

Anti-Vaxxers; philosophy within the hipster culture.

Case Management Nursing

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In January 2013, 102 people in 14 states were diagnosed with measles, a disease declared eliminated from the U.S. in 2000. It can lead to life-threatening pneumonia as well as deafness and swelling of the brain. Most vulnerable are infants, pregnant women, and people with compromised immune systems who can't get the vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that 92 percent of the January cases can be traced to the outbreak in Southern California, which happens to be where some of the most fervent community of people who refuse to vaccinate their children reside. This type of community has come to be known as "Anti- Vaxxers". These parents—who don't vaccinate at all, stretch out the schedule, or skip some vaccines—continue to say they're just doing what's right for their children. They rely on the small minority of physicians and others who tell them that the inoculations are more dangerous than the diseases they prevent. The southern California measles outbreak has reignited the vaccination controversy in California and elsewhere, but new research indicates that those opposed to immunization may be clustered in affluent areas. Researchers identified "clusters" of under immunization (meaning one or more of the recommended vaccine doses before age three is lacking) and vaccine refusal. What they learned about the demographics was remarkable. It is not necessarily the progeny of the poor, uneducated or uninsured who are not being vaccinated.

The term "hipster" comes from the 1930s Beatnik movement. The modern hipster is a composite of individuals with a certain bohemian life situation and lifestyle. He or she rejects "mainstream" culture and embraces and contributes to an independent culture.

Part of that independent culture has been to refuse vaccinations for their children, thus the term “anti-vaxxers” or “hipster” have been linked. Although we may think of the word hipster to refer to young people who have less than 5% body fat, drink copious amounts of coffee, eat children's cereal and wear thrift store clothing. "Hipsterism" is really a state of mind. While the image of the hipster is constantly changing, several aspects have stayed constant over time. They are a subculture of men and women typically in their 20's and 30's that value independent thinking, counter-culture, progressive politics, an appreciation of art and indie-rock, creativity, intelligence, and witty banter. Often well educated and have liberal arts degrees, or degrees in math's and sciences, which require certain creative analytical thinking abilities. Consequently many hipsters tend to have jobs in the music, art, and fashion industries. Hipsters are also very racially open-minded, and the greatest numbers of inter-racial couples in any urban environment are typically found within the hipster subculture. It is a myth that most hipsters are unemployed and live off of their parent's trust funds.

The greatest concentrations of hipsters can be found living in the Williamsburg, Wicker Park, and Mission District neighborhoods of major cosmopolitan centers such as New York, Chicago, and San Francisco respectively. So why would a group of well educated, intelligent, progressive group of people not want to vaccinate their children? Perhaps it's the fear of a link between vaccines and autism, which every parent fears. Or perhaps it's knowledge of herd immunity: if enough members of a population are vaccinated, even those who don't get vaccinated are safe because the disease can't reach them. Some people feel anti-vaxxers are free riders that get the benefit of vaccination programs

without sharing the real or perceived burden. Parenting in America has long caused passionate debates, but rarely do they turn as vicious as they have since the outbreak of measles at California's Disneyland. "Here's hoping the anti-vaxxer movement will naturally deselect hipsters from the human race," wrote one Twitter user.

During the 20th century, the near-universal inoculation of children in developed countries all but eliminated the threat of such diseases as measles, mumps, and polio. Yet in the United States, a federal law is silent on compulsory vaccination, leaving the matter to the states rights. 50 states compel parents to vaccinate their children—but 48 of them (all but West Virginia and Mississippi) allow exemptions for religious objectors. Twenty more states recognize personal or philosophical objections to vaccination.

There are strong social, medical, and moral arguments for limiting exemptions. Anti-Vaxxers are not breaking the law. The measles war is ugly and intense, with fear motivating both sides. It also presents vexing questions for policymakers. How should individual freedom be balanced against public health? What should a democratic society do when a determined minority does something that seems to endanger not only itself but also the majority? History is filled with minority groups who have been perceived as physical, moral, or political threats to society—sometimes rightly, sometimes wrongly. Perhaps anti-hipster sentiment often comes from people who simply can't keep up with social change and are envious of those who can.

References

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