



“Fascist Epiphany”: Neoliberalism, biopolitics and the anti-vaccination movement on Facebook

Smith, Naomi and Graham, Timothy

Federation University Australia, School of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences, Gippsland
The University of Queensland, School of Social Science, St Lucia

In advanced-liberal societies (Rose 1993) a good citizen is healthy, productive and self-disciplining. The state attempts to instil and produce good health behaviours in citizens through public health campaigns that encourage individual self-care and personal responsibility (Miller & Rose 2008). In this context how might current anti-vaccination sentiment be best positioned and understood? Originating in the late 1800s (Blume 2006), the anti-vaccination movement appears alongside the biopolitical technologies of government (Foucault 2007) and the emerging bureaucracy of nationstates. Anti-vaccination movements disappeared by the early 20th century as the techniques and apparatuses of liberal government became entrenched and stable. Over the past 10 years antivaccination rhetoric has re-emerged. Similarly to earlier movements, anti-vaccination proponents are concerned with self-determination and the interference of the state in individual matters. These movements are now persistent and global in scope - utilising social media to create spaces, which strengthen, popularise and align anti-vaccination discourses with sympathetic causes. In this paper we examine the characteristics of and the discourses present within 7 popular anti-vaccination Facebook pages. We use this data to argue that anti-vaccination sentiments can be seen as a logical internalisation and reproduction of neoliberal biopolitical narratives and technologies within ‘risk society’ (Beck 1992).