Steven soderbergh's traffic: a detailed evaluation

Traffic

Traffic watches, and observes drug use but does not glorify it, like many movies. The hopeless " War on Drugs" is told through believable scenarios, and not an excess of speeches or messages. Instead of saying that the " War on Drugs" is winnable like many other movies, Traffic shows that many drug laws have little effect and that many police officers, army men and politicians are truly corrupt. The movie shows that no matter the money spent, the threat of death, possibility of addiction, chance of crime or the fear of prison, anybody who wants drugs can get them. Traffic shows drug trafficking in North America from the bottom to the top of the supply chain, and allows you to draw your own conclusions.

Overall, I felt like the characters in Traffic were interesting and also played along very well with the story line. I have a better understanding about the Drug Enforcement Agency, which was mentioned in Chapter 3. Since the book never went into detail about what the DEA really did, I feel as if storyline with Gordon and Ray really helped me in better understating their role in drug enforcement. The storyline following Toro and Jacob, really showed how corrupt Mexican officials and law enforcement are on the topic of drugs. In our day to day lives, I think many people forget that there are many back door deals going on when it comes to the drug business, and this movie openly shows how often corruption occurs. The Wakefield family's storyline didn't just show the United States Government's view on drugs, but it really made the movie more personal. Caroline's drug use really showed how easy it was for a teenager to secure drugs, how quickly someone could

get addicted, and how quickly a family can lose hold on an addicted member.

Caroline is one of the most colorful characters, and is the one who most actively seeks uses drugs during the movie. Caroline has many of the protective factors, and several of the risk factors that we learned about in Chapter 1. Caroline has involved parents, was committed to school both academically and socially, volunteered, and participated in numerous extracurricular activities. However the risk factors of being surrounded by drug using friends, having a father who regularly drinks before dinner, seeing drug use as prevalent around her school and having a positive attitude toward drug use, ended up outweighing her protective factors when it came to her drug use. Twice, while watching the movie Caroline even engaged in risky sexual behavior while using free-base cocaine. However, peers who also use drugs constantly surround Caroline. In one scene, we see Chapters 6 and 9 collide, when Caroline's friend overdoses on a mixture of cocaine, heroin, and alcohol. He was lucky that the mixture of cocaine and alcohol didn't lead to heart failure. However, the mixture of cocaine and heroin could have had opposing effects on his body, so he may not have realized he was overdosing until her started seizing. The movie definitely accurately represented the data from the Table 2. 2 in Chapter 2 on Toxicity Data from the Drug Abuse Warning Network. The table had data saying that cocaine was the number one cause of drug-related emergency room visits, with alcohol-in-combination being the number two cause.

Traffic brings to life many of the routes of administration that we learned about in Chapter 5. Once again, most of the active drug use revolves around Caroline and her friends. Free-base cocaine is constantly inhaled, heroin is injected, inhalation occurs through bongs, and some substance is snorted. We see people experiencing highs, engaging in risky behavior, and the effects of mixing multiple drugs at once. However, what we see almost none of, is withdrawal. No pain of withdrawal is ever really shown. Caroline goes from a drug-addicted teenager, to on the mend in only a few quick cuts. Caroline even remained healthy looking throughout the movie, no weight loss, decaying teeth, or scaly skin from heroin use. The presence of withdrawal and a declining appearance for Caroline would have made this movie more realistic and believable, instead of just glossing over the ravages of drug use.

The Mexico storyline with Javier and Sanchez shocked me, as I never imagined the Mexican drug trade being that brutal and corrupted. I knew the Mexican drug trade created a lot of corruption in the country, but never imagined a general of the army would have so many secrets. I was reminded, though that there are good guys in the fight against drugs, such as Javier who only wanted electricity for his neighborhood so that the kids could play baseball at night, and not be tempted by gangs and crime. Javier gave the storyline hope, when everybody else around him seemed to be a fraud. I had more hope for the DEA storyline, as it started out with the arrest of a high-ranked drug dealer. However, I was shocked at how willing everybody was to sell each other out in hopes of smaller repercussions for their actions. I don't think the story line would have developed without

people constantly giving up who the next person higher up then them was. Like every movie, some aspects were dramatized to keep the viewers attention and keep the movie going along.

Overall, I feel like Traffic does a great job at diving into the drug trade, and bringing to light hard to discuss topics. It shows the brutal force of human nature when it comes to either securing drugs, or selling them. Unlike many movies, Traffic in no way glamorizes drug use, but yet never comes out and tells you not to do drugs. The movie tells a story through believable scenarios, and keeps the Hollywood exaggerations to a minimum. At first, the multiple storylines were confusing, but as the movie progressed I found myself deeply involved in the plot. Traffic brings to light all of the ineffective drug-war tactics, while showing that the war on drugs has too many interwoven levels to ever be won.