

Allie Herrera

JOR 445

Professor Moore

Sicko

Michael Moore's *Sicko*, introduced flaws in the United States by digging deep into the unknown world of our healthcare system. Not only did he question their motives, but essentially led the American people to question their trust in the system. In this documentary, Moore exposes the dysfunctional healthcare system, focused on earning profits and not on their primary mission of saving lives. Based on what we have learned thus far, *Sicko* is considered to have a participatory style of filmmaking because of Moore's personal involvement as a character and the clear stance or bias the film possesses.

Known to embarrass and make his subjects appear foolish at times, Moore has done it yet again through the rhetoric and theme of this film. A strong supporter of fairness and equality, he has taken this opportunity to expose the American health care system through the usage of personal stories, interviews, and even situations. "Those who Moore does ridicule (and there are indeed many) are simple given enough rope to hang themselves with" (Documentary: Film and the Power of Interrogation). For example, Moore interviews individuals who used to work in the health care system who surprisingly exposed the flaws from within their positions. A woman who used to call and inform people that they were being denied health care benefits admitted to being rude on the phone because she didn't want to get the know the person on the other line. She didn't want to know their story because she knew once that line had been crossed, she would

feel even more guilty about her job. I remember this scene distinctly because it was the beginning of my anger towards the health care company. Moore has included scenes such as this to relay the message of a broken system within our country.

In regards to the persuasiveness and bias of *Sicko*, most, if not all of its viewers can argue that the theme of this film is clear and concise. That being, negative exposure about the American health care system through the eyes of its victims and employees. For example, most of the subjects of this film are victims to the broken healthcare system. Such as the 79 year old man who has to work because of the benefits his job provides him with because without them, he would not be able to afford his medication. He states, "If there are golden years, I can't find them." Simply by introducing this man's story for a quick 45 second clip, the audience has already developed emotional attachment to the character. We feel pity, even guilt that this hardworking man who clearly needs to retire is still working. Another example that stood out to me from this film was the woman who's husband had passed away because he had been denied health insurance. Not only was her story absolutely heartbreaking, but the way it was then relayed to the audience really brought the situation into perspective. Her emotions were distinct and her words were even more powerful. She stated, "Why wasn't he given a chance to live?" when asked about her husband's situation. Scenes like these were strategically placed throughout *Sicko* so that the viewers were persuaded to take stance against the health care system.

The visual elements and style of shooting throughout this documentary speak a great deal about the type of filmmaker Michael Moore is. His interviews are intimate in the way they come close to the subjects faces. Their emotions are the real messages that relay the theme of a broken system. I have yet to ever understand what it is like for someone to be denied any health benefits,

but being a witness to *Sicko* has changed my perspective on this system. Not only are the subjects being exposed right before our very own eyes, but they are being stripped of their privacy simply to add to this film's message. They have allowed the audience to enter the hospital's right alongside them to further confirm the lack of respect, attention, and equality in the healthcare system. Towards the end of this film, people are being dumped on the side of the road, disoriented from medications simply because they cannot afford to pay their medical bills. I don't think I will ever get those images out of my head, but it was the style of shooting and visual elements used that affected me. That is what true filmmaking does for its audience. It arises something in you that you can't explain, but that makes you want to act out as a force of change for the people being portrayed. These visual choices have added to the film's overall message of a broken health care system looking to make money at the expense of people's lives.

Overall, I learned that Michael Moore's subject of power, its ignorance, and stupidity are just exposing the truth's of our society. He is simply challenging what America has done to its health care system and why they have separated themselves from the greater good of our community. *Sicko* is a thought provoking film that has taught me a lot about the ignorance in this country. Too often do we turn the cheek to people treated unfairly, simply because we do not want to be involved. It is our job to expose these flaws in the United States system in order to recreate equality and fairness among the American people.

Works Cited

Orvell, Miles. "Documentary Film and the Power of Interrogation: "American Dream" & "Roger and Me"" *Film Quarterly* 48.2 (1994): 10-18. Web.

Sicko. Dir. Michael Moore. Prod. Michael Moore and Meghan O'Hara. By Michael Moore and Michael Moore. The Weinstein Company, 2007. Online.