

Deceiving images of bowling for columbine



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The gun control issue is one of the most debated in the United States. The US is one of few countries that allow its citizens the right to have firearms. Due to this, there are many more gun related fatalities compared to other countries that do not allow their citizens to keep firearms. Bowling for Columbine, directed by Michael Moore, focuses mostly on one tragic event that happened at Columbine High School, and uses it in order to persuade viewers to side against National Rifle Association, which is a big pro-gun group, and the whole gun control issue. Moore makes the reason why the US has more gun related fatalities than other countries to be because of the right to carry firearms and easy access to them. In the movie, Moore uses a lot of editing and splices together a lot of scenes in order to get his points across. In fact, he does this so much that the whole film is misleading. The fast moving scenes are used in order to hide the splicing work, which can be noticed by careful viewing of the film. Overall, the film deceives the viewers by using various editing techniques, thus the director's integrity is questionable. Moore splices together speeches and interviews in order to make them say what he wants the viewers to hear. For example, the film has lots of scenes of Heston, the president of NRA, giving what seems like an ignorant speech. Heston says in the opening of a rally that is supposedly held in Denver right after the Columbine shooting, "I have only five words for you. From my cold, dead hands!" (Bowling) However, that speech was given at a different rally that was held at different location and different time. (Hardy) The film then cuts to a different scene and narration, in order to keep the viewers from noticing that Heston's outfit and the background had changed when the film cut back to the speech. Then the film shows Heston saying in response of Denver's mayor asking NRA not to come, "As

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Americans, we are free to travel wherever we want in our broad land. Don't come here? We are already here! (Bowling) It gives the impression of Heston being ignorant and insensitive to the viewers. However, there are five paragraphs between those sentences that had been edited out. (Hardy) The full speech is saying something completely different. In order to hide this, the film cuts to shot of audience between the sentences. (Hardy) This clearly shows the use of dishonest editing techniques by Moore, in order for the speeches to give the impression that he desires to the viewers. The interview of Heston at his house is also heavily edited. Judging from the clock on the wall that can be seen in the background, the interview lasts about twenty five minutes. (Hardy) However, only five minutes of the interview is shown in the film. During the interview, Heston seems like a very ignorant person who only cares about the interest of NRA and his own. Most of the statements made by him during the interview make the viewers see him as someone who lives in his own world and does not care about the society in general. However, it is possible to question if Heston really is such an ignorant person since only one fifth of the whole interview is shown in the film; Moore could have edited the interview so that it showed what he wanted to show. The splicing of scenes makes it possible to seriously question the honesty of the director. Documentaries should be seen as "reality fiction"; they may seem like reality as they are being filmed, but they become more like fiction through editing. (Fraser) Bowling for Columbine is a good example of a documentary that has become a fiction, perhaps more so than it should have, through heavy editing in order to express the director's view. Misleading scenes were used in the film to deceive the viewers. When the film is showing scenes of violence and captions of the kinds of violent

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activities the US supposedly has either committed or supported throughout the years. The scenes used are mostly of violence and its horrible aftermath. When the caption is showing °2000-01 U. S. gives Taliban-ruled Afghanistan \$245 million in °aid, ±± a scene of turbaned men with rifles on truck is shown. This makes the \$245 million aid look like it was an aid to support the military activity and violence, which ultimately supports the turbaned men with rifles. It also gives an impression that the US somewhat supported terrorism as after 9-11, Americans tend to think that a turbaned man has an image of being a terrorist. However, it is quite easy to figure out the US did not give \$245 million in order for Talibans to support violence. That absolutely could not have been the intended use for this aid. Due to the scene shown in the film with the caption, the viewers are deceived into thinking that the US, in fact, supports violence, which might actually be the fact. However, deceiving the viewers about the aid is another display of dishonest editing technique by Moore. Some scenes are only shown for a brief moment in order to hide what they really show. There are scenes of another NRA rally in the film. The rally is held at the place where another school shooting took place, which resulted in a six-year old killing another six-year old with a gun he found in his uncle's house. After the scenes of the rally and the protestors, the film cuts to an article. When the film zooms in an excerpt from the article saying °48 hours after Kayla Robinson is pronounced dead, ± it suggests that either NRA or Heston did something 48 hours after the child who was the victim of another school shooting was dead, or even that the rally was held 48 hours after the death. This scene is only shown for a brief moment so the viewers cannot read what the article is truly saying. The article, in fact, was about the president offering

condolences for the victim;’s family. (Hardy) However, the scene is shown right after the rally held over at the location of the tragic event. Therefore, it is easy for the viewers to assume that it was about Heston or NRA. The use of this scene is deceiving and has in fact no relation to Heston or NRA whatsoever. Moore uses this scene to deceive the viewers and present it as something it is not. While it might be acceptable to use editing to make the scenes say what the director wants, using something that has no relation with the scenes and presenting it as it does is a very dishonest trick to deceive the viewers. Claims that have no factual basis are used in the film. Moore turns the blame on racism for violence. The film suggests that the Caucasians own guns because they are scared of African-Americans. The film shows many news stories about African-American criminals, and plays them off as an effort to keep the nation scared of them. However, the media does not cover stories only about African-American criminals. In fact, the media also covers Caucasian criminals as well. By showing only African-American criminals related news stories, the film is suggesting that the nation views all African-Americans as criminals and people to be scared of. In a cartoon of a brief history of America, the film portrays Caucasian Americans as scared people who need guns in order to feel safe. The cartoon says America started from people who ran away from their home countries because they were scared of being prosecuted, and then were again scared by growing number of African-Americans. Caucasian people are portrayed as scared people who only found comfort by killing those they are scared of. The cartoon also equates NRA to Ku Klux Klan, which has no factual base at all. These claims are just pure speculations and opinions by Moore, and do not represent any fact at all. Moore;’s direct use of his own view enables the

viewers to question the honesty of the film itself. The music is used to sway the emotion of the viewers. When the scenes and captions of the historical events of violence that the US played parts in, the music is used in the background. A part of the lyrics is "What a wonderful world," which is repeated numerous times in the song. That lyrics conflict drastically with the images being shown, as the images are of horrible and violent events that caused many deaths. This gives a very sarcastic impression, as the lyrics and the scenes are quite contrasting. When the film is showing the aftermath of tragic events, quiet and sad tone of music is used in order to gain sympathy of viewers. Fast music with hard beats is used in scenes of violence. The music is mostly used to cause a certain response or intensity the emotion of the viewers. By doing so, the film is swaying the viewers to a certain opinion and not letting the viewers think for themselves and come up with their own opinion. In the end, the music used in this film is another effort to sway the viewers into agreeing with Moore. There are various displays of dishonest editing techniques by Moore in the film. It is easy for the uninformed viewers to be misled into siding with Moore on gun control issue based on the false impression and/or information that this film gives out. Moore's way of making and editing this film goes against the ethics that documentary makers should follow and tricks the viewers. Documentaries that do not pretend to be objective are more honest and usually more interesting. (Ellis) Bowling for Columbine certainly does not pose to be objective. In fact, it is easy for the viewers to see that it is very subjective and filmed for purpose. Moore is a bold man who risks a lot in order to make confrontations in his documentaries. (Ellis) This film touches a very sensitive subject, and Moore should be credited for making confrontations about it. However, that does

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not allow misrepresenting the information, and splicing of the interviews in order to get the viewers to agree with the director's view to be acceptable. Some documentaries make their living by telling lies, (Fraser) and Bowling for Columbine is a prime example of that. Works Cited Bowling for Columbine. Writ., and dir. Michael Moore. MGM Studios Inc., 2002. Ellis, Mark. "Documentaries; Series to Examine Draw of Rising Genre;" The Columbus Dispatch. 3 Feb. 2005: 01B. Lexis Nexis. The Ohio State University Library, Columbus. 8 Nov. 2005 Fraser, Nick. "The camera's angle Documentary makers are coming clean about the shades of truth and fiction in their films;" The Financial Times. 17 Sep. 2005: 36. Lexis Nexis. The Ohio State University Library, Columbus. 8 Nov. 2005 Hardy, David T. "Bowling for Columbine; Truth of Fiction?" Apr. 2003