

202 Views | 1 CrossRef citations to date | 0 Altmetric

Film Reviews

# What It Is, What It Does and What It Might Do: A Review of Michael Moore's *Sicko*, 113 Minutes, Dog Eat Dog Films, USA, 2007

Theodore R. Marmor, Kieke G. H. Okma & Joseph R. Rojas

Pages 49-51 | Published online: 09 Oct 2007

 Cite this article  <https://doi.org/10.1080/15265160701638751>

Sample our  
Humanities  
Journals  
>> [Sign in here](#) to start your access  
to the latest two volumes for 14 days

 Full Article

 Figures & data

 References

 Citations

 Metrics

 Reprints

## We Care About Your Privacy

We and our 899 partners store and access personal data, like browsing data or unique identifiers, on your device. Selecting I Accept enables tracking technologies to support the purposes shown under we and our partners process data to provide. Selecting Reject All or withdrawing your consent will disable them. If trackers are disabled, some content and ads you see may not be as relevant to you. You can resurface this menu to change your choices or withdraw consent at any time by clicking the Show Purposes link on the bottom of the webpage .Your choices will have effect within our Website. For more details, refer to our Privacy Policy. [Here](#)

We and our partners process data to provide:

Use precise geolocation data. Actively scan device

 I Accept

Reject All

Show Purpose

Film Reviews

# What It Is, What It Does and What It Might Do: A Review of Michael Moore's *Sicko*, 113 Minutes, Dog Eat Dog Films, USA, 2007

Theodore R. Marmor, Yale University  
 Kieke G. H. Okma, New York University  
 Joseph R. Rojas, Yale University

Within two weeks of its American screening, Michael Moore's *Sicko* had already divided the American public into zealous supporters and agitated detractors. Amidst extraordinary media attention, it created some 15 million Internet "hits", with Larry King, Jon Stewart and CNN debates with Sanjay Gupta helping to turn Moore into a populist star. The movie itself is a combination of biting satire, goofy stunts, and touching tales, all in the service of arousing American citizens to demand universal health insurance. But much of the commentary, anxious to celebrate or damn, obscures what the movie actually does and, ultimately, what it will mean politically.

In his full-frontal attack on the health insurance industry, Moore employs a bewildering mix of techniques to support his central message: Americans deserve universal health care free at the point of service. The movie is explicitly *not* about the millions of uninsured in America, as some critics have wrongly assumed. Rather, it depicts in vignettes, statistics, and through stories and exaggerated gags the anxieties and struggles of insured American middle-class families. His accurate claim is that millions of American are underinsured. They are at risk of devastating financial consequences from illnesses or injuries if their health insurers, with one technique or another, figure out how to deny care or avoid reimbursement of claims.

Moore's individual stories touch a raw nerve, which

using stories to represent social and financial realities, but his techniques diverge sharply from the practices of ordinary policy analysis. No one can fail to be moved by the story of the young woman injured in an automobile accident whose insurance denied reimbursement because her ambulance trip to the hospital was not "authorized." As she ironically put it, "when was I supposed to make that call? Did they expect me to get up from the ambulance to retrieve my cell from the tarmac?"

Moore is at his best and most vulnerable when he uses individual stories to make factually sound comparisons of American medicine to that of Canada, France and Britain. In a final segment, he moves close to the implausible in depicting Cuban health care as free, modern, and a relevant comparison. This is the least convincing segment of the movie, funny and poignant in its use of 9/11 rescue workers being treated royally in a modern Cuban hospital. Because Cuba is at a completely different level of income, the truth about its medical triumphs is simply not relevant to American lesson-drawing.

That is not the case with the other comparative examples. In each case, an essential truth emerges from what are not necessarily representative citizens abroad. So, for instance, we learn about the readily accessible French medical care from American expatriates grateful for their welfare state benefits. We see interviews with British physicians



Log i

> Acc

Log i

> Log

# Restore content access

➤ Restore content access for purchases made as guest

## Purchase options \*

Save for later

### PDF download + Online access

- 48 hours access to article PDF & online version
- Article PDF can be downloaded
- Article PDF can be printed

EUR 48.00

🛒 Add to  
cart

### Issue Purchase

- 30 days online access to complete issue
- Article PDFs can be downloaded
- Article PDFs can be printed

EUR 121.00

🛒 Add to  
cart

\* Local tax will be added as applicable

Related



## Information for

- Authors
- R&D professionals
- Editors
- Librarians
- Societies

## Opportunities

- Reprints and e-prints
- Advertising solutions
- Accelerated publication
- Corporate access solutions

## Open access

- Overview
- Open journals
- Open Select
- Dove Medical Press
- F1000Research

## Help and information

- Help and contact
- Newsroom
- All journals
- Books

## Keep up to date

Register to receive personalised research and resources by email

 Sign me up



Copyright

Accessib

Registered  
5 Howick Pl

or & Francis Group  
orma business

