush was re-elected and Moore’s arguments were far-fetched ideas that contained no facts. Moore’s film failed to alter the political landscape. However, this is not a solid indicator that the hybrid blend created by Moore was not effective or compatible. Moore was more than likely preaching to already decided voters. Perhaps the hybrid blend created caused groups from both sides to support their candidate versus staying at home on Election Day. After all, the voter turnout increased, reaching its highest level since the presidential election in 1968 (Patterson, 2004). Perhaps voter-turn out is a good indication that the hybrid was compatible, regardless of who won.

The Future of Documentaries

*Fahrenheit 9/11*’s success, combined with the success of Moore's previous films, has been credited with building a larger market for documentary filmmaking in the United States. In the wake of the success of *Fahrenheit 9/11* a series of politically-oriented documentaries have also appeared. These films include: Jehanie Noujam’s *Control Room*, Mark Achbar’s *Corporation*, Robert Greenwald’s *Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch’s War on Journalism*, and Greenwald’s *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price*.

Robert Greenwald asserts, “We’ve underestimated the audience’s desire to see [political] material. I don’t think it’s about hating the President. It’s that politics has been brought home for the deepest part of ourselves. People now feel Politics is me” (Corliss et. al., 2004, p. 66). Greenwald further stated, “The issue of how the United States is going to be in the world is one of the most profound issues we as a country and a culture are going to struggle with. Politics, in
that sense, is going to be playing an important role in people’s lives for a longer time. I think there will be a continuing focus on some of these issues that are being raised” (McIntyre, 2004, para. 21).

“Political documentaries are becoming very, very important,” Cinema Libre founder Philippe Diaz asserted, "People will tell you that five or 10 years ago, they never would have thought to go to a documentary in the theater, but because now they are so disenfranchised by what they see on TV in terms of news, they go to theaters to see a movie" (McIntyre, 2004, para. 19). Nolley (2005) indicated, “we may not be able to agree about the likelihood or even the possibility of knowing truth, but the use we make of documentary points to a continuing belief that there are important things out there somewhere, that it is worth looking for them, and that the medium of motion picture photography is of some assistance in the search” (p. 14). Mintz (2005) asserted, “Perhaps the recent flow of documentaries demonstrates that there is an audience waiting, eager for politically-conscious films” (p. 11). It’s obvious given the release of films after Moore’s that there is a growing importance for alternative public spheres for marginalized political communities.

Moore’s dynamic hybrid blended the conspiracy and diatribes genres. The goal of the diatribe is to raise awareness about corrupt institutions through shock, parody, and inverted logic (Windt, 1972, 1990). While the goal of the conspiracy argument is to tell the story of conflict, persecution, power, and betrayal of a malevolent individual or group (Goodnight & Poulakos, 1981; Zarefsky, 1984). The conspiracy does so by pinpointing various external events and explaining their relationship, and linking them to the internal arguments made by the rhetor and opponent. "I think [Moore] may have started a trend where people believe that if you have a point of view, you can make a documentary and air the argument…[and] if you make it in a way
that also includes entertainment, you may even get further," indicated Howard Cohen, the president of Roadside Attractions, a documentary production company (McIntyre, 2004, para. 7). Moore has paved the way for other filmmakers who wish to advance their own arguments. Who’s to say these upcoming filmmakers won’t borrow from his infamous techniques or his use of the conspiracy/diatribe hybrid? The films listed above and those that are later released should be analyzed and examined for evidence of a hybrid blend.

Moore’s Next Move

Moore’s latest attention-grabbing documentary is already in development. According to some reports, he already has begun to “freak out” the HMOs (Wray, 2004; & Thomaselli, 2005). This time Miramax has stepped up and will handle Moore’s next documentary, Sicko. Sicko is going to target the American health care system. At least six major drug companies have issued the warning, with the likes of GlaxoSmithKline and AstraZeneca telling employees not to answer any questions asked by Moore and instead to refer him to the company's publicity department (Wray, 2004). Stephen Lederer of Pfizer Global Research and Development indicated, "We ran a story in our online newspaper saying Moore is embarking on a documentary – and if you see a scruffy guy in a baseball cap, you'll know who it is." (Thomaselli, 2005, p. 61).

In an interview with Newsweek, Moore denied that he was paying doctors to set up hidden cameras to film interactions with pharmaceutical-company sales representatives, Moore asserted, “I didn’t need to. So many doctors have offered to help, for free” (Gates, 2004, Movies: Moore on Drugs, para. 2). On Moore’s website Michaelmoore.com, he has dedicated a section his site to asking individuals to send in their own personal “health care horror stories.” “Being screwed by your HMO and ill served by pharmaceutical companies is the shared

Perhaps Moore will employ the conspiracy/diatribe hybrid again. However, hybrids are called into existence by “complex situations and as such, are transitory and situation-bound” (Jamieson & Campbell, 1982, p. 150). The fusion of two genres is a strategic response to the demands of the situation and the audience, so if the perceived needs for this film are similar to *Fahrenheit 9/11* then the possibility the hybrid will be employed is great. If the perceived needs of the situation and audience are different, then perhaps Moore will create a new hybrid. It is all dependent upon perceived needs.

This chapter revisited the research questions posed in Chapter One and recapped the findings from the previous chapters. We also examined the compatibility of Moore’s conspiracy/diatribe hybrid and also suggested that critics utilize the hybrid as a tool to examine the idiosyncrasies and commonalities of a given artifact. The critical responses were examined in relation to the generic elements of the hybrid and from that discussion we considered the potential for future documentaries. Additionally, this chapter provided a brief overview of Moore’s next career move which includes the upcoming documentary *Sicko*. We also briefly discussed the potential for future hybrids within Moore’s work.

In *Fahrenheit 9/11* Moore demonstrated the menace that comes with George W. Bush's administration, which he presents as not being legitimate enough to govern a free nation. For Moore, Bush is representative of the Republican power elite that abuses the rights of the American people. Both the war on terror and the war in Iraq serve the sole purpose of empowering those who rule either financially or politically, and international conflicts are artificially created to keep the elite in a position of power.
If the information in the *Fahrenheit 9/11* is not “true”, then why go to such great lengths to “protect” us from it? "It is certainly something the Bush administration does not want people to see," said Moore (Youngs, 2004, Undercover in Iraq, para. 11). The question, “What are you hiding?” continuously resurfaces. Moore issues a strong caution, warning citizens of potential outcomes of the current administration's policy. We have entered Orwellian, Moore claims. Times when society feels disconnected from its elected officials, and in turn, those elected officials keep society ignorant to what’s really going on. According to *Fahrenheit 9/11*, the President of the United States and all of his cabinet continue to present a façade of democracy, but the reality behind that façade is something less than democratic—the wealthy have the power and ability to steer this country in whatever direction their agenda dictates. *Fahrenheit 9/11* opens with the voice-over narration, "Was it just a dream?" and rest of the film provides the answer: What is happening in American politics after 9/11 is dangerous to society and democracy. The worst nightmare of literary and cinematic masters may come true if the society is lulled by the sweet deceptive voices of politicians.
References


35.2, 12-16.


