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## A Narrative Criticism of Online Anti-Vaccine Stories of VaxTruth

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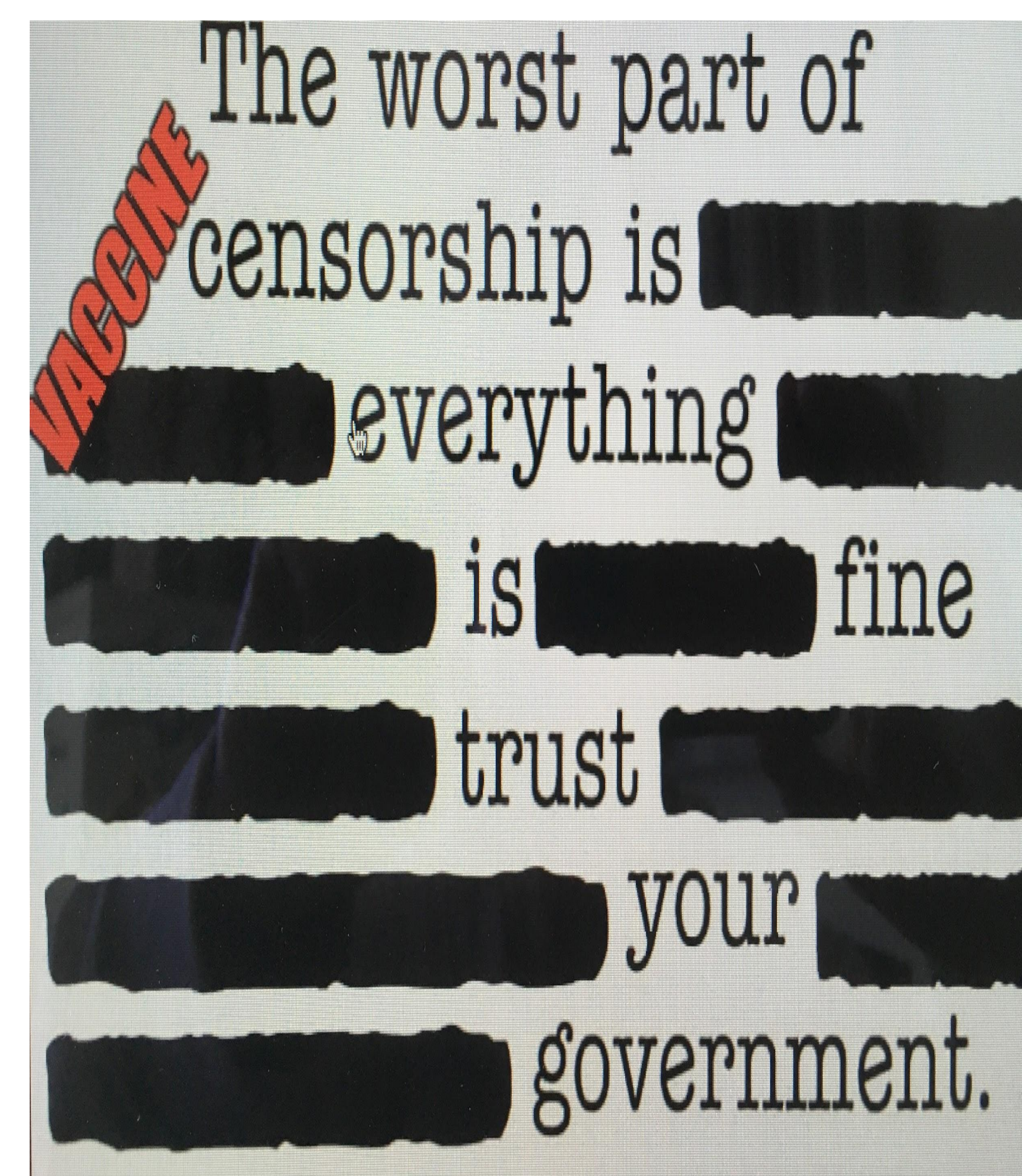
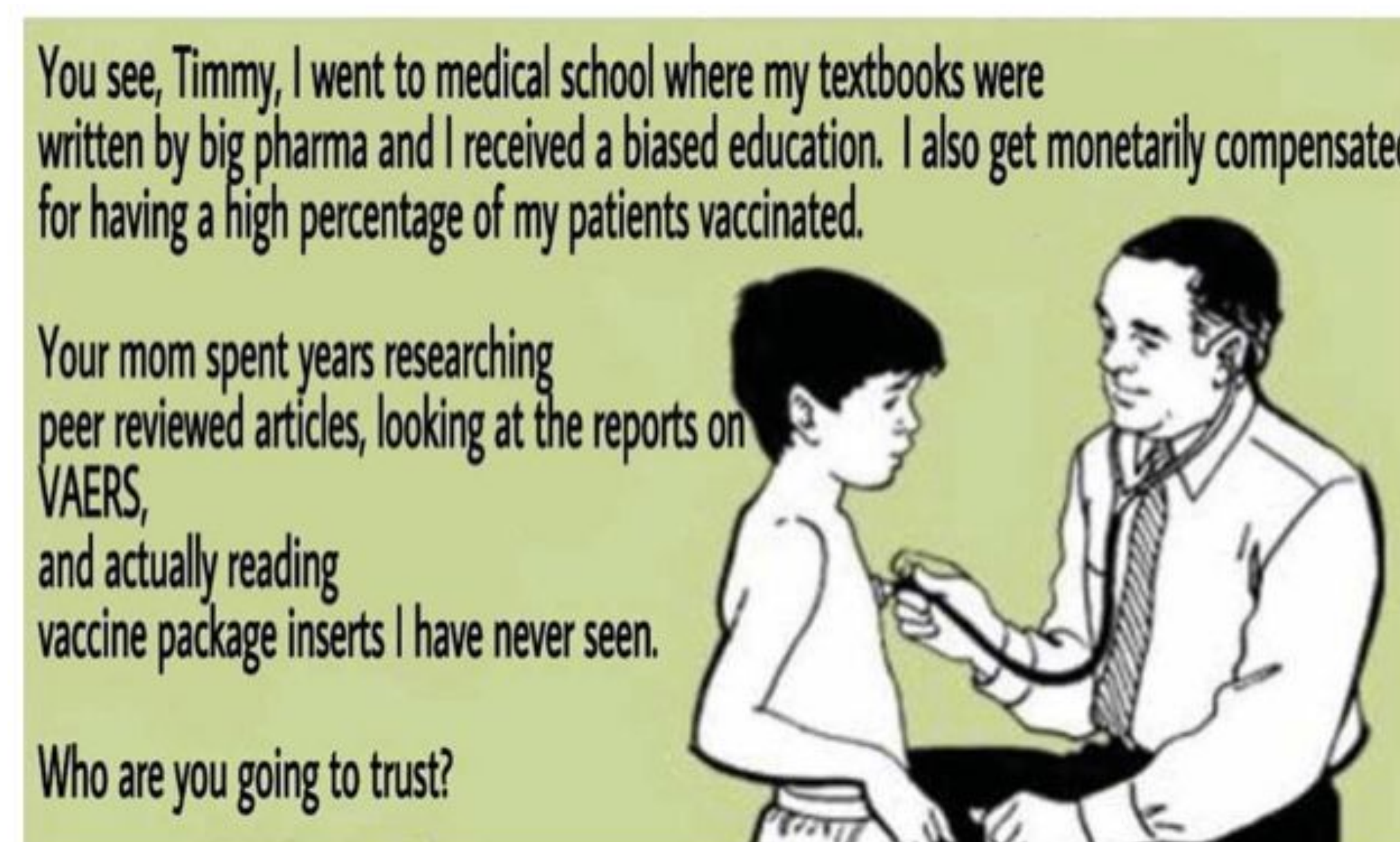
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# A Narrative Criticism of Online Anti-Vaccine Stories of VaxTruth

Author: Stephanie Willes (2019)



Themes

**RQ1:** How do anti-vaccine narratives operate in persuasively drawing people in to participate online?

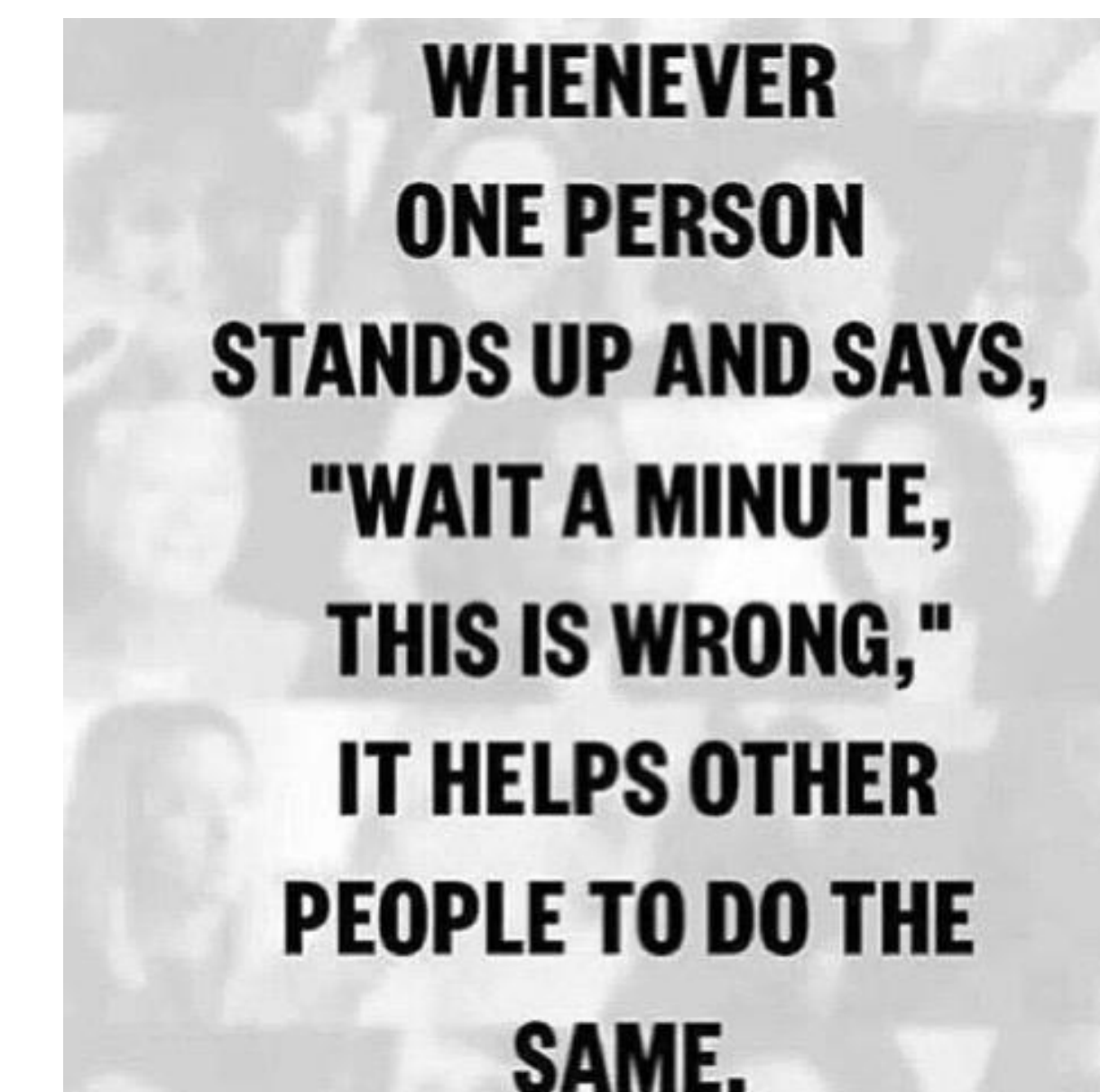
**RQ2:** What do anti-vaccine communities offer to those who participate?

## Narrative Method: Fisher (1984)

### **Narrative Coherence-**

- 1) "whether or not a story coheres or hangs together" or has contradictions.
- 2) Measuring one story against many other stories.
- 3) evaluating the good nature/ethos of the stories author.

**Narrative Fidelity-** how true the story is in relation to the audiences real life experiences.



Findings

## Digital Rhetorics

**Counterpublics:** Groups of marginalized voices to challenge the hegemony (*but not for the public good*).

**Exigence:** Something not normal that urgently needs rhetorical intervention (Bitzer, 1968).

## Metavoicing /

## Networked-Informed

**Associating:** linking people to people and people with other content with "Likes," sharing posts, hyperlinking and tagging friends (Majchrzak et al., 2013).

## Narratives of Fear:

- 1) Government may force vaccination.
- 2) Having an "abnormal" child.
- 3) Being responsible for a "vaccine injured" child--labeled as "bad parent."

## Narratives of Hope:

- 1) Parents as non-experts masquerading as experts.
- 2) Parents become saviors of children.
- 3) Information sharing and community building as rhetorical weapons to win the battle of vaccine information.

- 1) Stories of perceived "vaccine injured" children resonate with parents realities.
- 2) Stories proliferate through the Internet's affordances and are consistently repeating the same meta-narrative that people should fear the government and an "abnormal" child.
- 3) Sharing personal stories is how parents take back their authority to make healthcare decisions for their child.
- 4) Hope enables parents to ignore the irrationality of anti-vaccine discourse for the possibility of saving future children from the "harms" of vaccines.
- 5) The totality of anti-vaccine stories provides hope that this rhetorical weapon can be a source of power to defeat hegemonic discourses regarding vaccines.