Forgive Me Child for I Have Sinned:
Anti-Vaxxer Folk Devil Mothers and Narratives of Redemption

by

Antonella Pucci

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Communication

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

© 2018, Antonella Pucci

Abstract

“Folk devils” is a term coined by Stanley Cohen (1972) to characterize social groups who come to be seen as threats to society. The concept has been theorized in many ways—from showcasing voiceless outsiders, to outspoken individuals defending themselves. The thesis troubles Cohen’s original concept by showing an emerging folk devil narrative of redemption, examined through the case studies of two anti-vaxxer mothers who publically confess wrongdoing of their previous anti-vaccination stance. These acts of public confession, I show, are highly mediatized. Drawing from McAdams’s (2006) theory of narrative identity, I pose critical questions of how redemption narratives not only challenge previous notions of folk devils, but also explore how they impact discourses of moral regulation. This study finds that folk devil redemption narratives illustrate identity reconstruction through the liminal state of exiting, imply self-policing mechanisms of conformity, and specifically with regard to the topic of the case studies, offer effective anecdotal strategies for vaccine promotion.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge some remarkable people who helped me complete my thesis.

To my incredible supervisor, Dr. Josh Greenberg: thank you for taking interest in my thesis project since the beginning of my Master's degree and thank you for being my advisor. I sincerely appreciate your insightful feedback, helpful and caring guidance, and endless support. To my wonderful second reader, Dr. Irena Knezevic: thank you for your mentorship, insight, compassion and advice since the fourth year of my undergraduate degree when I was writing my HRE (honours research essay) with you as my second reader and thank you for your enthusiasm to work with me again on my Master's thesis project. To my fantastic external, Dr. Neil Gerlach: thank you for your thought-provoking questions and discussion. To Dr. Chris Russill: thank you for chairing my defense. I am very fortunate to have been blessed with such a great thesis committee! Also, to my copy editor, Simon Osborne: thank you for your marvellous work in polishing my thesis.

Thank you to the brilliant faculty and administrative staff at the School of Journalism and Communication who helped me along the way. Special thanks to: Dr. Gina Grosenick (my HRE supervisor), Dr. Sandra Robinson, Dr. Merlyna Lim, Dr. Ira Wagman, Dr. Sheryl Hamilton, Dr. Chris Russill, Dr. Rena Bivens, Coleen Kornelsen, Cindy Kardash-Lalonde and Melanie Leblanc.

Thank you to my amazing family and friends for always being there for me through my Master's journey. To my loving parents, Tom and Lina: thank you for supporting me throughout my post-secondary career. I couldn't have done this without your help and unconditional love. To my awesome brother, Peter: thank you for always putting a smile on my face. To my bright cousin, Michael: thank you for letting me ramble on about my thesis project and other communication related theories at family dinners. To my wonderful aunt and godmother, Rose: thank you for always listening to me and calming my anxieties about completing my Master's degree. To my best friend, Sukey: thank you for your support in attending my conference presentations, your heartwarming chats and your astounding friendship. To my MA cohort, my COMMrades and my grad school friends: thank you for your fun energy, motivation and inspiring conversations—it was fun nerding out about academia together! To the first friends I made in grad school, Maddie and Emma: thank you for always being so welcoming and kind.

Especially, to my partner, Patrick: thank you for your never-ending encouragement and thank you for always believing in me. Even during moments of self-doubt, you were always there to cheer me on. I am very grateful to have you in my life. I love you, buddy.

Thank you all!

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Introduction.....	1
Chapter Breakdown	6
1 Chapter: Behind the Sins of News Media: Social Problems, Health Scares and the Outbreak Narrative	9
1.1 Social Problems and the Media	9
1.2 Health Scares and the Outbreak Narrative	11
2 Chapter: The Road from Deviance to Redemption: Folk Devils in Literature	16
2.1 Theorizing Moral Panic and Folk Devils	16
2.1.1 Casting Characters in the Moral Panic Melodrama.....	18
2.2 Investigating Folk Devil Redemption Narratives	23
2.2.1 Narrative Identity	23
2.2.2 Folk Devil Redemption Narratives	25
3 Chapter: Folk Devil Redemption Narratives in the Making	32
3.1 Narrative Analysis	33
3.2 Case Studies	36
3.2.1 Rationale of Case Studies	37
3.2.2 Data Collection of Case Studies	38
3.3 Organizing Narrative Analysis of Case Studies	42
4 Chapter: Folk Devil Revelation: Analyzing Anti-Vaxxer Redemption Narratives	45
4.1 Case Study One: Tara Hills, Whooping Cough	45
4.1.1 Summary of Tara Hills Dataset	45

4.1.2	Chronological Description of Tara Hills's Redemption Narrative	49
4.1.3	Analysis of Tara Hills's Folk Devil Redemption Narrative	51
4.2	Case Study Two: Kristen O'Meara, Rotavirus	62
4.2.1	Summary of Kristen O'Meara Dataset	62
4.2.2	Chronological Description of Kristen O'Meara's Redemption Narrative	65
4.2.3	Analysis of Kristen O'Meara's Folk Devil Redemption Narrative	67
4.3	Recapturing the Case Studies	76
5	Chapter: Reflecting on Folk Devil Redemption Narratives	80
5.1	The Complexity of Folk Devil Redemption Narratives	80
5.2	The Dichotomous Power of Public Confessionals in the Media	83
5.3	Learning from Anti-Vaxxer Folk Devil Redemption Narratives	86
	Conclusion	88
	Appendices	94
	Appendix A: Tara Hills Dataset	94
A.1	Chronological List of Media Stories in Tara Hills Dataset	94
A.2	Chronological List of Visuals in Media Stories in Tara Hills Dataset	96
A.3	Types of Media Stories in Tara Hills Dataset	105
	Appendix B: Kristen O'Meara Dataset	106
B.1	Chronological List of Media Stories in Kristen O'Meara Dataset	106
B.2	Chronological List of Visuals in Media Stories in Kristen O'Meara Dataset	107
B.3	Types of Media Stories in Kristen O'Meara Dataset	113
	Bibliography	114

Introduction

“I thought: Am I actually looking at whooping cough in the face? Could it be possible?” (Spears, 2015, para. 7)

In an April 2015 interview with the *Ottawa Citizen*, Tara Hills reflects on the nightmare of her seven children, all under the age of 11, falling ill with whooping cough, a potentially fatal respiratory infection. Before the family’s health scare, Hills and her husband, Gavin, were in the midst of coordinating a catch-up vaccination schedule with their family doctor, but they were too late. Their reason for needing to catch up on vaccinations? Hills was formerly an “anti-vaxxer,” the common media moniker for those who feel vaccines pose a range of health risks—the most well-known being the belief that vaccines cause autism in children—and refuse to vaccinate themselves or their families. Ironically, just a week prior to getting his vaccinations, Hills’s 10-month-old son contracted the vaccine-preventable disease (VPD), and not long after his six siblings were sick too.

While a devastated Hills was quarantined in her suburban home, she decided to share her story on the parenting forum The Scientific Parent. In her personal blog post, which she titled “Learning the Hard Way: My Journey from #AntiVaxx to Science,” Hills apologized for her former stance on vaccines, and expressed regret and a desire to raise awareness about the importance of vaccines, so others would not have to go through the pain and suffering her family experienced. Before Hills knew it, her story went viral, and for several weeks she was a global media sensation attracting international headlines (e.g., “ANTI-VAXXER MOM CHANGES HER TUNE”); she was featured on several news interviews where she discussed her former vaccine fears, previous distrust in the medical community, and encounters with misinformation online that led to her anti-vaccination beliefs. While contrite about her actions, Hills also was

cognizant of her identity as an anti-vaxxer. For instance, in a *Washington Post* video clip, Hills says, “In the media, people who don’t vaccinate are typically the villains, and that made us really uncomfortable because we knew we were those people...I set out to prove that we were right, and in the process found out how wrong we were” (Bernstein & Schatz, 2015). Coming to terms with the discomfort of her deviant past made her think twice about how anti-vaccination was not just a choice, but a moral wrongdoing that can potentially harm or even kill individuals, especially small children who are more vulnerable to VPDs. Although Hills didn’t imagine her story reaching more than a handful of people in her community, she used her brief period of fame not only to help parents who were once anti-vaxxers re-examine the issue, but also to create a narrative that restores her moral identity.

This case study is more than just the story of a reformed anti-vaxxer who became a vaccine advocate—as I argue in the chapters which follow it’s primarily a folk devil redemption narrative. Folk devils are assumed threats vilified by the media and held accountable for an issue (Cohen, 1972; Levina, 2015; Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009). They usually stand in as scapegoats used to simplify the complexities of a social issue. In a society where vaccinations are considered both normal and obligatory, anti-vaxxers are traditionally blamed as the chief folk devils responsible for the decline in vaccinations and the rise of VPD outbreaks, despite the fact that they only make up a small portion of the North American population (Conis, 2015). It’s important to note that there are other multifaceted factors such as rapid global transportation, lax vaccine laws in other countries, a lack of health literacy, poor immunization resources in some

communities and, most notably, vaccine hesitancy¹ that contribute to this growing social health problem (Shah, 2016; Conis, 2015). Therefore, folk devils stand in as not only a streamlining tool used to accessibly and quickly package the problem, but also to symbolize devious acts in society (Cohen, 1972). With regard to Tara Hills's case study, she would be understood as the folk devil threatening the safety of herd immunity² in this scenario. However, what stands out about her narrative is her willingness to redeem herself, reconstruct her identity and essentially conform to the moral order of vaccinating, a narrative which has yet to be explored.

If we look at how folk devils are traditionally conceptualized, they consist of individuals who are socially marginalized by either class, race, gender, physical ability or sexual orientation (deYoung, 2011; Cohen, 1972). Conventional folk devils were often viewed as voiceless and defenceless characters in the public eye. Later literature challenged this depiction by illustrating that folk devils do have a space to “fight back,” to contest claims against them and defend themselves on either mainstream or alternative media platforms (McRobbie, 1994; St. Cyr, 2003; deYoung, 2011). Anti-vaxxers make for an illustrative example of folk devils who fight back. Since the invention of the smallpox vaccine in the 18th century, anti-vaxxers have always been considered outsiders because their views conflict with widely accepted public health protocols (Fentiman, 2017; Shah, 2016; Conis, 2015; Link, 2005). However, their voices were seldom silenced due to outspoken activism in the anti-vaccination movement, as well as the presence of high-profile spokespeople, who I will refer to as “spox devils,” who would fight back

¹ Rather than the outright refusal of vaccines, vaccine hesitant individuals are “fence-sitters” when it comes to vaccination (Busby et al, 2017, p. 24). Therefore, they may delay or reject some vaccines because they are unsure about the safety.

² Herd Immunity: Protecting one's individual immunity, as well as the immunity of everyone else by getting vaccinated (Dubé et al, 2013).

(McRobbie, 1994; deYoung, 2011, St. Cyr, 2003) to preserve their values and promote their beliefs among public spectators (Conis, 2015). Prominent spox devils within the contemporary anti-vaccination movement include Dr. Andrew Wakefield, a British doctor who published a since-discredited article in *The Lancet* on how vaccines lead to gastrointestinal issues and autism in children, and Jenny McCarthy, an anti-vaxxer celebrity who used Wakefield's study as part of her evidence to support her claims that vaccines gave her son autism (Kolodziejski, 2014; Mnookin, 2011; Conis, 2015). Aside from famous spox devils, there have also been news stories of everyday people who advocate for the refusal of vaccines. Kata (2012) states that many of these anti-vaccine advocates have formed online communities, using blogs and social media to discuss their issues to anyone who is against or hesitant toward vaccinations.

While anti-vaxxer folk devils have media outlets and spox devils to advocate and defend their folk devil label, what happens when these individuals choose to use said platforms to do the opposite? What if instead of fighting back, folk devils apologize for their wrongdoing and seek forgiveness for their sins? Recent media narratives, like Tara Hills exemplify representations of anti-vaxxer folk devils who are less inclined to resist, and more likely to change their mind and conform to the social norm of getting vaccinated. Themes such as self-reflection, guilt, confession and advocacy are displayed in these folk devil redemption narratives as a way of reconstructing the moral identity of one's past deviant self.

In this thesis, I intend to reveal the emerging folk devil narrative of redemption by thoroughly examining two case studies of anti-vaxxer folk devils who have rethought their anti-vaccination stance. Both case studies showcase similar redemption narratives of former anti-vaxxer mothers whose children became sick with a VPD. With Tara Hills being one of the case

studies situated in Canada, I will also look at the case study of Kristen O'Meara, a mother of three from Chicago, IL who changed her mind about vaccination after her three daughters fell ill to rotavirus. These two case studies aim to offer different perspectives of anti-vaxxer folk devils redeeming their moral identity in the media.

Specifically, I aim to contribute to previous folk devil literature by applying redemption narratives to folk devils recanting their deviant behavior in the media. In the process of doing so, I provide a brief background on media's influence over social problems, and how the outbreak narrative relates to the construction of stigmatized identities in health scares. Furthermore, I review literature on folk devils by discussing the concept's theoretical foundations of moral panic, and how it impacts identity formation and dramatic narratives in the media. I apply my understanding of moral panics to health scares such as VPD outbreaks to explain how fear-mongering is used to establish folk devil characters as way of conveying normative public health discourse to citizens.

Additionally, I explore the folk devil redemption narrative through the concept of narrative identity, which examines the internally evolving process of one's life story through reconstructing moral goodness from their former self (McAdams, 2006; McAdams & McLean, 2013; Stone, 2016; Ransom, 2006; Singer, 2004; McAdams et al, 2001). I postulate how redemption occurs in a two-step process of confronting the self and confronting others. Here, theories of mortification (the figurative death of one's previous identity) and confession can be used to interpret redemption narratives of folk devils, especially when grappling with their emotions of shame and guilt (Burke, 1970; Foucault, 1978; Maruna, 2001; McAdams & McLean, 2013). Using this scholarship as a baseline, I will conduct in-depth narrative analysis of

my two case studies of anti-vaxxers mothers in order to demonstrate how folk devil redemption narratives take place.

Despite anti-vaxxers' sustained popularity as folk devils who need to be punished, there has been recent attention drawn to changing an anti-vaxxer's mind. By investigating folk devil redemption narratives through the lens of an anti-vaxxer, I propose three main research questions: How do redemption narratives complicate our recent understanding of folk devils? What power do public confessionals of folk devils hold toward establishing a moral community? Specifically drawing on the case studies, what can we learn about anti-vaxxer folk devil redemption narratives in the public health community?

Chapter Breakdown

Chapter 1: Behind the Sins of News Media: Social Problems, Health Scares and the Outbreak Narrative

In chapter 1, I contextualize the news media's role in defining social problems like health scares and impacting identity formation. I exclusively look at media framing and claims that impact the severity of a social problem, and relate these tools to how health scares are formed in the public eye. In relation to health scares, I further explore how the media's influence on the outbreak narrative (the developing story of disease emergence) stigmatizes individuals and creates villains (Wald, 2008), some of whom become folk devils.

Chapter 2: The Road from Deviance to Redemption: Theorizing Folk Devils in Literature

In chapter 2, I review literature about the concept of folk devils. First, I discuss the theoretical foundation of folk devils through moral panic theory and examine academic works on the different conceptualizations of folk devils. Then, I explore redemption narratives through the

theory of narrative identity, which looks at one's personal moral story of self-transformation from bad to good in society (McAdams, 2006), as well as the transitional process of confronting the self and others in a public confession of wrongdoing. Finally, I investigate the liminal state of "purgatory" in which a redemptive folk devil's identity lies while awaiting forgiveness.

Chapter 3: Folk Devil Redemption Narratives in the Making

In chapter 3, I explain the methodology I used to measure and justify the case studies I chose for my thesis project, which will be applied to the redemption narratives of anti-vaxxer folk devils. Initially, I explain narrative analysis, as well as the four techniques of formula stories, to theorize the methodological background of my analysis. I then present my case studies and provide a rationale to why and how I selected them. Finally, I describe how my case studies are analyzed using the unobtrusive method of narrative analysis.

Chapter 4: The Folk Devil Revelation: Analyzing Anti-Vaxxer Redemption Narratives

In chapter 4, I organize and explore my findings in a detailed narrative analysis of the two case studies in order reveal how folk devils redeem themselves. This is where I discuss the types of sources I found in my data collection for each case study and provide a chronological description of how each redemption story unraveled. At the end of observing each case study, I conduct in-depth analysis of how each folk devil redeems herself by relating my findings back to the literature of redemption narrative.

Chapter 5: Reflecting on Folk Devil Redemption Narratives

In this chapter I reflect on the purpose of this thesis through answering and discussing the three research questions I proposed earlier in the Introduction chapter. Here, I identify both the

importance of redemption narratives as well as what can be learned specifically from anti-vaxxer folk devil redemption narratives through this thesis project.

Conclusion:

I conclude the project in this chapter and make recommendations for future study. I pose questions from my findings that I was unable to answer due to limitations of time and capacity, which could form the basis for future inquiry and discussion.

1 Chapter: Behind the Sins of News Media: Social Problems, Health Scares and the Outbreak Narrative

This chapter aims to examine how news media influences both the definition and identity of social problems when they erupt in the public sphere. I situate media's role and strategies within social problem trajectories to expose how moral discourses of health scares are formed and entrenched in the communities they inhabit. Specifically, I engage with the concept of 'outbreak narrative' in order to understand how both selective belonging and stigmatization are instituted by media claims and framing in order to build a normative collective identity.

1.1 Social Problems and the Media

Social problems are conditions that are constructed as damaging, threatening and that pose harm to society. Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009) state, "any condition that causes death or disease, which shortens life expectancy or deteriorates the quantity of life on a large scale, must be defined as a social problem" (p. 150). When a social problem erupts in a community, the public tends to turn to news media as information sources to calm their uncertainties, and to learn about the severity of the issue and how to protect themselves. News media play a pertinent role in disseminating accessible and timely information about the social problem to the public. Their main objective is to effectively define the social problem to different segments and convince them of why they should be concerned about the issue (Loseke, 1999; Woolgar & Pawluch, 1985; Altheide, 1997). While relying on the legacy of mainstream news media to provide unbiased and empirical truths, many sources fall short in accurately reporting the facts in their full complexity, which renders the social problem oversimplified and imprecise to a larger audience. Additionally, news stories about social problems become exaggerated as they are

conveyed with hidden narratives tied to dominant social norms and behaviours as a way for people to police themselves and others. Since mainstream media outlets are in constant competition with each other, social problems are often portrayed with rhetorical devices such as claims and frames in order to “win over” people’s attention (Loseke, 1999).

Claims are verbal, visual (e.g., images and typifications) or behavioural (e.g., protests and demonstrations) statements used by individuals or organizations to persuade different audiences about the gravity of a social problem. Since people have a limited capacity of time and money to spend on addressing social problems, claims must be both concise and compelling (Loseke, 1999). Therefore, claims involve a hodgepodge of logical reasoning (e.g., scientific studies and statistics) and emotional appeals (e.g., anger, sympathy and fear), but do not necessarily have to be truthful so much as simply believable to the audience (Loseke, 1999). However, as audiences are diverse, claim-makers must create different frames to capture each segment’s attention.

Frames are used to present certain social problems in accessible packages and sets of parameters for each audience regarding a particular event (Altheide, 1997). The claims placed in the frames create typifications, or mental pictures, about what it might be like to experience the social problem (Loseke, 1999). A main consequence of framing is that it only takes into account one of many narratives within a social problem, which leads to only particular issues being recognized and others being silenced. Often frames are used in media like television, the press, film and, more currently, social media to simplify social problems for the audience (Loseke, 1999; Altheide, 1997).

Although media are a powerful source to raise awareness about social problems, they routinely showcase these issues in one-dimensional, fear-based frames that lead to inaccurate portrayals of the situation and the people involved (Altheide, 1997). Loseke (1999) brings attention to the fact that “media tends to blur differences between fact and fiction, truth and fantasy” (p. 11). This is due to the fact the media over-represent the severe conditions of social problems in an episodic and catastrophic manner, which frequently results in paranoia and fear (Best, 2001; Altheide, 1997). Media formats establish a problem frame that provides a “quick fix” of entertainment and voyeurism in order to attract audience attention toward the social problem, promoting a discourse of fear, risk and danger in society (Altheide, 1997).

1.2 Health Scares and the Outbreak Narrative

Health scares, or “episodes of acute collective insecurity pertaining to health-related issues” (Béland, 2011, p. 224) are social problems that are commonly elevated in the media. When mysterious and potentially fatal diseases (such as SARS, H1N1, Ebola and Zika) emerge and threaten to infect numbers of people within their communities, mass insecurities and social fears around public health and personal well-being strike among many (Hooker, 2008). Experts, researchers and the media are faced with a sense of urgency to stabilize societal panic and provide answers about diseases whose causes are thus far unknown. Wald (2008) explains that in scenarios of outbreak, medical researchers diligently seek to understand and learn how to treat the disease, while journalists and health organizations rush to inform the public about the possible dangers and risks of the outbreak. However, when little is known about the disease, the media is left depending on the precedents of previous outbreaks until further data is obtained (Wald, 2008).

Wald (2008) considers the evolving story of an emerging disease as an “outbreak narrative” where scientists, organizations and mainstream media outlets frame accounts of the infection under popular health discourse. She writes that, “the repetition of particular phrases, images and story lines produced a formula that was amplified by the extended treatment of these themes in popular novels and films” (Wald, 2008, p. 2). Notable claims produced within these media stories not only showcase the danger and novelty of the emerging disease, but also trace the implicit dilemma of human connection—which is that the same interactions we need to build a community also make us sick and contagious when a disease outbreak strikes (Wald, 2008). A common media image that illustrates the predicament of necessary human interaction in a time of contagion is the white surgical mask, covering the mouth and nose, which some people choose to wear in public spaces.

Outbreak narratives are reflective of the pandemic culture we inhabit. Gerlach and Hamilton (2014) state that pandemic culture is “the shared experience of living in a society where we are regularly advised by trusted institutions and experts that we are indiscriminately vulnerable to the viral spread of disease” (p. 5). Images and stories of contagion portrayed in outbreak narratives elevate anxieties about faster modes of transportation in our globalized world, which provide easy avenues for pathogens to spread and infect mass populations (Shah, 2016; Wald, 2008). Drache and Clifton (2008) argue that we are living in a world of global cultural flow, “an intense movement of people, capital, ideas and information” (p. 119) where the chances of unintended health consequences have exponentially increased as pathogens have the ability to move throughout the world without restriction. Gerlach and Hamilton (2014) consider health scares to have “indeterminate potentiality” because they are ubiquitous and may emerge at any given moment. Therefore, outbreak narratives under the umbrella of our pandemic culture

imply that we are constantly living in close proximity to danger and risk of disease. Although outbreak narratives can be helpful in disseminating information and analysis about an emerging disease, they come with consequences such as fear-mongering, stigmatization of vulnerable groups and selective belonging (Wald, 2008).

Further to this, Hooker (2008) states that other than the possibility of vast disease outbreak, health professionals worry about the increased saturation of fear-mongering and panic that outbreak narratives foster in popular discourse. Consequently, this leads to less reporting about the scientific facts of disease and more about framing the health scares through a moralized and sensationalized lens (Béland, 2011; Drache & Clifton, 2008). For example, Drache and Clifton (2008) argue that the local “saturation of news coverage” during the 2003 SARS outbreak in Toronto insisted that the city was unsafe to visit because the disease was out of control (p. 110). The media exaggerated the danger of the SARS outbreak by unequivocally comparing it to Spanish influenza, a deadly virus that killed over 40 million people worldwide near the end of the First World War (Béland, 2011; Smith, 2006; Shah, 2016). By contrast, SARS infected over 10,000 people in 37 countries, but only about 1,000 people died from the disease worldwide (Smith, 2006). Thus, there is a large and clear discrepancy between the high mortality rates of Spanish influenza and the low mortality rates of SARS that reveals how the media narrative mischaracterized the severity of SARS to produce panic and fear (Béland, 2011; Drache & Clifton, 2008).

Subsequently, dramatized media reports led to stigmatizing infected groups of people, or what Wald (2008) calls “superspreaders,” as scapegoats responsible for bringing “the virus itself to life” (p. 4) and contaminating citizens in the community. The delineation of the superspreader

scapegoat in outbreak narratives is often hyperbolic, racialized and established as the “Other” in society. With regard to SARS, Chinese-Canadians were deemed the scapegoats responsible for the outbreak as the disease originated in China. Media reports in North America framed Asian bodies as the source of contagion by displaying misleading claims and images of Chinese-Canadians and other Asian populations wearing white face masks and being infected with the illness (Béland, 2011; Shah, 2016, Hooker, 2008, Drache & Clifton, 2008), which led to xenophobia and racism in many Asian communities.

The SARS example illustrates how the stigmatization that results from outbreak narratives fosters the notion of medicalized nativism, where immigrant groups living within a new community are associated with spreading communicable diseases they brought over from their so-called “primitive” and “under-developed” societies (Wald, 2008). Alongside the stigmatization of immigrants, medicalized nativism can be seen among natural-born citizens within a community who deviate from common health care practices like vaccination, which is viewed as a symbol of social responsibility and maintaining herd immunity to protect citizens from vaccine-preventable disease (Conis, 2015; Fentiman, 2017; Shah, 2016). Therefore, when a vaccine-preventable disease (VPD) outbreak erupts within a community, anti-vaxxers are the first to be blamed as they willfully refuse to conform to the norm of vaccination. The same narratives apply when a foreign disease migrates to other countries; people associated with the country where the disease originated become scapegoats for the spread of the disease.

Blended with the mixture of fear and stigmatized groups, outbreak narratives in the media represent myths—un-authored short stories emerging from a group of people as ways to express collective identity—of selective belonging where the healthy are welcomed and the infected are

not (Wald, 2008). Brought to life by the outbreak narrative, these myths encompass strong emotional appeals and are based on fundamental values produced by hierarchies (Wald, 2008), which create an imagined community of healthy and socially responsible individuals who follow the moral norms and regulations entrenched in society. The carriers of disease are vilified as scapegoats in the outbreak narrative when public health is compromised. While the stigmatized individuals are seen as an archetypal Other who embodies danger and the threat of disease, Wald (2008) discusses how the outbreak narrative offers them the chance to redeem themselves through confession and conformity. If the stigmatized individuals choose not to, they remain the villain, but if they do redeem themselves they have the possibility of re-integration into society. Redemption in the outbreak narrative is the determining factor of what fate awaits the scapegoat and is therefore tied to the evolving outbreak narrative. While redemption is not explicitly addressed in folk devil or moral panic theory, the next chapter aims to make this connection, especially within the realm of health scares.

2 Chapter: The Road from Deviance to Redemption: Theorizing Folk Devils in Literature

Chapter 2 delivers a literature review of folk devils. First, I will explain the origins of folk devils through providing a background of moral panic theory. I demonstrate moral panic's dramaturgical media elements and the characters included in news stories, such as heroes, victims and folk devils. I then discuss the different types of folk devils that have been conceptualized so far. Finally, I contribute to existing folk devil literature by exploring narrative identity, mortification and public confessionals to explain the emergence of folk devil redemption narratives.

2.1 Theorizing Moral Panic and Folk Devils

Most scholars agree that Stanley Cohen coined the term "folk devil" in his seminal 1972 study *Folk Devils and Moral Panic* (Cohen, 1972; Levina, 2015; Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009; Critcher, 2009; Hier, 2011). Cohen (1972) defines moral panic as:

A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interest; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; moral barricades are manned by...right-thinking people; social accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions (p. 9).

The aforementioned "threat" in moral panics is not objective; it is a socially constructed problem that plays on the anxieties of citizens. Moral panic can be seen as a result of the framing and claims produced by the media in order to define a social problem, such as a health scare. Since moral panics are based on the degree of public concern over an issue, they are often disjointed and inconsistent: they can be intense one day, then subside the next and remain

dormant in society until a similar condition arises (Béland, 2011). The duration of a moral panic largely depends on how its narrative is represented in the media (Béland, 2011). When a moral panic occurs, claim-makers who largely consist of dominant social actors in the community provide distorted examples, predict dire consequences and present stigmatized images of the threat (Goode & Ben Yehuda, 2009; Béland, 2015). Moral panic narratives often act to minimize the complicated facts of a situation, but also to build a shared morality within a community, which helps people distinguish good versus evil (Levina, 2015; Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009; Loseke, 1999; Cohen, 1972; Hier, 2011; Ungar, 2001; Anker, 2005; Furedi, 2011; Wright, 2015). The “evil” actors in moral panics are known as folk devils who are “visible reminders of what we should not be” in society (Cohen, 1972, p. 10).

Critcher (2009) argues that the concept of moral panic is an extreme form of moral regulation, or the way in which individuals are constructed as moral subjects who act according to practices deemed acceptable by the state. The construction of moral subjects begins with the production of moral discourses that “seek to act on conduct that is deemed to be intrinsically bad or wrong” (Hunt, 1999, p. 7). The dramaturgical nature of moral panic creates discourses that reflect moral regulations in society, and “attribute blame and responsibility for social ills” in the media (Hunt, 1999, p. 21). Sarasin (2008) applies Michel Foucault’s writings in *Discipline and Punish* to describe how folk devils are perceived within moral regulations. He explains how we discipline ourselves to abide by moral conduct and establish a normalized identity. Therefore, those who oppose moral regulations are depicted as monsters or villains.

For example, if we look through the lens of the vaccine-preventable disease outbreak narrative, moral panic rises around anti-vaxxers without considering other social factors that may

come into play. Since public health officials make claims to parents about the importance of vaccinating their children, they embed a moral discourse through the use of anti-vaxxer rhetoric that argues that refusing to vaccinate is morally wrong and the primary cause of the resurgence of vaccine-preventable diseases (Shah, 2016), establishing anti-vaxxers as the primary threat.

2.1.1 Casting Characters in the Moral Panic Melodrama

Conceptualizing moral panic is like interpreting a dramaturgical performance that consists of an inciting incident, an intriguing plot and character development (Cohen, 1972; Wright, 2015). Wright (2015) considers moral panics as “enacted melodramas” or “dramatic storyline[s] where nasty villains enact evil deeds against virtuous victims who are eventually rescued and have their virtue reinstated by gallant heroes” (p. 1246). In moral panic dramas, everyday citizens are the suffering victims, social actors (or moral entrepreneurs) are the heroes, and folk devils are the bizarre villains who must be stopped and tamed by the heroes (Wright, 2015; Cohen, 1972).

The “Heroic” Moral Entrepreneur

Moral entrepreneurs are social actors who predominantly exist within the dominant/mainstream workings of the community, and are “well-endowed with symbolic and economic capital” (Douglas, 1992, p. 107). They act as producers and directors in the context of moral panics, who attempt to gain public support by setting the stage (or agenda in the media) and assigning individuals or groups “character roles” in the moral panic issue (i.e. scapegoating certain individuals as deviants or folk devils) (Cohen, 1972). These social actors aim at building consensus among the public by reinforcing behavioural norms, but also by emphasizing unacceptable deviance and the possible dangers the deviant represents, and establishing

boundaries for the outsiders who digress from the norms (Douglas, 1992). Moral entrepreneurs do so by transmitting claims and images in the media to increase the level of moral panic in order to promote a greater amount of concern among audiences toward a situation (Cohen, 1972; Wright, 2015).

The media devote a considerable amount of space to portraying deviance by sensationalizing crimes, odd habits and scandals, not only to increase audience attention and trigger higher responses to moral panic issues, but also to clearly demonstrate the boundaries between good and evil in society (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009; Cohen, 1972; Meades, 2011; Anker, 2005; Wright, 2015). Therefore, moral entrepreneurs often suggest sinister objectives that inaccurately convey the reality of the problem. Depending on the threat at hand, audience reactions may lead to further fear, anxiety and blame (deYoung, 2011). As moral entrepreneurs are responsible for maintaining social control, they also possess the power to create “a set of ideas about what causes deviation” (Cohen, 1972, p. 16). The blame is then directed toward the folk devil who deviates from the constructed norms of society.

The Folk Devil Villain

The folk devil is depicted as the “suitable enemy” or “the agent responsible for the threatening or damaging behavior or condition” (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 27). Individuals who either violate or fail to conform to established societal rules are labeled as social deviants and become outsiders (Cohen, 1972). Deviance is not a fixed trait but rather a process of becoming, or “a certain liminal status before [individuals are] nominated as folk devils” (deYoung, 2011, p. 119). Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009) argue that folk devils gain instant recognition as they are symbolized as negative, unfavourable and selfish.

Cohen (1980) states that he doesn't mean to imply folk devils are not real people, but rather presents them as intangible objects in order to produce narratives about their identities. The identities of folk devils are created through a symbolization process where words and objects are constructed symbolically as a way of amplifying their status in the media (Cohen, 1980; Cohen, 1972). James Meades (2011) observes in folk devils a dual nature. On one end of the spectrum, folk devils are abstract and stylized representations of moral panic concerns. Rather than pinpointing a specific person, the concept is strictly used for rhetorical purposes to portray harm to the greater public. On the other hand, the emergence of folk devil representations "depend[s] upon essential actions of real people who exist relationally to others" (Meades, 2011, p. 134).

Selling your Soul to Multiple Devils:

Mary deYoung (2011) argues that there are two types of folk devils: conventional folk devils and modern folk devils. Conventional folk devils are socially marginalized individuals considered as outsiders in relation to mainstream society. They are regularly excluded from social spaces of privilege and exist in the social margins, such as housing projects and other desolate areas (deYoung, 2011). Cohen (1972) writes that conventional folk devils consist of groups of deviants who are either segregated or ostracized from the conventions of society, both unwillingly or willfully. As socially marginalized individuals are often vulnerable to political, economic and ideological threats by dominant groups, they become characterized as "threateningly different" to moral order (deYoung, 2011, p. 121). Conventional folk devils tend to be easily identifiable as their appearance, behaviour and/or social location deviate from mainstream societal norms. Therefore, when a moral panic breaks out, it becomes easier for moral entrepreneurs to deem socially marginalized or abnormal individuals as folk devils.

Usually, punitive sanctions or increased pressures are orchestrated to push folk devils to conform (deYoung, 2011).

Conversely, contemporary society has been faced with another type, the modern folk devil (deYoung, 2011). Modern folk devils are not necessarily marginalized and easily identified. Although they may exist in societal margins, they may also have a sense of personal power, have access to institutional resources and/or be embedded within the corporate realm (deYoung, 2011). In addition, the identity of modern folk devils is ambiguous. Therefore, they can either exist through proxies or just blend into conventional norms of society. White-collar crime is an example of a space where modern folk devils can navigate. When crimes like embezzlement, fraud and bribery occur, the corporate environment can act as a proxy for the individual(s) responsible for the criminal act and create a discourse that blames the crime on social conditions rather than the behaviour of the folk devil(s) (deYoung, 2011).

Anti-vaxxers are positioned somewhere between the binary poles of conventional and modern folk devils. Like the conventional folk devil, they are socially marginalized by their abnormal public health beliefs, but like the modern folk devil they are more difficult to identify in society because there are no accepted indicators of what an anti-vaxxer looks like. Anti-vaxxer folk devils usually hide behind proxies, like the spox devils who openly advocate for the rejection of vaccines. Furthermore, many anti-vaxxers do not have to face a high degree of social marginalization as they predominantly come from white, affluent communities (deYoung, 2011; Conis, 2015; Fentiman, 2017; Chai, 2015). Overall, conventional and modern folk devils are only two narratives of the many types of folk devils involved in moral panics. The anti-vaxxer

folk devil demonstrates how it is possible to blend in between the lines of the conventional and modern forms.

Folk Devils Fighting Back?

A criticism of Cohen's work is that it treats the media as a monolithic entity solely responsible for constructing public narratives. Contemporary folk devil scholars refute this portrayal and argue that folk devils have the agency to fight back against their demonization and construct counter-narratives through niche media and social media technologies (McRobbie, 1994; McRobbie & Thornton, 1995; Meades, 2011; deYoung, 2011). Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009) state that modern moral panics permit debates between moral entrepreneurs and folk devils as a way to maintain or acquire a dominant discourse around the issue raised. Both claims and counterclaims can be brought forth within the public sphere to win over audiences.

The main goal of having opposing voices is to protect or—with respect to the folk devils—de-legitimize a cultural representation. Although moral entrepreneurs are usually in control of the “us vs. them” moral discourse (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009), this does not limit the chance for folk devils to “fight back” and reclaim their status to the public. For instance, Kata (2012) and Wright (2015) explain how the postmodern paradigm of social media and alternative media has opened avenues for folk devils to become advocates for their own views who establish and communicate their own personal narratives (what in this thesis I call ‘spox’ devils). For instance, anti-vaxxer activists created online communities through websites and forums in order to effectively spread their message. Although anti-vaxxers are still opposed in official public health discourse, online spaces provide them the agency and power to explain their views to the public and take some control of the dialogue.

Mary deYoung (2011) argues that folk devils' reactions to the claims made against them have been both under-theorized and under-analyzed. She suggests that folk devils need to be further considered as crucial social actors in the construction of moral panics, as they aid in enhancing scholarship on topics such as stigma and deviance. Therefore, in relation to VPD health scares, anti-vaxxer folk devils serve as a case study to advance this topic. By extension, this project intends to complicate the folk devil narrative further, especially around the notion of agency, by examining folk devil redemption narratives as they relate to anti-vaxxer deviancy in the media.

While contemporary studies of folk devils have been centred around agency and resistance, I argue that they don't help to explain the current media coverage of anti-vaxxers who recant their wrongdoing and transform into pro-vaccine advocates. How is it that with all the discussion of folk devils, we have yet to see narratives of redemption? First, I will demonstrate the importance of narratives in everyday life through the theory of narrative identity. I then discuss the two steps of redemption narratives, confronting the self and confronting others, while adding the concepts of mortification and confessionals. Finally, I look at the liminal state of redeemed folk devils using the example of the recovering alcoholic.

2.2 Investigating Folk Devil Redemption Narratives

2.2.1 Narrative Identity

Redemption narratives derive from the concept of narrative identity, which examines the internal reconstruction of the individual's past and imagined self. Narrative identity theorizes how people tell stories of overcoming hardship and atoning for wrongdoing not only as a form of altruism to promote life lessons for future generations, but also a mechanism for reconstructing a

purposeful and moral identity for themselves (McAdams, 2006; McAdams & McLean, 2013; Stone, 2016; Ransom, 2006; Singer, 2004; McAdams et al, 2001). Creating narrative identity is like conveying a life story accompanied with suffering, development and possible outcomes (Singer, 2004); it consists of using personal narratives of one's autobiographical past to convey "who they are now, how they came to be and where they think their lives may be going in the future" (McAdams & McLean, 2013, p. 233). However, an individual's narrative identity is not extracted from lived experience, but rather from the life stories they retell to themselves and others (Giddens, 1991; Singer, 2004). With this noted, media news stories are a prominent platform where narratives of identity reconstruction are framed and shared publicly.

Therefore, it is important to examine narrative identity within an interactionist framework because it reveals how meanings are shaped and formed by social interactions and in different contexts, such as the mainstream media (Stone, 2016; Van den Hoonaard, 2015). Interactionism demonstrates semantic conclusions about an individual drawn from the episodic information they express in their stories (McAdams & McLean, 2013). Narrative identity is a psychosocial construction whereby life stories are not only impacted by psychological efforts of generativity³, but also shaped by social and cultural surroundings (McAdams, 2006). Giddens (1991) explains that the self does not function within the workings of personal disposition alone; it is also shaped by modern institutions that control social life. Narrative identity operates within the traditions and expectations of its own societal niches as well as being influenced by social norms, historical events, stereotypes and cultural assumptions (McAdams, 2006; Stone, 2016; Ransom, 2006). In fact, individuals directly contribute to the promotion of social influences through dialectical

³ Psychologist Erik Erikson's theory on generativity is applied to help explain narrative identity in middle-aged adults. Generativity examines an adult's own commitment and concerns toward the growth and well-being of future generations (as cited in McAdams, 2006).

interplay, which causes them to negotiate and re-negotiate their lifestyle choices among diverse options over time (Giddens, 1991). Singer (2004) states that individuals create stories that derive from existing cultural narratives based on myths, fables, popular culture, literature and family history. In response to cultural conventions and ongoing social interactions, the self is continuously being developed and revised (Giddens, 1991).

2.2.2 Folk Devil Redemption Narratives

Redemption narratives depict stories of identity transformation from “a bad, affectively negative life scene to a subsequent good, affectively positive life scene” (McAdams et al, 2001, p. 474).⁴ Redemption narratives are not mere justifications of wrongdoing, but instead represent a committed attempt by a former deviant to recover socially and reconnect with society—in other words, the former folk devil preaching to other folk devils about risks and consequences of their wrongdoing (Smith, 2014; McAdams et al, 2001; Stone, 2016; McAdams & McLean, 2013; McAdams, 2006).

In this thesis, narrative is an important factor in redemption because rather than a drastic “wholesale overthrow of the previous self,” redemption plays out in a gradual and consistent storyline of progression (Maruna, 2001, p. 86). As narrative identity only occurs through the symbolic interaction of retelling life stories to one’s self and others, McAdams and McLean (2013) state how the redemption narratives occurs in a two-step process: confronting the self and

⁴ Dan P. McAdams (2006) writes in this paper, *The Redemptive Self: Generativity and the Stories Americans Live By*, that the narrative of redemption derives from the myth of the “American Dream” whereby “America has been imagined as a place where people can start over, pursue a new dream” and attain second chances (p. 81). While redemption narratives prescribe myths of exceptionalism and equal opportunity, they instil comfort, hope and security for deliverance from suffering and personal recovery (Smith, 2014).

confronting others. I will expand on these two steps separately and use them as a basis for additional theoretical concepts to be applied.

Step One: Confronting the Self

Confronting the self occurs when the individual deeply reflects upon and evaluates a negative experience (McAdams & McLean, 2013). In relation to the redemptive anti-vaxxer folk devil, the negative experience occurs in the form of punishment and suffering from a vaccine-preventable disease. For Stone (2016) and Maruna (2001), confronting the self involves confronting the “bad it,” or the deviant acts they have committed in the past. Once the “bad it” is confronted, the deviant or folk devil is able to begin discovering their “true self” or their “inherent goodness or normalcy” (Stone, 2016, p. 963) and reconstruct their moral identity.

Kenneth Burke (1970) would call “step one” mortification, or the internal process of slaying one’s unruly motives, and becoming virtuous and aligned with the moral order while rejecting disorder. It cannot be determined by an external force; it must come from within, where essentially the individual rejects their past self and follows the accepted path toward moral goodness (Burke, 1970). The inner reclamation of self is interwoven with feelings of guilt and shame for the wrongful past (Burke, 1970; McAdams, 2006; Smith, 2014). Guilt implies an emotional debt or feeling of moral failing that can be paid back through appropriate action, such as apology, while shame concerns the disgrace and embarrassment of one’s tarnished existence (Smith, 2014). Smith (2014) argues one does not earn redemption from paying back the guilt with action, but rather confronting the shame that arises from attempting to recover from wrongdoing. In light of this, confronting the shameful self can be an act of mortification as it allows the individual to depart from their former deviant past. Overall, mortification can be

imagined as a symbolic death (Glantz, 2007) where one's previous identity figuratively dies and then is redeemed by confronting the self and performing public actions of confession and advocacy, as well as living a life of moral virtue (Burke, 1970; McAdams, 2006).

Step Two: Confronting Others

Confronting others is when the individual announces a positive resolution to their negative experience in order to achieve personal growth and empowerment (McAdams & McLean, 2013). In regard to folk devils, confronting others may consist of publicly denouncing their former deviancy (and by extension the deviancy of their former allies) in public forums, such as the media. Essentially, in redemption narrative the individual often shares accounts of loss and suffering in their past through detailed, believable and considerate discussion that does not overkill feelings of guilt and shame (McAdams & McLean, 2013; Maruna, 2001).

The act of confession plays a key role in confronting others. In the religious sense, confession involves the confessant or layperson admitting their sins to the confessor, such as a priest (Lynch, 2009; Haliczer, 1996; Foucault, 1978). While my thesis takes a secular approach to examining redemption narratives in the media, it is important to bring attention to the religious undertones of confession as similar themes are embedded in non-religious structures and practices of Western society, such as in a court of law (Haliczer, 1996; Foucault, 1978). Public confessions of anti-vaxxer folk devils in the media need to be taken into account when exploring redemption narratives as they not only contribute to moral discourse, but also reveal how the representation of the "true self" is exposed and transformed into a moral subject.

The verbal act of confession is fundamental in Christianity and serves as sacrament of penance⁵ in the Roman Catholic Church. In the Middle Ages, Catholic European countries often practiced the act of confession on an annual basis as a way of self-examination under meticulous societal rules that consisted of refraining from immoral and unacceptable thoughts, desires and actions (Foucault, 1978; Haliczer, 1996).⁶ While early philosophers such as Plato saw moral error as “a mere blunder on the part of an individual who thought he was in pursuit of the good,” Christianity saw immorality as a sin or a willfully evil act contravening God (Haliczer, 1996, p. 7). Although the Christian faith believes that every mortal being is born a sinner after baptism, early church practices required sinners to face penalties for their wrongdoing by being partially or completely shunned by their community (Haliczer, 1996). Similarly, the notion of the sinner can reflect the immoral others or folk devils in secular depictions of moral panic to represent evil and serve as “a repository for blame” (Joffe, 1999, p. 22). Whether sinners or folk devils, mainstream society often ostracized these individuals as “the other” due to their lack of conformity with the moral order of the community. Realistically, however, everyone sins, so “Christianity had to offer a way in which the individual could make amends” (Haliczer, 1996, p. 7). This resulted in a public ritual of penance where the sinner confessed their wrongdoing to God through an authentic expression of guilt and sorrow in order to be readmitted back into “the community of the faithful” (Haliczer, 1996, p. 7).

⁵ The Sacrament of Penance: a Christian ritual usually authorized by a priest and created to restore the former sinner back into the faithful community (Haliczer, 1996).

⁶ Foucault’s (1978) writings in *The History of Sexuality* referred to confessing “immoral acts” of sexual pleasures and sensations, but his notion on the confessional can also extend to other socially deviant actions, such as anti-vaccination.

Although Western society no longer follows this practice, there remains residual religious rhetoric within secular redemption narratives that requires the sinner or the folk devil to confess their immoral misconduct publicly. Viewed through a mainstream media lens, public confessions within redemption narratives frequently relate back to hegemonic discourses of moral regulation. While the practice of confession may be viewed as a personal, self-regulatory practice where the confessant is responsible for their own morality, it still hinges on conformity and the fulfillment of social expectations (Alcroft and Gray, 1993; Foucault, 1978). Therefore, depending on the type of confession, some voices are heard, while others are silenced or denied a speaking role (Foucault, 1978; Alcroft and Gray, 1993). Foucault (1978) writes, “there is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses” (p. 27).

Overall, the goal of confession is not only to confess wrongful actions that infringe on moral regulations and law, but also to seek transformation of the former self (Foucault, 1978). Foucault (1978) refers to “the confession of the flesh” (p. 19), which can apply to the figurative death of one’s former self through the process of mortification, where one sheds past evil and harvests a fresh moral identity. While Lynch (2009) contends that some scholars argue that the “true self” is recognized in the collaboration of the confessant and confessor, Foucault believes that “truth is produced in the act of confession” itself, as it lies within a network of power relations that influence self-transformation (p. 129).

In the process of confronting others through confession, the folk devil is able to achieve empowerment by seeking to help others and “give something back to society as a display of gratitude” (Stone, 2016, p. 965), such as helping others in terms of prevention or recovery from wrongdoing. The goal of advocacy after suffering leads to the promotion of a positive future and

a purpose in life for the individual who has left behind their deviant past (Maruna, 2001; Stone, 2016).

Folk Devil Purgatory

Once folk devils fully complete the steps of redemption, the question becomes: are they forgiven? And if they are, what becomes of the status of their folk devil character? How is it represented in the media? Are redeemed folk devils even folk devils anymore? I argue that redeemed folk devils enter a state of purgatory or limbo where their new identity is awaiting acceptance by the public. I investigate this state of purgatory through applying ideas from Norman K. Denzin's book about the dual identity of recovering alcoholics, entitled *The Alcoholic Self* (Denzin, 1987).

Denzin presents three interrelated acts involved in the recovery of an alcoholic: encountering sobriety, becoming a member of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and living two lives. When encountering sobriety and becoming an AA member, the former alcoholic acquires a new identity, the 'recovering alcoholic'. Denzin (1987) writes that recovering alcoholics don't seek a mere alteration when redeeming their past selves, but rather "a radical transformation of personal identity that signals a conversion and commitment to a new way of life" (p. 168). Under the concept of narrative identity, this form of radical transformation can be understood as analogous to the so-called folk devil confessing their wrongdoings and finding their true self by slaying the past deviancy that caused them to suffer in life. The alcoholic's commitment is proven through maintaining sobriety and actively attending AA meetings, as well as advocating to future generations about the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption.

Despite their commitment of abstaining from alcohol, recovering alcoholics live two lives: On one hand, they are reintegrated into moral society by remaining sober and engaging with fellow people in recovery at AA meetings (Denzin, 1987). However, amid transforming their new “normal” identity, recovering alcoholics remain outsiders in a wider society that supports the recreational use of alcohol in everyday life. Although former alcoholics no longer drink in order to pass as normal in society, they still linger in a self-conscious state as to how others view them based on their deviant past (Denzin, 1987). A recovering alcoholic may have radically transformed their identity and found their “true self” through suffering and confronting their addiction, but regardless of radical transformation, they still hold the previous identity of being an active alcoholic who could be on the cusp of relapse at any time (Denzin, 1987).

I would argue that folk devils are placed in a similar sort of limbo where they feel skeptical or paranoid as to how the community around them perceives them, and whether or not they are truly forgiven. As I will show in this study, this is particularly true in the case of recovering anti-vaxxers. Based on Denzin’s (1987) example of the recovering alcoholic, it appears that their redeemed identity will never completely be separated from the folk devil identity regardless of the confession and penance they have performed. This leaves the folk devil in an internal purgatory where they are unsure about how society views them because of their past mistakes. Folk devil purgatory will be examined through investigating the redemption narratives of Tara Hills and Kristen O’Meara.

3 Chapter: Folk Devil Redemption Narratives in the Making

Chapter 3 draws from narrative theory to consider how stories of redemption voiced by deviants in the media both trouble traditional folk devil narratives and reconstruct moral identity. Drawing from narrative analysis, I closely examine two prominent case studies of media coverage of former anti-vaxxer mothers who changed their minds about vaccination after their children got sick with a vaccine-preventable disease (VPD): Tara Hills from Ottawa and Kristen O'Meara from Chicago. Narrative analysis focuses on how people tell particular stories in order to gain an understanding of themselves and the world they live in (Bryman et al, 2012; van den Hoonaard, 2015; Hughes et al, 2016; Holstein & Gubrium, 2012). When examining prominent media narratives, the concept of the 'formula story' is taken into account as it helps to explain how stories are socially circulated and presented to a large audience. Since formula stories can consist of content within the public realm of mass media and the Internet (Loseke, 2012), my research takes an unobtrusive approach by observing media stories based on of the top ten Google searches for each case study. The goal of my research is to grasp the wider popular narrative of how folk devils are portrayed, as well as how they portray themselves publicly through narratives of redemption.

The methodology of this chapter will be broken down into three sections. First, I explain the components of narrative analysis and Loseke's four techniques of formula stories. I then describe my case studies and justify my choice in selection; I also discuss how I conducted my data collection using the Google search engine. Finally, I explain how my two case studies are organized and analyzed in order to reveal folk devil redemption narratives.

3.1 Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis is a qualitative method “concerned with understanding why particular stories are told” and how they shape personal meanings while “forging social identities” that either “resist or accommodate dominant social orders” (Hughes et al, 2016, p. 346). Key underpinnings of narrative analysis can be related back to McAdams’s (2006) theory of narrative identity: the retelling of one’s life story through elements of suffering, development and self-transformation. Redemption narratives tell a lot about a person as they are expended to help people make sense of the disruptions in their lives caused by negative experiences (van den Hoonaard, 2015). Denzin’s (1987) example of recovering alcoholics illustrates how they use narrative to make sense of their addiction by retelling stories of their negative experience at AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) meetings in the hopes of leading them to a path of recovery and self-transformation. Overall, narratives are important to analyze not only because telling stories is a natural human impulse, but also because the stories we tell in person, or that are told to us in the media, disclose how personal ontology, social interactions and public discourse are constructed in society.

Narratives consist of most oral, written and visual texts including “personal testaments, talk and interaction, media commentary and historical and cultural material” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2012, p. 1) and transpire in different ways. For instance, narratives can materialize in transient utterances about topical accounts related to a certain character or event, or they can be revealed in acts of extended speech also known as personal narratives, which convey compelling and substantial information about one’s relationships, work and conflict. (Holstein & Gubrium, 2012). Personal narratives can be observed in conversations, interviews, informal journals, letters

or art. Regardless of the form they take, many researchers wish to study personal narratives because they are ubiquitous in all forms of communication in everyday life.

While there are many ways to consider a narrative, Loseke (2012) states that we cannot limit our understanding to an individual's personal narrative within their own environment; we must investigate how the narratives of individuals are perceived among strangers or the wider public in society. Since much of our personal identity is shaped by the social expectations of strangers, Loseke (2012) argues that more attention must be given to exploring narratives in relation to the outer world. If we take the dramatic element of moral panic into account, we can see how identity narratives of deviant actors are constructed to reinforce and maintain moral regulations of the dominant discourse.

Formula Stories

Loseke (2012) defines formula stories as “the most interesting socially circulating stories... not grounded in practical experience [but] understandable to relatively large audiences” (p. 253). Formula stories are narratives that embody recognizable and predictable attributes. They show similarities to moral panic's dramatic elements I described in Chapter 2 as formula stories have plots, characters and morals similar to moral panic events that are comprehensible to a general audience (Loseke, 2012; Wright, 2015; Cohen, 1972; Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 2009).

Loseke's (2012) Four Techniques of Formula Story:

Loseke posits four techniques to be used to consider the data presented in formula stories: a) establishing a story context, b) performing a close reading, c) collecting and categorizing data, and d) unpacking symbolic and emotion codes. First, establishing the context of a story requires asking preliminary questions about its construction, such as the author(s) and their claims, the

intended audience, and the type of story being presented (i.e. fact, fiction or fictionalized fact). Asking these preliminary questions helps to situate the narrative within a solidified context.

Once a context is established, the researcher can proceed to examine the characteristics of the story itself through a close reading. Properly examining a story involves a great deal of re-reading in order for the researcher to get a full sense of all the data being presented. Loseke (2012) suggests that data should be recorded verbatim or as close as possible to the text to catch the subtle symbolic or emotion codes that cannot be easily found in a summary. For this technique, she poses questions linked to the dramatic elements of moral panic such as investigating the plot, major characters and moral of the story.

After performing a close reading of a story, the analysis can be continued by collecting and categorizing explicit descriptions of characters into different themes. This technique requires consideration of all the characters' statements in the narrative, and paying close attention to particular attributes "that might seem unexpected, odd, or ironic" (Loseke, 2012, p. 261). Once descriptions are grouped into themes, the researcher must decipher and unpack symbolic and emotion codes as they are "the basic building blocks of cultural meaning systems" and "make stories sensible to audience members" (Loseke, 2012, p. 262). Symbolic codes are systematic notions assessing how the world works and evaluating the rights and responsibilities people have within it; on the other hand, emotion codes are systematic ideas about what emotions should be "inwardly experienced, outwardly displayed, and morally evaluated" (Loseke, 2012, p. 253). This illustrates how formula stories help inform individuals about social expectations that must be followed in order to be accepted and considered "normal."

Some scholars argue, however, that formula stories are flawed due their homogenous nature, arguing that humans are in fact heterogeneous and morally fragmented. This makes symbolic and emotion codes contentious at times, as they may differ among diverse populations. Although not all citizens will embrace these codes, they redirect embedded discourse and rhetoric in an attempt to regulate their conduct. This project aims not only to indicate how folk devil redemption narratives help to reflect perpetuated social relations, but also to confront the moral discourses and norms raised. When attempting to understand codes, we must accept that biases cannot be avoided. Therefore, it is important to be aware that different interpretations may be considered when examining the dataset of each case study.

3.2 Case Studies

Case Study 1: Tara Hills: (Ottawa, Canada) / VPD Diagnosis: Whooping Cough

The first case study is situated in Ottawa, Canada. The main character at the centre of the folk devil narrative is Tara Hills, a mother of seven who was already reconsidering her participation in the anti-vaccination movement before her seven children got sick with pertussis, more popularly known as whooping cough.⁷ Hills's youngest son, at 10 months old, was the first to catch the disease. He had never been vaccinated. Her other six children, all under the age of 11, soon began showing symptoms as well. Eventually, all seven children were infected and quarantined in their suburban Ottawa home for five days to fight off the illness. This outbreak occurred as Hills was in the process of updating her children's vaccine schedules. After her

⁷ Whooping cough is a respiratory disease that is highly contagious and results in forceful, uncontrollable coughing that often makes it difficult to breathe (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017). This disease primarily affects children who are too young to receive the vaccinations, but pregnant women are encouraged to get vaccinated in their third trimester (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017).

family's serious health scare, she rejected her anti-vaccine stance and became a pro-vaccine advocate (CBC News Ottawa, 2015).

Case Study 2: Kristen O'Meara (Chicago, United States) / VPD Diagnosis: Rotavirus

The second case study is situated in Chicago, Illinois. The main character in this folk devil redemption tale is Kristen O'Meara, a mother of three daughters who changed her stance on anti-vaccination after her whole family, including herself and her husband, became ill with rotavirus.⁸ O'Meara admitted to being a "big believer" in anti-vaccination research, but changed when she started doing research on the benefits of immunization. Her frightening wake-up call caused her to rethink her position on childhood immunization. O'Meara is now a vocal pro-vaccine advocate and hopes to educate others about the vital importance of vaccines so that they will never experience what her family struggled with (ABC News, 2016).

3.2.1 Rationale of Case Studies

My selection of these two case studies was based on their prominence in the news as much as on their content and timeliness. I chose to examine two case studies in order to provide an in-depth and comparative analysis of the folk devil redemption narrative. To begin, Hills's and O'Meara's narratives were prominent cases that received widespread media coverage when their stories went public. This factor alone makes them suitable candidates to collect a considerable amount of data that can be closely examined.

⁸ Rotavirus is a contagious viral disease that causes stomach and intestinal inflammation. Symptoms of the disease include severe diarrhea, vomiting, fever and abdominal pain. Rotavirus is vaccine-preventable; two doses of the rotavirus vaccine are given before a child turns one (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016).

As well, the two cases share similarities in their subject matter and timelines, from both mothers' entire families getting sick, to going public with their stories, to becoming high profile vaccine advocates. This allowed me to examine a comparable self-transformation of both folk devils through personal accounts and media portrayals. These case studies by no means stand homogenously to represent how redemptive anti-vaxxer folk devils act in both countries, but rather illustrate an example of the similarities and differences of media coverage. Additionally, the fact of Hills's and O'Meara's stories occurring around a year apart from one another can help demonstrate the continuity of the folk devil redemption narrative and how it is discussed in the public eye.

3.2.2 Data Collection of Case Studies

According to studies in both Canada and the United States, many people obtain their news and information online (Gottfried & Shearer, 2016; Statistics Canada, 2016). Google's search engine is "one of the widely used search tools on the Internet" (Yamin & Ramayah, 2013, p. 48) that individuals commonly rely on to seek information. Google's user-friendly interface and the immediate access it provides to countless media sources—including websites, journals, images, videos, news and audio—makes it an easily accessible information resource that enables users to search topics (Yamin & Ramayah, 2013; Pedro, 2012; Sorenson, 2016). While Pedro (2012) and Sorenson (2016) question Google's credibility when it comes to gathering data in academic research, my thesis is not primarily concerned with this issue. Based on my two case studies, I intend to gather the common popular narrative of redemption as it circulated on the Internet. Collecting sources on Google as my media stories would be an appropriate method to generate a dataset of popular results, ranging from both formal (e.g., news media and

organizations) and informal (e.g., personal or popular blogs and satire sites) web sources for each case study presented to the wider public.

Before proceeding to gather media stories for each case study from Google, it is important to examine what types of content may appear on the first top ten search results and how this might impact the explicit narrative of redemption perceived by a random user. Mainstream news media websites are more likely to appear first not only because they are better known, but also because they maintain good relationships with dominant actors to gain wider representation (Pedro, 2012). Alongside mainstream sources in a Google search, many users also tend to rely on secondary sources regardless of credibility (Pedro, 2012), which is an important consideration as untrustworthy or illegitimate sources can also impact the public narrative.

Two-Step Data Collection Process:

Collecting the data for each case study in this thesis project involved a two-step process. The first step consisted of gathering my media stories within top ten Google search results in order to create a dataset for each case study. The second step was looking for hyperlinks within each media story to see if additional sources directly related to the case study (that were not found in the first step of data collection) were referenced and could be added to the dataset of the case study.

Step One: Searching in Google

Prior to performing a Google search to collect my media stories for each case study, I accessed a public computer at Carleton University. I refrained from using my personal computer to collect data in order to limit the possibility of Google using algorithms to track my previous user activity, which could manipulate my findings. Gillespie (2017) states the “search algorithms

have a set of organizing criteria” that creates individualized user patterns to influence search results (p. 65). Once I logged into a Carleton University public computer, I proceeded to Google’s history tab in the settings menu, clearing all browsing history data dated back to the “beginning of time” on that network. Although I seldom use the Carleton computers, starting my data collection with a clean slate reduced the chances of my previous browsing history influencing the results.

When I began conducting step one of my data collection, I created a specific set of criteria for performing my Google search. My search criteria included keywords, a set time span and different spatial locations for both case studies. First, selecting appropriate and relevant keywords on a topic has a significant impact on results. Pedro (2012) states that, “the order of key words influences both the number and the content of results” (p. 35). For each case study, I decided to search the first and last name of the alleged folk devil, followed by the vaccine-preventable disease their families contracted; thus, “Tara Hills Whooping Cough” and “Kristen O’Meara Rotavirus” were my search terms. Each vaccine-preventable disease was used as a keyword over “anti-vaxxer” or similar because it was an objective fact about each case study that did not involve subjective implications or negative connotations that could influence the search results. On Google, I searched for “all of these words” to appear in results.

With regard to temporal parameters, I only searched for results within a fourteen (14) day span starting from when the story became public in the media. For the Tara Hills case study, I searched for results from April 8, 2015 to April 21, 2015. For the Kristen O’Meara case study, I searched for results from September 20, 2016 to October 3, 2016. I selected 14 days as my temporal parameter in order to emphasize timely results, as well as to see how the story played

out over the two weeks from its initial airing. Furthermore, five spatial parameters were selected for collecting data in each case study. The first used was “any country,” in order to observe where the majority of results were coming from. Then the regions of Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia were each individually selected in order to grasp the narrative of the top Google results within specific locations. Initially, Canada and the United States were selected since each case study came from one of the respective regions. The United Kingdom and Australia were also used as parameters not only because they added an international perspective, but also because they are both English-speaking countries with the similar technological advances and infrastructures compared to North America.

It is important to note that I cleared my search history each time after searching a different spatial location, regardless of which case study, in order to limit user activity tracking that could skew the results. Additionally, within each spatial parameter, I only looked at the top ten Google results as they are the primary sources individuals usually rely on when searching keywords on Google (Pedro, 2012). Therefore, based on the limitations of quantity and region, a maximum of fifty (50) media stories could be found in each case study. For each case study, all data were compiled in an Excel spreadsheet where the date, source, author, title and link were recorded.

Step Two: Additional Data Collection within Media Stories

Once all media stories were collected for each case study, I searched within each source to retrieve additional related links discussing the case that I did not find in step one of my data collection. These additional sources were added to the Excel spreadsheets. While searching for relevant sources, I also recorded which current media story contained pictures, videos and/or

related articles that were already found in step one of the data collection. Due to constraints, I only collected text and content found in the sources themselves and did not include any additional readers' comments in my research.

3.3 Organizing Narrative Analysis of Case Studies

Before proceeding to my analysis, I printed and laid out all media stories I collected for each case study via Google search, and displayed them chronologically on a Bristol board by the date each source was published in order to create a visual timeline. This allowed me to grasp the full mediated narrative over the fourteen (14) days from when the story went public. I observed twenty-eight (28) media stories for Tara Hills's case study and eighteen (18) media stories for Kristen O'Meara's.

My analysis of each case study will be comprised of three parts. First, I describe the apparent findings of each dataset. Second, I provide a chronological description of the redemption narrative that took place based on the findings. Third, I unpack my research and relate the case studies back to the literature on folk devil redemption narratives. With regard to these three parts, Loseke's (2012) four techniques of formula story are incorporated as an unobtrusive⁹ methodological framework to conduct an in-depth narrative analysis of my two case studies. It is important to note that rather than explaining and evaluating each media story I retrieved for each case study as its own narrative, I combine them as one narrative arc that gradually depicts the redemption of the folk devils.

⁹ Unobtrusive methods are a way of gathering data without human interactions required. Van den Hoonaard (2012) states that "the researcher simply analyzes material that already exists, and the process of collecting data does not affect the materials that are studied" (p. 121).

Part One: Summary of Dataset of Each Case Study

In part one, I borrow elements from Loseke's first technique of formula story where I ascertain the context of the media stories for each dataset. Initially, I recapitulate the overall findings of my dataset for each case study through explaining the quantity of regions, visuals and types of Google results I found.

Part Two: Chronological Description of Each Case Study

In part two, I advance to Loseke's second technique by performing a close reading of the media stories within the dataset of each case study. I examine and summarize the chief storyline elements, such as the plot, major character and moral of the media narrative. I do this by laying out all my media stories for each dataset in chronological order and revealing how the narrative of redemption played out throughout the fourteen (14) day span from when the story broke out into the public. I continue to conduct my close reading by extrapolating dominant quotes about the folk devil's redemption process that was reiterated within the media stories.

Part Three: Analyzing the Data of Each Case Study

Part three applies to Loseke's third technique of categorizing my quotes from the data of each case study into themes related to the literature on narrative identity from my second chapter. Specifically, I demonstrate how the anti-vaxxers go through the redemptive process of confronting themselves and others as well as waiting in folk devil purgatory to be forgiven. Initially, I examine how the folk devils confront themselves through reviewing their confessions in their personal blogs, where they talk about their punishment of suffering with a VPD, self-reflection and epiphany to start vaccinating. Then, I elaborate on how they confront others through confession, apology and advocacy both in their personal blogs as well as media

interviews. Afterward, I discuss where each anti-vaxxer stands in folk devil purgatory based on the reactions that were published or reported in my dataset taken from the first fourteen (14) days. Once I complete the narrative analysis of each case study, I recapture the differences and similarities of Hills's and O'Meara's story. Here, I use Loseke's fourth technique where I decipher and unpack emotion and symbolic codes that contribute to each case study's redemption narrative. Overall, the goal of this analysis is to illustrate how these case studies contribute to the growing literature of folk devils—specifically, how they are redeemed, and how they reconstruct their moral identity to be reintegrated back into the moral community.

4 Chapter: Folk Devil Revelation: Analyzing Anti-Vaxxer Redemption Narratives

In this chapter, the folk devil redemption narrative will be revealed through an in-depth analysis of the two prominent media stories of anti-vaxxers who changed their minds and became pro-vaccine advocates. I examine and analyze the case studies of Tara Hills and Kristen O'Meara to illustrate how folk devils reconstruct their identity to “fit in” to their normative moral community. I will explore the findings of each case study individually to examine how each personal redemption story is framed. Finally, after presenting both case studies, I discuss how the similarities and differences in Hills's and O'Meara's stories relate to the literature on redemption narratives.

4.1 Case Study One: Tara Hills, Whooping Cough

4.1.1 Summary of Tara Hills Dataset

Overall, I retrieved twenty-eight (28) media stories in my Google search method. Initially, in the first round of data collection, thirty-eight (38) search results appeared for the keywords “Tara Hills Whooping Cough”¹⁰ within the top ten lists among five different spatial parameters. Among the five regions, ten (10) results were from Canada, ten (10) were from the United States, five (5) were from Australia, and three (3) were from the United Kingdom. Additionally, ten (10) results were found for “any region” where seven (7) of the same results came from Canada, two (2) of the same results came from the United States, and one (1) of the same results came from Australia. Results that appeared twice, both within their respective

¹⁰ When conducting the Google search the four key words Tara Hills Whooping Cough must all be included anywhere in the page of each result.

regions and in “any country,” were: both CBC News Ottawa articles (CAN), both *Ottawa Citizen* (CAN) articles, the *National Post* (CAN), CTV News (CAN), Ottawa Community News (CAN), Truth Revolt (US), The Scientific Parent (US), and The *Sydney Morning Herald* (AUS). Since these sources appeared twice in the data collection, the ten duplicates were subtracted from the Tara Hills dataset. Additionally, one source from the United States was also removed as the article could no longer be retrieved on the Internet, making a total of twenty-seven (27) media stories found in the first round of data collection.

As the second round of data collection involved searching for additional links within each media story found in the first round, I came across one new source, a personal blog post written by Tara Hills in The Scientific Parent about her experience. About 81% of the sources (22 out of the 27 media stories) retrieved contained a link to Tara Hills’s personal blog. The five sources that did not contain a link to Hills’s blog are Yahoo! 7 News (AUS), Ottawa Community News (CAN), Mint Press News Desk (US), The Scientific Parent (US), and *New York Daily News* (US). Therefore, based on two rounds of data collection, a total of twenty-eight (28) media stories were examined for my first case study. A.1 in Appendix A shows a chart displaying, in chronological order, each media story found within my research categorized by date, source, region, title and author. Media stories highlighted in green represent the duplicate sources found when searching “Tara Hills Whooping Cough” in “any country” in the Google search engine.

Visuals

With regard to visuals, eleven (11) sources display a picture of just Hills, eight (8) sources provide a picture of Hills with her husband and children, six (6) sources include images with just her and her children, three (3) sources only include her children and one (1) source

includes only her husband and children. No sources showed images of only her husband. A.2 in Appendix A presents a chronological list of visuals (either of images or video screen shots) found in each media story for the dataset.

Types of Google Results

When examining the twenty-eight (28) media stories, one (1) came from an organization, five (5) came from blogs posts or website forums, and twenty-two (22) came from news media sources ranging from mainstream to independent media (Refer to A.3 in Appendix A).

Organizations

I Boost Immunity (April 13) is a Canadian online public organization that advocates for pro-vaccination beliefs on what it describes as a judgment-free platform. Essentially, it reiterated Hills's story through gathering quotes from her blog and her April 8 CBC News Ottawa interview.

Blogs Posts/ Website Forums

Three (3) out of the five (5) blogs posts or website forums are written by Tara Hills herself. Of those three (3), two (2) are different blog posts hosted on The Scientific Parent (April 8 and April 15) while the other one (1) post is from Kidspot (April 13), an Australian parenting website forum, which reposted Hills's original blog post that went viral. The remaining two blogs posts are from additional individuals conveying polarized reactions toward Hills's story. My Secret Atheist Blog (April 9) wrote a pro-vaccine article commending Hills, while a blogger on the anti-vaxx blog Levi Quackenboss (April 13) wrote an anti-vaccine post that portrayed her negatively.

News Media

Aside from The Scientific Parent, CBC News Ottawa and the *Ottawa Citizen* reported twice on Hills's story within the (fourteen) 14 days from when her initial blog post was published. Seven (7) out of the twenty-two (22) news sources contained primary quotes and interviews from Hills. These sources are: CBC News Ottawa (April 8), the *Ottawa Citizen* (April 9), CTV News (April 10), the *Washington Post* (April 14), CBC News Ottawa (April 16), Ottawa Community News (April 16) and the *Ottawa Citizen* (April 18). From the seven (7) sources listed, four (4) consisted of video interviews with Tara Hills: CBC News Ottawa (April 8), the *Washington Post* (April 14), CBC News Ottawa (April 16) and the *Ottawa Citizen* (April 18). Note: these are all mainstream news media sources and the *Washington Post* is the only source not from Canada (the United States). The other three (3) news sources contained quotes from interviews with the Hills family. While most interviews were with Tara Hills, one (1) source (CTV News) interviewed her husband, Gavin, over the phone.

The remaining fifteen (15) news media sources from the original twenty-two (22) comprised of duplicate articles or reiterations of Tara Hills's original blog or media interviews. Four (4) out of the fifteen (15) news media sources were duplicates from previous media interviews. For instance, the *National Post* (April 10) article is based on the *Ottawa Citizen* article (April 9).¹¹ Articles in the *Hamilton Spectator* (April 15), Mint Press News Desk (April 16) and *The Sydney Morning Herald* (April 16) were based on the *Washington Post* (April 14) article. The remainder of the eleven (11) news media sources essentially retold Hills's story through previous articles written about her. While Hills's blog showed up the most as an

¹¹ This is largely because the *National Post* and the *Ottawa Citizen* are owned by the same conglomerate, Postmedia.

additional link in the media stories, sources such as the *Washington Post* (noted in 5 other sources), CBC News Ottawa (noted in 4 other sources), the *Ottawa Citizen* (noted in 2 other sources) and CTV News (noted in 1 other source) were quoted multiple times.

4.1.2 Chronological Description of Tara Hills's Redemption Narrative

Tara Hills's redemption story went public on Wednesday, April 8, 2015 when she published a blog post on The Scientific Parent, entitled "Learning the Hard Way: My Journey from #AntiVaxx to Science." In her post, Hills shares her personal narrative about how she and her husband transitioned from anti-vaxxers to pro-vaccine advocates. She composed her blog while quarantined with her family in her suburban Ottawa home while her seven children suffered from whooping cough. Hills (2015) writes, "I'm writing this from quarantine, the irony of which isn't lost on me" (p. 1). Once an avid proponent of the anti-vaccination movement and scared by misinformation, Hills started to rethink her position about vaccines when a small measles outbreak occurred in her community, which prompted her to do research about vaccines. The "irony" to which Hills refers is that her children contracted whooping cough just a week before she and her husband were set to have their children vaccinated on a catch-up schedule. This devastating event only solidified the consequences of withholding vaccination and empowered her to tell her story in order to educate others about the importance of vaccines, as well as to apologize for any risks she may have posed to her own community by not having her children immunized.

Within the span of fourteen days, Hills's blog post gained over two million views (Spears, 2015) and attracted both national and international attention within the regions I searched. Several mainstream and independent news outlets covered her story and some even

requested an interview with Hills. For instance, CBC News Ottawa decided to report on Hills's story the same day (Wednesday, April 8, 2015) she posted her blog. CBC initially interviewed her outside her home, with her quarantined children shown peering through the front window.

Throughout the initial week after the blog post (Wednesday, April 8, 2015 to Sunday, April 12, 2015), Hills's story gained traction in various local, national and international news media outlets. Further interviews were conducted with the *Ottawa Citizen* and CTV News, for which her husband is present as well. Also, the anonymous blogger behind My Secret Atheist Blog wrote a sympathetic post in response to Hills's story.

By the beginning of the following week, on both Monday, April 13 and Tuesday, April 14, Hills's story achieved further coverage from sources such as an Australian parenting forum and a Canadian pro-vaccine organization. I retrieved one of Hills's first American interviews with the *Washington Post*. However, not all recognition toward Hills was encouraging; I came across a post on the anti-vaccination blog, Levi Quackenboss (2015), which a blogger accused Hills of not being a "real" anti-vaxxer. Seven days after Hills's original blog post was published, she issued a follow-up post on The Scientific Parent, on Wednesday, April 15, 2015. Hills updated readers about her children's health, which had improved after antibiotic treatment, and offered an apology to the community she put at risk. At the end of the article, Hills also answered six frequently asked questions regarding her incident, ranging from when she started changing her mind to what reactions she had received since going public.

Most media stories written about Hills were published on April 16, 2015, the majority of which were from Australia and the United States, and reiterated Hills's account of events from previous interviews. However, Ottawa Community News and CBC News Ottawa had the chance

to personally interview Hills. Ottawa Community News provided a detailed report on Hills's story, based on her blog, and informed local readers that her children had been treated with antibiotics and were now disease-free. In a continuation of CBC News Ottawa's previous story, a reporter conducted a follow-up interview with Hills in her home with her now-healthy children. Hills's advice in the interview is not to treat anti-vaxxers or those wary of vaccines with hostility when encouraging vaccination. The same advice was reiterated in the final media story I retrieved in my research on April 18, 2015, a follow-up interview in the *Ottawa Citizen* where Hills advocates for pro-vaccine individuals to reach out to anti-vaxxers with empathy and compassion.

4.1.3 Analysis of Tara Hills's Folk Devil Redemption Narrative

1) Confronting the Self:

Hills laments in her blog about how she and her husband were in the process of confronting their vaccine refusal beliefs when her children came down with whooping cough. Hills confronts herself by recalling how misinformation fostered her anti-vaccination beliefs, and how she reached an epiphany and changed her mind.

Self-Reflection

First, Hills self-reflects by coming to terms with the fact that she and her husband got scared by misinformation they accessed on the Internet and decided to stop vaccinating their children.¹²

We stopped because we were scared and didn't know who to trust. Was the medical community just paid off puppets of Big Pharma-Government-Media Conspiracy? Were these vaccines even necessary in this day and age? Were we unwittingly doing greater harm than help to our beloved children? So much

¹² The Hills's first three children were partially vaccinated and the other four were not vaccinated at all.

smoke must mean a fire so we defaulted to the ‘do nothing and hope nothing bad happens’ position (Hills, 2015, para. 6).

This quote, which was included in twelve (12) out of the twenty-eight (28) media stories, paints a picture of Hills’s fears about vaccines, which mirror the arguments presented on many anti-vaccination websites. Her public disclosure not only bared the root cause of her anti-vaccination beliefs, but helped bring her a step forward in realizing that she needed to change.

Although Hills claims she was never a vehement anti-vaxxer in the past, she admits that she was so convinced by the misinformation on the Internet that she resorted to fighting back and defending her anti-vaccine stance when relatives and friends attempted to persuade her and her husband to reconsider their views. Hills (2015) writes, “For years relatives tried to persuade us to reconsider through emails and links, but this only irritated us and made us defensive” (para. 7). Hills may have been persistent in finding the “truth” about vaccines, but her biases toward the medical community, the pharmaceutical industry, the government and pro-vaccine advocates alike enabled her suspicions. When Hills (2015) tried to conduct research into the benefits of vaccines, she explains that “deep down I was resigned to only find endless conflicting arguments that never resolved anything. No matter if we vaccinated or not, I thought, it would be nothing more than a coin toss with horrible risks either way” (para. 7).

Epiphany

The Hills family’s first step toward reconsidering vaccination was prompted by the Disneyland measles outbreak in December 2015. However, Hills (2015) recalled that, “the final shift came when I connected the dots between a small, but real measles outbreak in my personal circles this time” (para. 10). She explains that when she examined the timing of the measles outbreak in her community, she was shocked that her seven mostly unvaccinated children had

been one step away from contracting the vaccine-preventable disease. And when Hills conducted further extensive hours of vaccine research, she realized the issues at stake with not vaccinating. Hills (2015) explains, “I looked again at the science and evidence for community immunity¹³ and found myself gripped with a very real sense of personal and social responsibility before God and man” (para. 11). At that moment, Hills realized that it was time to reject her anti-vaxxer beliefs and get her children vaccinated. She says, “the time had come to make a more fully informed decision than we did 6 years ago. I sat down with our family doctor and we put together a catch-up vaccination schedule for our children” (Hills, 2015, para. 11).

Punishment

However, Hills’s recognition of her wrongdoing did not come without punishment. A week before updating their children’s vaccination schedules, all seven of her children contracted whooping cough. She writes, “for six years we were frozen in fear from vaccines, and now we are frozen because of the disease” (Hills, 2015, para. 13). Hills’s husband, Gavin, said in a CTV interview that it is “frustrating to be quarantined” and “knowing that the whole thing could have been avoided” (Mulholland, 2015, para. 6). Although Hills was able to recognize the consequences of her actions before her punishment, she now had to suffer with the real pain of delaying her children’s vaccinations. Hills (2015) explains,

My youngest three children were coughing so hard they would gag or vomit. I’d never seen anything like this before. Watching our youngest struggle with this choking cough, bringing up clear, stringy mucus...I snapped into ‘something is WRONG’ mode (para. 4).

The whooping cough scare led Hills to experience residual feelings of guilt and fear that pushed her to go public with her story.

¹³ Also known as herd immunity.

2) Confronting Others:

Confession

Beginning with confession, Hills always wanted to go public with her redemption story. Originally, she was planning to publish her post to *The Scientific Parent* on April 12, 2015, but once she grasped the severity of her children's diagnoses, she told the editors that she needed to post her story on the website immediately. Hills (2015) explained in an interview to *Ottawa Community News*, "I was like, I need to share this now, and I need to share it from my situation now because I know that this is going to be so embarrassing, but I know this is going to be so powerful" (Kveton, 2015, para. 29). In fact, so powerful was Hills's story that after her original blog post went live, she followed up with a second post on *The Scientific Parent* saying that "when I wrote our story last week, I had *no idea* our story would go 'viral' (no pun intended)" (Hills, 2015, para. 1). Hills thought her story would only be read by a few members of her community and never imagined it reaching a global audience. Instead Hills gained coverage both nationally and internationally, with multiple news sources eager to speak to her. With Hills being the main confessor in her redemption narrative, she took full responsibility in addressing her deviant past. In a *Washington Post* video interview, she says, "In the media, people who don't vaccinate are typically the villains, and that made us uncomfortable because we knew we were those people and I set out to prove that we were right and in the process found out how wrong we were" (Bernstein and Schatz, 2015).

While Hills expressed shame and guilt for what happened to her children, she understood that a *public* confession was required in order to help other parents who were struggling with the decision of whether or not to vaccinate to reconsider. For instance, in a *CBC News Ottawa* interview, Hills defines the experience of dealing with seven sick children as "sobering" and

“raw” (CBC News Ottawa, 2015, para. 6). Hills explained that, “it was too late [to vaccinate]. It’s so ironic and I’m not beating myself up for it. I just hope we can use this very painful experience to encourage other people like us to maybe re-examine the issue” (CBC News Ottawa, 2015, para. 7). In fact, Hills initially admits in her blog post that she fully understands the consequences of deserting the anti-vaccination movement and going public with her story.

I am not looking forward to any gloating or shame as this ‘defection’ from the antivaxx camp goes public, but, this isn’t a popularity contest...I understand that families in our community may be mad at us for putting their kids at risk. I want them to know that we tried our best to protect our kids when we were afraid of vaccination and we are doing our best now, for everyone’s sake, by getting them up to date. We can’t take it back ... but we can learn from this and help others the same way we have been helped (Hills, 2015 para. 14).

This theme, which reflects her readiness to accept responsibility for her actions as well as acknowledge the consequences for coming forward, was featured in twelve (12) out of the twenty-eight (28) media stories. It also brings a sense of genuineness and fidelity toward her redemption story, which would make it more convincing and compelling to a larger audience.

Apology

In her public confession, Hills offers a profound, sincere apology in her follow-up post for *The Scientific Parent*: “words may seem cheap now that the damage is done and we can’t undo it. We can only say that we are truly sorry for the unintentional but real impacts to everyone involved” (2015, para. 2). In her stoicism, she understands that there are “many real emotions of fear, anger, distrust and hurt that many have voiced against” her and her family (ibid). Hills makes personal apologies to many close members of her extended family (including her children, who are old enough to understand what is going on) as well as community members who may have been affected by her decision. Her apology, especially to those who remained

angry at the family, demonstrates the seriousness of her redemption narrative and commitment to make amends in their community.

Advocacy

Drawing from Hills's public confession, her initial purpose of confronting others about her redemption story was for the sake of advocacy. Hills (2015) writes in her follow-up post for *The Scientific Parent*:

We hope that sharing our personal story will be some token of reconciliation. We took the personal risk of going public because we knew that others like us might be willing to re-evaluate the topic sooner than we did if more people used a better approach (para. 2).

Advocacy is a crucial element in a redemption narrative, as well as for the mortification of one's moral identity reconstruction, as it demonstrates both empowerment and dedication to overcoming guilt and shame, by performing an action that can help others not follow down the same path. Tom Spears (2015) in the *Ottawa Citizen* explains that "now the Hills family has gone public with their story...it's important to help others understand the risk of not having vaccinations" (para. 3).

In addition to bringing awareness about the importance of vaccination, Hills had a message for both anti-vaxxer and pro-vaccine communities. With regards to the former, she acknowledges that choosing to vaccinate is a serious decision not only in regard to public health, but also personally. Hills (2015) explains in first blog post that vaccination "can't be made out of fear, capitulation or following any crowd" (para. 15); it must be a firm and rational decision based on research and evidence. As a point of guidance, she reminds vaccine resistant or hesitant individuals who are researching about vaccination to check their biases and sources as well as check their calendars when it comes to making

the decision, as “time waits for no parent” (Hills, 2015, para. 15). Gavin Hills also advises the same in his interview with CTV News: “I don't know if you'll come to the same conclusion as us, but do your research, because there's lots of good info out there” (Mulholland, 2015, para. 25). Overall, Hills's main takeaway message to vaccine hesitant or resistant communities is that, “It is OK to have concerns about a major medical decision for the children you love” (CBC News Ottawa, 2015, para. 12), but she strongly encourages these communities to carefully re-evaluate and check their sources so that they can make a more informed decision about the necessity of getting their children vaccinated.

Furthermore, Hills urges members in the pro-vaccine community to treat anti-vaxxers or vaccine hesitant individuals with empathy and compassion, rather than bullying and anger. In her blog post, Hills (2015) explains that, “if more people talked to parents with questions about vaccines like that [with empathy and compassion], instead of making them feel stupid or ashamed, I think more minds would be changed” (para. 4). Essentially, the tone of vaccine advocates determines everything. “You can either help those people move one step closer to re-evaluating and making a change, or you can drive them further in their corner where they won't even listen anymore,” said Hills (CBC News Ottawa, 2015, para. 10).

3) Folk Devil Purgatory:

Researching Tara Hills's redemption narrative through media stories within a 14-day period from when her story broke out will not provide a full understanding of whether Hills is forgiven; however, additional reactions to her narrative captured in the media stories under analysis offer a glimpse of how the forgiveness process will turn out. It is important to understand that the

feelings toward her redemption narrative are diverse. Hills explained in an interview to Ottawa Community News, “The decision has resulted in a mixed bag of reactions...from the downright angry to encouraging. Both reactions make sense” (Kveton, 2015, para. 30). That being said, I will offer a summary of different reactions from the general public, the news media and various moral entrepreneurs, as well as Hills’s accounts of the situation, in order to reveal where her reconstructed identity lies based on the media stories I retrieved for the dataset.

General Public

There was not much to take into account with regard to the general public, as I did not observe the readers’ comments of each source in this project. However, I did retrieve some blog posts as well as a quote from a member of Hills’s community who were represented in the media stories examined. With regard to the latter, Tom Spears (2015) from the *Ottawa Citizen* posted that “the neighborhood isn’t all happy with having whooping cough nearby” (para. 11). In an early article about Tara Hills, the *Ottawa Citizen* gathered an interview with the Hills family’s neighbor Jennifer Eady, who says she is “unhappy that many neighbours were put at risk by one family’s decision not to vaccinate” (para. 26).

As far as the two bloggers whose posts were part of the dataset, they offer different views toward Hills’s story. My Secret Atheist Blog called Hills’s post “compelling.” The blogger wrote, “I have no smug ‘*I told you so*’ for Hill[s], even though she does recognize the family could be on the receiving end of this -- from both sides. Frankly, I feel nothing but sincerely sorrow and empathy for her and her children since this illness is **no freaking joke**” (My Secret Atheist Blog, 2015, para. 5). The anti-vaxxer blogger on Levi Quackenboss (2015) had no problem showing disapproval for Hills’s redemption story by calling it “one of the dumbest posts

I've ever read...an 'anti-vax' mom's entire family...came down with the whoop and she's made the switch (from a club she was never a part of) to 'science.' ” (para. 1). This is not a robust reflection of the general public's reactions, but it gives a sense of the varied feelings people have.

News Media

Overall, news media remained objective by only reporting the facts of Hills's story; however, some sources hinted at sympathy, while others were subtly condescending in their accounts. For an example of the latter, the *New York Daily News* stated in the first paragraph, “an anti-vaccination mom finally agreed for her seven children to be vaccinated—after her entire family contracted whooping cough and had to be quarantined” (Moran, 2015, para. 1). Moran (2015) presented partial facts, but the use of the word “finally” implied that it took her children getting sick to change her mind, which wasn't accurate as Hills was already in the process of getting her children's vaccine schedules up-to-date.

On the other hand, The Chronicle (2015), from the United Kingdom, stated that, “It is never easy to change your mind on something you passionately believe in” (para. 1) while the news anchor for CBC News Ottawa states how it is understandable Hills feels shaken by the whole experience, rather than portraying her story in a “you should have known better” manner. Lastly, Bernstein and Schatz (2015) from the *Washington Post* stated that, “In the ongoing skirmishes between public health officials and vaccine skeptics, I'm scoring this one for the pro-immunization forces” (para. 1). This implies that Hills's story is helpful to encourage others to vaccinate. Additionally, Samantha Olson (2015) from Medical Daily believes that “there was disconnect between Hills and her children's doctor” (para. 9) and argues that there needs to be more transparent and accessible communication between health care providers and patients about vaccines.

Moral Entrepreneurs

The moral entrepreneurs featured in the media stories, such as doctors and other public health officials, showed support toward Hills's decision to change her mind and admired her courage to go public. Dr. Christianah Owoeye told CBC News Ottawa (2015) that, "It was good that she came out" (para. 15) and believes that perhaps Tara Hills's redemption story could "be a deterrent for other moms who are ... anti-vaccination" (para. 16) especially as there are continual misperceptions about vaccines on the Internet, which lead to fear and apprehension. Similarly, Dr. William Schaffner, speaking to ABC News, said, "I appreciate her honesty and it is very candid and self-revealing... I think you ought to respect her and listen carefully and think carefully about what she's saying" (Mohney, 2015, para. 11) and referred to Hills as "representative of many young, educated parents today" (para. 13). Likewise, in the same interview, Karen Ernst, founder of the vaccine forum Voices for Vaccines, says, "I just feel so much gratitude for parents, who not only change their minds and admit they are wrong... but do so publicly," (Mohney, 2015, para. 15).

Hills's Accounts

In Hills's follow-up blog post on The Scientific Parent, she describes the multitude of reactions she received for coming forward with her story. Hills thanked her immediate family and friends for being kind and supportive; although there were some people who are angry with her, she did not expect the wider community to be so forgiving. Hills (2015) wrote,

Local Facebook moms groups have been honest about their feelings yet most have been willing to look past how we got there to where we were... The best comment bar none was a friend posting to my wall that her family doctor wanted to send us a personal thank you for sharing our story publicly (para. 9).

Hills was surprised by how civil and mature people were to her on Facebook groups and comment feeds. She also found it reassuring when she noticed pro-vaxxers calling out their fellow pro-vaxxers for bullying and name-calling anti-vaxxers online.

However, not all reactions to her stories were positive. Hills (2015) explains that “some have been understandably upset, even enraged” (para. 9). Likewise, Hills (2015) describes the hatred she received from the anti-vaxx community.

I was surprised at how quickly people began making untrue accusations about me, like calling my story into question as fake pro-vax propaganda or saying that I’m being paid by big pharma. I am still waiting for the imaginary paycheck (para. 9).

Yet despite the hostile comments and some broken friendships, Hills tells Ottawa Community News, “she doesn’t regret the decision to tell the world about her and her husband’s decision” (Kveton, 2015, para. 13). Gavin Hills also supported this decision earlier in an interview with CTV News: “We knew that there were going to be some tomatoes thrown, sure... but we felt the message was important for others to hear” (Mulholland, 2015, para. 23). Hills tells the *Ottawa Citizen* that although she feels a “little self-conscious right now,” she understands the “anger and the fear and even the sense of betrayal among neighbors” (Spears, 2015, para. 2). She tells Ottawa Community News that she even understands she is the socially constructed folk devil who is seen as causing harm to people: “I understand their anger at the stereotype that I represent and the threat that they perceive us as. I totally, totally understand and I don’t dismiss that” (Kveton, 2015, para. 32). This is a huge part of the self-reflection in her redemption narrative, which contributes to her transitional identity reconstruction.

To end Hills’s redemption story on a positive note, she did receive a large amount of support from moral entrepreneurs like Ottawa Public Health, who were “helpful and communicative, trying to get us the help we need while keeping the community safe”, says Hills

(2015, para. 13). Likewise, Hills is grateful that many “people in the public sphere have been amazing [and] very gracious” (Kveton, 2015, para. 31). Whether she is fully forgiven or not, Hills demonstrates her identity reconstruction by not only going public and getting her kids vaccinated, but advocating to change the social norm of how we talk to vaccine-hesitant or vaccine-resistant communities in order to boost vaccination rates and reduce outbreaks of VPDs. She argues that if people treated anti-vaxxers less as enemies, or folk devils, and more like people who need help, it “could change the whole social norm of how we discuss [vaccination] in our private dialogues and in the public sphere”; she also states that the biggest change toward this growing public health issue is “how we talk about each other” (Kveton, 2015, para. 37).

4.2 Case Study Two: Kristen O’Meara, Rotavirus

4.2.1 Summary of Kristen O’Meara Dataset

Overall, I found eighteen (18) media stories using the Google search method. In the first round of data collection, I found twenty-five (25) search results using the keywords “Kristen O’Meara Rotavirus”¹⁴ within the top ten lists of five different spatial parameters. Among my five selected spatial regions, no results were found in Canada, ten (10) results were found for the United States, four (4) were found in Australia, and one (1) was found in the United Kingdom. Additionally, I found ten (10) results for “any country” where nine (9) were duplicates from the other regions searched: eight (8) of the same results came from the United States, and one (1) of the same results came from Australia. Results that appeared twice when searched both within their respective region and in “any country” were: the *New York Post* (US), Raw Story (US), ABC 7 Chicago (US), Jezebel (US) ABC News, Huffington Post (US), *Self* (US), The Vienna

¹⁴ When conducting the Google search the three key words “Kristen O’Meara Rotavirus” must all be included anywhere in the page of each result.

Report (US), and News.com.au (AUS). Since these sources appeared twice, the nine (9) duplicates were subtracted from the Kristen O'Meara dataset, for a total of sixteen (16) media stories found in the first round of data collection.

In the second round of data collection, two additional sources were retrieved among the sixteen (16) media stories. First, I came across a personal blog post written by Kristen O'Meara for the pro-vaccine site Voices for Vaccines about her experience. Four (4) out of the sixteen (16) media stories retrieved, or 25%, contained a link to Kristen O'Meara's personal blog. The four (4) sources which did contain a link are *New York Post* (US), Raw Story (US), Huffington Post (US) and Levi Quackenboss (US). The second additional link I found was from the anti-vaccination blog Levi Quackenboss, which was linked to the Vienna Report source. Therefore, based on my two rounds of data collection, a total of eighteen (18) media stories were examined for my second case study. B.1 in Appendix B displays a chart of each media story in chronological order of publication, categorized by date, source, region, title and author. Media stories highlighted in green represent the duplicate sources that appeared twice when searching "Kristen O'Meara Rotavirus" in "any country" in the Google search engine.

Visuals

As for the visuals depicted in the media stories, eleven (11) sources consist of O'Meara with her children, six (6) are of just O'Meara, two (2) show O'Meara with her husband and children, and one (1) display just O'Meara and her husband. Similar to my first case study, B.2 in Appendix B presents a chronological list of visuals (either of images or video screen shots) found in each media story for the dataset.

Types of Google Results

Based on the eighteen (18) media stories I retrieved, one (1) came from an organization, four (4) came from blog posts or website forums, and thirteen (13) came from news media sources ranging from mainstream to independent media (Refer to B.3 in Appendix B).

Organizations

The Universal Life Church Monastery (September 30) is an online non-denominational religious non-profit in the United States that reported on O'Meara's story. The report briefly discussed both sides of the vaccine safety argument and posted a question at the end of the article asking where readers stand on the issue.

Blog Posts/Website Forums

Out of the four (4) blog posts or website forums I found, half were pro-vaccine and half were anti-vaccine. Out of the pro-vaccine portion, one was a blog post written by Kristen O'Meara for the vaccine advocacy site Voices for Vaccines (ND), which provided a first-hand account of her story. The other pro-vaccine website post was published in the Australian parenting forum, Kidspot (September 27), which reproduced O'Meara's story from other media interviews. As for the anti-vaxxer blogs, one was written by the Vienna Report (October 5)¹⁵, which had a link to blog post on the Levi Quackenboss website (September 21). Both anti-vaxxer bloggers portrayed O'Meara negatively for speaking out about the incident.

¹⁵ I included the October 5, 2016 source from the Vienna Report because it appeared in my top ten Google results when I searched "Kristen O'Meara Rotavirus" in the United States between the dates of September 20, 2016 to October 3, 2016. Since the date of the source was only two days off from my preselected dates, I decided to incorporate it in my thesis project.

News Media

Out of the thirteen (13) news media articles retrieved, none of the sources reported on O'Meara's story more than once within the fourteen (14) day span from when the story broke (September 20, 2016 to October 3, 2016). Only three (3) out of the thirteen (13) news sources I found consisted of primary quotes and interviews with O'Meara. These sources are: the *New York Post* (September 20), ABC News (September 26) and *Self* magazine (September 28). Only ABC News presented a video interview with O'Meara on their Good Morning America program, while the other two sources contained textual quotes in their articles. The remaining ten (10) sources reiterated O'Meara's story with quotes predominantly from the *New York Post* (noted in 9 other articles) and ABC News (noted in 9 other articles). One (1) of the ten (10) reiterated sources (ABC 7 Chicago) was a duplicate from ABC News.

4.2.2 Chronological Description of Kristen O'Meara's Redemption Narrative

Kristen O'Meara began her public redemption with a blog post entitled "Emerging from the Herd" written for Voices for Vaccines. It is unclear when she published her story, but presumably it was posted in the months after she, her husband and their three children contracted rotavirus in 2015, one of the primary events that led her to change her mind. O'Meara described herself as a staunch anti-vaxxer, but at the same time paradoxically believed in the benefits of herd immunity, and acknowledged that her family benefitted from others who were vaccinated. Clearly the theory didn't prevent the O'Meara family from getting rotavirus over the winter of 2015. After some in-depth research, O'Meara came to the conclusion that it was time to vaccinate her children in order to avoid another serious health crisis in her family. In addition, she went public in order to encourage other vaccine-hesitant parents to do the same.

About a year later, O'Meara's story gained public attention when the *New York Post* covered it on Tuesday, September 20, 2016. Along with restating important highlights from her blog post, the newspaper interviewed O'Meara about the experience. Throughout the rest of the week, I only retrieved two (2) other sources that reported on the story: a Raw Story article reiterated her blog and quotes from her *New York Post* interview on September 20, while an anti-vaxx blogger on the website Levi Quackenboss wrote a satirical response to O'Meara's story by pretending to her as a form of mockery and belittlement of O'Meara's decision to leave the anti-vaccination movement.

On Tuesday, September 26, 2016, eight days after O'Meara's story went public in the *New York Post*, ABC News interviewed her on the Good Morning America show. I found the most amount of coverage both nationally and internationally on September 26 and 27, 2016. Most sources just recapped quotes from O'Meara's *New York Post* and ABC News interviews. Also, many sources made reference to the rise of the anti-vaccination movement and its correlation with growing vaccine-preventable disease rates.

On September 28, 2016, O'Meara had another interview with *Self* magazine about her decision to start vaccination. In her accounts, she emphasized the importance of people refraining from judgement of her decision and finding a trusting relationship with her doctor. Nearing the end of the fourteen days, I came across a couple more articles. One post, from the Universal Life Church Monastery on September 30, 2016, was very sympathetic toward O'Meara. This was the opposite reaction from a blogger in the Vienna Report, who wrote a conspiracy post on October 5, 2016, linking O'Meara's Facebook friends to people from Big Pharma. This media story was in fact the final source I found within the fourteen (14) days of

O'Meara's story going public, which ended her redemption narrative on a sour and somewhat suspenseful note.

4.2.3 Analysis of Kristen O'Meara's Folk Devil Redemption Narrative

1) Confronting the Self:

After her family contracted rotavirus, O'Meara reflected publicly on her negative experience of being an anti-vaxxer. She is seen coming to an epiphany to vaccinate her three daughters after conducting extensive research about the importance of vaccination.

The Punishment

Before O'Meara could confront herself about her wrongdoing, she had to face the punishment of not getting her children vaccinated—a punishment, she acknowledged, that she didn't see coming. In the winter of 2015, she, her husband and their three daughters all contracted rotavirus. In O'Meara's blog, she describes the experience as a “nightmare.” She writes, “It was horrible to see my daughters hunched over on the toilet, crying from the painful cramping that lasted a week after the acute illness” (O'Meara, 2015, para. 7). In a later interview with the *New York Post*, O'Meara says,

I'll never forget the look of fear on my daughters' faces as they suffered intense pain and diarrhea that lasted for three weeks. I've no idea where we picked it up, but the horrific experience proved that, even living in a highly vaccinated population, we were vulnerable. (Ridley, 2016, para. 12).

The contradictory reality is that while O'Meara did not view it as safe to vaccinate her children, she nevertheless expressed faith in the idea of herd immunity. O'Meara (2015) explains in her blog, “I knew that my children had a low risk of contracting vaccine-preventable diseases—precisely because vaccination is effective” (para. 6). Therefore, when she learned her family got diagnosed with a vaccine-preventable

disease, her heart sank (Marturana, 2016). She describes the guilt as “overwhelming,” but is thankful that none of her children were newborns or had autoimmune deficiencies, or they could have died (Ridley, 2016). Therefore, after receiving the terrifying ‘wake-up call’, she started to reflect on her anti-vaxxer position. “Once I realized what we all had, and that it could have been prevented with a vaccine, a spark of doubt began to grow” (O’Meara, 2015, para. 7).

Self-Reflection

Once the punishment occurred, O’Meara confronted her deviant past by recollecting on the events that precipitated her change in position on vaccination. In her Voices for Vaccines post, O’Meara said she went into motherhood as a healthy skeptic: “When I became pregnant with my first daughter, I wanted to do the right thing by investigating the safety of vaccines before making a decision” (O’Meara, 2015, para. 1). However, she (2015) openly admitted to purposely seeking out anti-vaccination materials because she figured “the pro-vaccine side was going to say...immunization was safe and that people against vaccination are a bunch of quacks” (para. 2). Also, in a *Self* magazine interview, she stated, “I had a pretty deep mistrust of the pharmaceutical companies that produce vaccines” (Marturana, 2016, para. 4). O’Meara admits to how she purposefully sought out misinformation on anti-vaxxer mom blogs and even saw a pediatrician who did not vaccinate patients. O’Meara (2015) says, “I didn’t have any trouble finding what I was looking for” (para. 2).

Conversely, the first sign of vaccine doubt occurred for O’Meara when she gave birth to her twins. O’Meara (2015) says, “I felt a new sense of vulnerability. If one child got sick, I quickly realized, they’d all be sick” (para. 6). By the time her entire immediate family got sick

with rotavirus, her doubts about vaccination persisted, but this was not the main event that led to the final decision to get all her three daughters immunized. O'Meara (2015) explains that another event that led her to vaccinate her children was when she received a note from her children's school stating "in light of the measles outbreak,¹⁶ vaccination was now a non-negotiable condition of enrollment, effective the following school year" (para. 7).

She had used religious exemption letters in the past, but questioned, "Do I really want to spend my life writing these letters—fighting something I'm not even sure I believe in anymore?" (Ridley, 2016, para. 13). Additionally, O'Meara (2015) states that her husband started pressing her to "remind him why the girls weren't vaccinated" (para. 9). *Self* magazine describes that "her husband gently pressured her to rethink their choice" (Marturana, 2016, para. 3). Thus, O'Meara (2015) began conducting research and asking questions like, "what if I researched with the opposite bias? What if I instead looked for confirmation of the efficacy and safety of vaccination?" (para. 10).

Epiphany

From a family health scare to self-reflection and research, O'Meara was finally ready to release her fears as an anti-vaxxer. In *Voices for Vaccines*, O'Meara (2015) wrote, "armed with a whole new perspective and tons of information, I was able to trust that vaccinating my girls was the right and safe thing to do" (para. 11). In fact, she elaborates by stating that within days of rethinking her decision, she chose to completely release her deviant past and get her daughters vaccinated on an aggressive catch-up schedule (O'Meara, 2015). Her epiphany regarding the

¹⁶ Referring to the Disneyland measles outbreak of 2015.

importance of vaccination led her to a happier place where she knows her children are protected from a large range of vaccine-preventable diseases.

2) Confronting Others:

Although O'Meara's story did not receive a large amount of public attention until a year later, she was still open to being interviewed by various news sources who wanted to report on her story.

Confession

In the *New York Post*, she admits to several vices and wrongdoings in her public confession. She describes being "raised in a "crunchy" family that questioned authority and the status quo" (Ridley, 2016, para. 6) and being surrounded by friends who refused vaccination encouraged her anti-vaccine views. O'Meara acknowledged that she deliberately researched biased anti-vaccination information in the past while also having a self-righteous view about vaccines where she thought she was better than pro-vaccine parents. O'Meara says,

I got absorbed in the anti-vax culture and secretly thought of myself as being superior to others. Parents who vaccinated didn't have my special investigative skills. As far as I was concerned, they didn't stop to question and were just sheep following the herd (Ridley, 2016, para. 9).

On top of O'Meara's complicity in the anti-vaccination movement, she willingly discloses her selfish and hypocritical beliefs of believing in herd immunity even when she was an anti-vaxxer.

O'Meara admits:

Speaking of herds, I knew that the great reduction in diseases had a good deal to do with clinical vaccinations. I just thought: "Let someone else take on the risks of vaccinating." It was a very selfish viewpoint because I had the best of both worlds (Ridley, 2016, para. 10).

When she came to the realization of her wrongdoing, she decided it was time to go public and relieve herself from her devious past. O'Meara says in her *Self* magazine interview:

I realize now that I had confirmation bias...I looked for information confirming my suspicion that something about vaccines was unsafe. I wish I would have applied what I know to be true about analyzing information in any other area to the topic of vaccination (Marturana, 2016, para. 10).

Apology

While O'Meara did not offer an explicit apology in her redemption narrative, she did repent by acknowledging that she had put her kids at risk (ABC News, 2016). In an ABC News (2016) interview, O'Meara says, "I wish that I had taken more time to research from both sides before my children were born" (para. 5). O'Meara continues, "It was awful, and it didn't have to happen, because I could have had them vaccinated. I felt guilty. I felt really guilty" (ABC News, 2016, para. 2).

Advocacy

O'Meara put her bouts of guilt to work by advocating for people who are anti-vaxxers like herself to reassess their position about vaccine safety and necessity. As she told ABC News (2016), "I'm here because I wanted to share my personal story...and if it does help someone change their mind, then that's great" (para. 11). O'Meara (2015) expressed her frustration with the anti-vaccination movement and how it spreads misinformation about the risk of vaccination that "feeds on fear and mistrust of our government and the agencies" and "benefits from our collective short-term memories, forgetting or never even knowing what it was like to fear diseases that have been nearly or completely eradicated throughout the developed world" (para. 12). In the *New York Post*, O'Meara emphasizes, "If I can make even one anti-vaxxer think twice, speaking out will have been worth it" (Ridley, 2016, para. 17), especially so others don't have to suffer the way she did with a life-threatening vaccine-preventable disease.

Finally, O'Meara advised doctors and patients to focus on open and non-judgmental communication when it comes to talking about the decision to vaccinate:

I think the most important resource unsure parents need is a trusting relationship with a physician or other medical professional who understands and honors their legitimate concerns about vaccinating their children (Marturana, 2016, para. 11).

A more inclusive and compassionate approach may encourage parents to reach the conclusion about vaccinating their children. This can also help foster growth in anti-vaxxers to reconstruct their identity and become pro-vaccine. The new pediatrician O'Meara found “didn't judge or reprimand me” (Marturana, 2016, para. 11), she says, which encouraged her to confidently reconsider her previous stance and move forward with getting her children vaccinated.

3) Folk Devil Purgatory

When it comes to examining whether O'Meara is stuck in folk devil purgatory, it is unclear whether she is fully forgiven. However, based on the media stories I retrieved for the dataset, contemporary accounts from different groups of actors such as the general public, the news media and moral entrepreneurs, as well as O'Meara herself, can offer insights into how her story was perceived.

General Public

Similar to Tara Hills, I was unable to find a representative amount of Google search results from members of the general public as excluded readers' comments in the media stories from the study. As for the three (3) dominant media stories I retrieved portraying the public, I found one that spoke in favour of O'Meara's story while the other two spoke against it. With regard to the former, the Universal Life Church Monastery (2016) showed support for O'Meara

by defending her, writing, “No matter your stance on this issue, it takes courage for someone to come forward in front of the national media and admit that they made a mistake” (para. 6). On the other side of the spectrum, two interconnected anti-vaxxer bloggers were present in the online narrative. First, Levi Quackenboss featured a piece that mocked O’Meara’s decision to change her mind by pretending to be her. Here are some quotes from the blog post:

I was a special anti-vaxer, because while I did not believe that vaccines were safe or effective, I truly believed in the theory of herd immunity, and laughed myself to sleep at night thinking of how everyone else in the world absorbed the risks of vaccinating, and my child was taking advantage of it (Levi Quackenboss, 2016, para. 11).

But, if my story of having to poop real bad changes the mind of even one anti-vaxer, it’s worth embarrassing myself with all of the inaccurate information I have shared here (Levi Quackenboss, 2016, para. 15).

These quotes demonstrate the sarcasm and ridicule O’Meara faced from people in the anti-vaxxer community who disapproved of her decision to leave the camp. The Levi Quackenboss post was linked to the Vienna Report media story I found, which essentially supports the previous article and makes claims toward a conspiracy theory of how O’Meara is connected to Big Pharma and was never really an anti-vaxxer in the first place.

News Media

As for the news media, there were a couple of subtle reactions of judgment toward O’Meara’s methods of research, as well as curiosity as to what took so long for her to change her mind. Firstly, I retrieved a number of news media sources that did not outright accuse or blame O’Meara, but hinted at problems with her research methodology. For example, Rothkopf (2016) wrote in Jezebel, “The thing about O’Meara’s technique (scouring everything about why vaccines *might be bad for you*) is that it conveniently leaves out the settled science that vaccines are actually not bad for you, and are, in fact, good for you, in that they effectively prevent a host

of diseases” (para. 5). She compares anti-vaxxers seeking information on anti-vaxxer sites to how men’s rights activists seek information on 4chan to confirm why men are “scientifically more advanced” than women. “Check your research methods, people!” Rothkopf (2016, para. 5) cries. While it is crucial to have adequate and accurate research about an issue, her comment is clearly judgmental. Similarly, after hearing O’Meara’s story on Good Morning America, the anchor mentions how he doesn’t understand why a person would choose not to vaccinate. “I just don’t get strong...feelings when the science seems so clear... this family really illustrates the real danger of not vaccinating your kids” (ABC News, 2016).

Moral Entrepreneurs

O’Meara’s story received a number of comments from moral entrepreneurs who didn’t express discernable praise for her, but rather restated the importance of vaccination and clarified what needs to be done in order to encourage this behavior. In six (6) out of the eighteen (18) media stories, I discovered quotes reiterated from the American Academy of Pediatrics that may have not referred to O’Meara directly, but restated their recommendation to have every child vaccinated, especially since “87 percent of pediatricians surveyed had encountered patients who refused a vaccine for their child” in 2013 (ABC News, 2016, para. 7). In fact, ABC’s Chief Health and Medical Editor, and former director of the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), Dr. Richard Besser was interviewed on Good Morning America and discussed that although the evidence in favour of vaccines is strong, a large part of the vaccine resistance problem is that we don’t see many instances of vaccine-preventable disease anymore, because vaccines have mostly eradicated them (ABC News, 2016).

With regard to O'Meara's story, Dr. Besser stated that he does not fully understand why someone wouldn't vaccinate because "nothing I do for my kids is more valuable" (ABC News, 2016). He admits that when he first started his practice, he would tell patients who did not want to have their children vaccinated to find another doctor, but now he tries to work with patients who are vaccine-hesitant by giving them information and trying to build a relationship of trust that will encourage them to vaccinate (ABC News, 2016). In a *Self* magazine interview, co-inventor of the rotavirus vaccine and member of the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, Dr. Paul Offit defends the importance of open communication between doctor and patient because "there's... a problem with lack of information that leaves a shroud of mystery and makes vaccines a little scary... We have to step back and explain" (Marturana, 2016, para. 8). This is a crucial point in convincing people to vaccinate, but also in reducing the stigmatization anti-vaxxers or vaccine-hesitant individuals feel when they want to talk to their doctors about vaccination.

O'Meara's Accounts

I was not able to find many sources that capture O'Meara's account of the reactions she received within my dataset. This might have to do with the fact that there was less coverage in general on O'Meara's story compared to Hills's. However, she did state in her interview with the *New York Post* that her decision to vaccinate led to some friendships ending. O'Meara says, "Sadly, I lost my best friend over the issue. When I shared with her that I'd changed my mind, there was an instant feeling of tension. Our relationship didn't immediately end, but it went downhill from there. Perhaps she thought I was judging her" (Ridley, 2016, para. 16). Regardless of some negative press and a tarnished relationship, O'Meara does not regret changing her mind

and becoming a pro-vaxxer: “I am proud that they [her three daughters] are now contributing members, providing additional strength to our collective immunity” (O’Meara, 2015, para. 13).

4.3 Recapturing the Case Studies

Through an in-depth analysis of my two case studies, I show how folk devils are not only constructed in the media, but have the ability to redeem themselves too. While there are similarities in the redemption processes of both Hills and O’Meara, their stories are heterogeneous in detail. This demonstrates the plurality of folk devils that exist. In summary of how the case studies relate to the literature, the differences and similarities in the case studies will be noted in order to convey distinctive narratives of redemption for each anti-vaxxer.

A crucial factor of redemption narrative is the ability to confront oneself through reflecting on wrongful behavior or the “bad it” (McAdams & McLean, 2013; Maruna, 2001). Hills and O’Meara both confront themselves in their respective redemption narratives by reflecting on their experience as an anti-vaxxer in the posts they wrote for parenting blogs before their stories became public. While they both completed this first step, afterward their paths to realization or “epiphany” were different. For instance, Hills’s self-reflection and research alone was enough to make her and her husband come to the conclusion that getting their children vaccinated was the solution. The main reason why Hills wanted to report on her story sooner was because the couple was struck with the punishment of having their children hit with whooping cough a week before they were going to get caught up on their vaccines.

On the other hand, O’Meara’s self-confrontation occurred when her family was punished with rotavirus, prior to her self-reflection and research that led her to put her three daughters on an aggressive catch-up schedule. Arguably, O’Meara’s narrative of confronting herself occurred

more in line with the literature, in the sense that she suffered first before self-reflecting on her negative experience. However, regardless of what path Hills and O'Meara took to changing their minds, they both retell the story of how they confronted themselves in their blog posts. They each describe how their first step led them to find their "true self" (Maruna, 2001) and start vaccinating their children. Clearly, both of them showed emotion codes of guilt and shame that contributed to confronting themselves in their narratives of redemption. Hills's and O'Meara's mortification process (Burke, 1970) of rejecting their anti-vaxxer selves and conforming to morals of public health transpired through not only getting their children vaccinated, but also releasing their feelings of guilt and shame by confronting others in an attempt to reconstruct their new identity.

In the second step of redemption, Hills and O'Meara confronted others through public confession, apology and advocacy, with the intention of living their lives as newfound pro-vaxxers (Burke, 1970; McAdams, 2006). In both their personal blogs and elsewhere, Hills and O'Meara played the role of the confessant (Lynch, 2009; Haliczer, 1996; Foucault, 1978), when they publically denounced their former anti-vaxxer selves. Their undertakings of confession, apology and advocacy demonstrate symbolic codes of taking responsibility for their wrongful actions and remaining committed to follow society's moral standard of vaccinating. For Hills, she was prepared to come forward and confront others regardless of the shame and embarrassment she knew she would receive from naysayers on both sides of the vaccine argument. She felt that this was the right thing to do to help other parents who are uncertain about vaccines, so as to not have her experience repeated with them. In a follow-up blog post, she even apologized to her community and others she may have put at risk, but also empathized with others who remained upset with her actions. In the end, Hills's vaccine advocacy is the

driving point of her confession. She not only sympathetically encouraged hesitant parents to ‘do the research’ and then vaccinate their kids, but she also flagged the pro-vaccine public that many anti-vaxxers or vaccine-hesitant individuals are good people who need to be treated with an open mind. Similarly, O’Meara conveys these actions when she confronts others, but is less sympathetic to people in the anti-vaxxer movement and does not offer an obvious apology, but understands how she put her daughters at risk. However, she reiterates a similar vaccine advocacy message just as Hills does in her narrative.

In addition, both stories centered on the mother as the main character and left the husband with little to no voice. Having both anti-vaxxer women as the focal point in redemption narratives perpetuates how vaccinating your children is gendered as a mother’s responsibility. For instance, Hills’s husband was at least featured in one interview and more pictures of the entire family were dispersed across media outlets, whereas O’Meara’s husband was only reference a couple of times and did not have a voice at all. O’Meara only quoted him once when asking her to rethink her stance on vaccinations, which shows that he had less agency and responsibility for the healthcare of their three daughters.

While both Hills and O’Meara presented redemption stories, I would argue that Hills’s was the more compelling and genuine. However, my observations might be influenced by the fact that I retrieved more media coverage and interviews of Hills, and those sources did a better job at portraying her redemption narrative in a positive light. With Hills’s story being more prominent, this may also explain why I discovered more positive reactions that commended Hills for coming forth about this issue compared to O’Meara, as Hills had more of a voice in her narrative. There were very few positive reactions related to O’Meara going public, which could be partially due to her blunt tone, but also a consequence of the lack of coverage she received. In

sum, aside from the differences in their redemption stories, both of these cases demonstrated identity reconstruction from anti-vaxxer to pro-vaxxer, as well as reached the moral conclusion of getting their children vaccinated.

5 Chapter: Reflecting on Folk Devil Redemption Narratives

After illustrating how both case studies demonstrate narratives of folk devil redemption, this chapter will delve into the deeper questions that outline the significance of this thesis project. In three sections, I will answer the three research questions I proposed in the Introduction chapter. Section one unpacks how redemption narratives continue to complicate the folk devil character, while section two probes deeper into problematizing public confessionals in the media by looking at their influence on identity formation and reconstruction. Finally, within the specific context of the case studies examined in this thesis, I will discuss in section three what can be learned from anti-vaxxer folk devil redemption narratives in public health.

5.1 The Complexity of Folk Devil Redemption Narratives

The complex nature of folk devil redemption narratives exists in contradiction to the traditional villainous character of folk devils in moral panic drama. In this section, I look at how folk devil redemption narratives are both a *space* of purgatory, where the folk devil remains in limbo while they wait to be forgiven, and a *process* of exiting that space.

The Process of Exiting

Redemption narratives complicate the folk devil character as individuals are seen confessing their moral sins and asking for forgiveness in order to reintegrate back to moral society. While McRobbie and Thornton (1995) proved how folk devils have agency, being able to fight back and become a more developed character through their persistence and activism in support of their deviant stance, we rarely came across the opposite. deYoung (2011) looks at folk devils as a process of becoming, but in this scenario, I argue that folk devils in redemption are in a process of exiting from their former selves. Theories of narrative identity and mortification

supported in the literature of this thesis illustrate how the folk devil wishes to shed their deviant past in order to allow their new moral identity to grow (Burke, 1970, McAdams, 2006).

The case studies of anti-vaxxers Tara Hills and Kristen O'Meara only further reaffirms the process of leaving their folk devil selves behind through a series of acts of self-reflection, public confession and advocacy for their newfound support for vaccination. Through reviewing the literature and my analysis, I can see redemption narratives continue to complicate the role of the folk devil by adding an alternative form of agency in their character that offers them the narrative of departing from their past and starting anew. The folk devil's "exiting process" interrupts and challenges the media claims of folk devils being evil as they attempt to redeem themselves. In fact, within the realm of anti-vaxxer folk devil redemption narratives, they extend the evolving story of the outbreak narrative that leaves room for growth in the vilified and stigmatized individuals.

Folk Devil Purgatory

However, just because folk devils can enter the process of redemption, doesn't mean they will be fully forgiven on the other side. Another element that ties to the complexity of the folk devil redemption narrative is how folk devils occupy a space of uncertainty about where they stand with their identity, which I call a stage of 'folk devil purgatory'. Individuals exiting the folk devil identity, such as anti-vaxxers changing their minds, live two lives similar to the recovering alcoholic accounted for by Denzin (1987). While they are trying to transform to their new identity, folk devils in redemption still remain outsiders to the larger society until they are pardoned.

At least within the two case studies I observed, I think it is very unlikely for an anti-vaxxer folk devil to be fully forgiven since the audiences to whom they are delivering their

message are very diverse. However, I argue that the exit out of folk devil purgatory depends on who forgives them. Within the context of anti-vaccination, I argue that if folk devils are forgiven by or receive positive reactions by moral entrepreneurs, such as doctors or public health professionals as well as members within their community, then the folk devils are more likely to emerge from their purgatory state. In relation to the case studies, I looked at folk devil purgatory through media stories that indicated either positive or negative reactions to Hills's and O'Meara's narratives.¹⁷ While I only looked at popular Google search results, I understand that the reactions are not completely representative of what could have occurred through readers' comment or perceptions offline; however, I contend that they would still impact the public perception of their redemption narratives. For example, in my observation of both case studies, I would argue that Tara Hills received more mainstream positive reactions from moral entrepreneurs such as doctors, vaccine advocates and public health workers compared to Kirsten O'Meara, who received less positive reactions. Perhaps Hills had more fidelity in her narrative through being less blunt and more compassionate about her confession, which triggered affirmative responses and can contribute to her being forgiven sooner than O'Meara.

Overall, although the process of folk devil redemption narratives is similar in both case studies, the outcomes presented in the narratives are rather different. I think the outcomes of folk devil redemption narratives must be examined on a case-by-case basis where forgiveness occurs differently for each folk devil; often only time will tell when it comes to full forgiveness. But the

¹⁷ Since readers' comments were not included in the scope of my unobtrusive study, I was limited in analyzing the larger extent of how the general public reacted to each folk devil's redemption narrative. This omission hinders my ability to fully portray the purgatory status of the folk devil in each case study because I am unable to capture wider perceptions of forgiveness or resentment toward them.

fact that redemption folk devils are caught in a liminal stage and a dual state serves to complicate and trouble previous folk devil understandings.

5.2 The Dichotomous Power of Public Confessionals in the Media

Once observing two case studies of folk devil redemption narratives in the media, I noticed how public confessionals have a dichotomous influence on self-identity. Public confessionals in the media can be seen as both a self-policing mechanism to conform to moral order, as well a helpful device of identity reconstruction. I consider these two observations in opposition to each other, as self-policing through dominant discourse implies negative connotations toward the individual's agency, but depending on the context or perspective of the individual, self-policing can also be considered positive in terms of providing checks and balances to the situation.

Self-Policing Mechanism

Public confessionals in the dominant media platform, at least within the case studies I observed, often showcase individuals confessing to bad behaviours or actions that go against the moral regulations of society. Foucault (1978) as well as Alcroft and Gray (1993) argue how confessionals centre themselves on the panoptical pressures of conformity and expectations. Therefore, I contend that when we see public confessionals of individuals admitting their wrongdoing to a large audience, this reinforces the importance of maintaining moral regulations to the public rather than immediately finding a meaning to contest. I am not arguing that observing public confessionals limits the critical ability of the audience, but rather maintains embedded moral discourses established by hegemonic forces. For example, when Hills and O'Meara recanted their anti-vaxxer views after their children got sick with a vaccine-preventable disease, this reaffirmed the moral and public health importance of getting vaccinated in society.

Moreover, an unfair representation I retrieved in the public confessionals of my two case studies was based on who is “allowed” to confess publically. Foucault (1978) states that certain voices are elevated while many are silenced in public confessions as a strategy to convey particular types of discourse. In my two case studies, I noticed common themes based on the gender, race, class and sexual orientation of the confessants, which translated social responsibilities and normative expectations of one group over another. For instance, Tara Hills and Kristen O’Meara both being cis women in the redemption narrative illustrated how mothers are held primarily responsible for their children’s healthcare and respective health crises. While Hills and O’Meara stood as the main characters in redemption, their husbands (the fathers) were for the most part silenced in the narrative. The representation of mothers seen in both public confessionals exemplifies dominant and heteronormative discourses that continue to reinforce notions that vaccine-related decision making and childhood healthcare in general are gendered issues. For the most part, the mothers are placed under public scrutiny while the fathers are silenced and forgotten about in the decision-making process. Therefore, the gendered redemption narratives of anti-vaxxers in the media put more pressure on mothers to get their children vaccinated over fathers.

Other factors that tie into the silencing of both Hills’s and O’Meara’s case studies is the lack of diversity shown among different ethnic groups, races, class, and sexual orientation in these redemption narratives. While I am aware that I only observed two case studies, and that Hills’s and O’Meara’s are not the only anti-vaxxer redemption narratives that exist, the prominence they achieved in the media in relation to their apparent identity is worth noting. While Hills and O’Meara are both faced with the systemic gender pressures of being solely responsible for vaccinating their children, they still occupy a space of privilege, being white,

heteronormative individuals from presumably middle-class families, which may impact how much they had to struggle to find acceptance and understanding compared to marginalized individuals who may not always feel safe doing so. Essentially, how would the narrative of redemption be altered if the folk devil was a racialized, impoverished, disabled, or LGBTQII? What is silenced in these confessionals is an intersectional approach to how motherhood is burdened with the pressures of vaccination decisions. The silencing of marginalized voices in redemption narratives lead to further stigmatization and polices a particular normative narrative of who is “able” to change their mind.

The Opportunity of Identity Reconstruction

Another element related to the power of public confessionals is how they portray mythical narratives about the opportunity of identity reconstruction. When public confessionals of wrongdoing are represented in the media, this could inspire other deviant individuals to come forward as well. Public confessionals can serve to reassure individuals that they have the autonomy to confess and redeem themselves in order to reconstruct their identity. The opportunity of identity reconstruction is inherent in McAdams’s (2006) notion of narrative identity, which embraces one’s internal and evolving story in order to reconstruct their past self and enhance a better well-being for themselves and others. This theory tells us how redemption is possible and how we are not bound to the constraints of our former selves when we wish to change. Public confessionals help facilitate this identity process as deviant folk devils are given the space to apologize for their wrongful actions and submit themselves to the moral regulations of society through advocacy.

Hills and O’Meara fulfill the process of identity reconstruction by not only changing their mind about vaccination internally, but also going public about their former transgressions and

advocating for the importance of vaccines. Through these folk devils' acts of confession, they take part in mortification where they slay their negative anti-vaxxer identities in order to embrace the moral order of vaccinating and protecting society through contributing to herd immunity. These redemption narratives embrace the power public confessionals have on identity reconstruction in the public eye and, hopefully, can positively encourage other vaccine-hesitant or vaccine refusing individuals to do the same.

5.3 Learning from Anti-Vaxxer Folk Devil Redemption Narratives

Despite some of the critical conclusions I encountered in my project, there are practical implications that we can learn about anti-vaxxer folk devil redemption narratives especially with regard to combatting vaccine hesitancy in society, a large contributing factor to the rise of vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks. Two important highlights I came across while investigating my two case studies emphasize improving doctor-patient communication and implementing more personal redemption narratives in public health communication.

Improving Doctor-Patient Communication

Effective and accessible communication between health care providers such as doctors and their patients plays a key role in ensuring vaccine confidence and education among patients (MacDonald, 2015; Dubé et al, 2013). In both case studies, Hills and O'Meara advocate for doctors and nurses to speak to their patients with a more open mind when it comes to vaccine hesitancy. While doctors understand that vaccine evidence is apparent, the patient who is hesitant clearly does not see the evidence from the same perspective. By being more compassionate toward all patients, especially those struggling with vaccine hesitancy, rather than being hostile and belittling, will help build the patient's trust and impact their decision to vaccinate.

Personal Narratives in Public Health Communication

Anti-vaxxer redemption narratives can be used as a strategy of vaccine promotion. Dubé et al (2013) argue that many of the messages public health professionals use to promote vaccine awareness and education have not been effective toward enhancing vaccine acceptance. It is suggested that public health advocacy works to use new communication tools, such as social media and proactive messaging that is tailored to the needs and emotions of different audiences (Dubé et al, 2013). However, a big part of what is absent on the pro-vaccine realm of communication is anecdotal illustrations through the retelling of personal stories (Faasse et al, 2016; Poltorak et al, 2005). Personal narratives are one of the key reasons why the anti-vaccination movement is so persuasive (Faasse et al, 2016). Loseke (2009) writes that, “although our modern world prizes the importance of logic and scientific evidence, humans at all times and in all places are drawn to stories” (p. 2).

Rather than statistics, personal narratives can capture the hearts, minds and emotions of people, which makes them the most influential (Loseke, 2009). Therefore, the public health community needs to consider the important contributions that ‘recovering’ anti-vaxx parents, specifically mothers (since they are assumed to be the primary decision-makers when it comes to vaccines), have in telling their own personal redemption stories about vaccination in order to compel vaccine-hesitant or anti-vaxx communities to change their minds as well. Redemption narratives might have a more inspirational impact on the intended audience as they showcase first-hand accounts about the consequences of not vaccinating. Perhaps what we have been missing all along in pro-vaccine messaging is the subject of blame themselves: the anti-vaxxer folk devils.

Conclusion

From voiceless outsiders to outspoken villains fighting back, my thesis reveals the emerging narrative of folk devil redemption. I presented two anti-vaxxer mothers trapped in their own cycles of fear and tribulation about vaccination, but through a combination of self-reflection, public confession and advocacy, these folk devils attempt to make amends and reconstruct their previous identities in narratives of redemption. The prominent media stories of Tara Hills and Kristen O'Meara not only portray anti-vaxxers changing their views, but also serve as general case studies of the folk devil redemption narrative. Those we once understood only as villains or scapegoats regarding a social problem or moral panic event are seen to have the ability to alter their narrative identity and conform to social norms and moral regulations. While these folk devil redemption narratives don't solve the problem of stigmatization, they speak to how we understand the correlation between social problems and moral communities (in particular within outbreak narratives) and how they are social constructions and tied to hegemonic discourses instituted by dominant authorities, against which we perform and revise elements of our identity in order to find belonging.

Each chapter in my thesis helps paint a picture of how the development of the folk devil redemption narrative is revealed. Chapter 1 provided background on how the media uses claims and frames such as outbreak narratives to create fear, collective identity and especially stigmatization in health scares and social problems. I delve deeper into the understanding of stigmatized individuals and groups in health scares when I connect them to moral panic events that establish them into folk devil characters. In chapter 2 I lay out the background of the folk devil concept and complementary theories of narrative identity to demonstrate how redemption stories take place. I demonstrate the two-step process of confronting the self and confronting

others that redemptive folk devils go through in their transition from “bad” to “good.” I also look at Denzin’s (1987) research on recovering alcoholics to demonstrate how redemptive folk devils are trapped in a liminal stage of transition, awaiting forgiveness. In chapter 3, I present the case studies I examined to test redemption narratives within the folk devil concept. I explain my methodology for retrieving sources through the Google search engine, and how I use narrative analysis to demonstrate how we can evaluate the redemption of folk devils. Finally, my fourth chapter offers a narrative analysis of my two case studies where I gather quotes from each dataset and showcase the narrative of redemption by indicating how the folk devils confront both themselves and others. Additionally, I gather reactions portrayed with the media stories themselves in order to grasp a sense of where the deviants stand in folk devil purgatory.

Overall, the three takeaways from my research link back to the findings in my research questions. First, through conducting research on this topic I was able to discover the complexities that redemption narratives add onto original notions of folk devils. Since folk devil redemption narratives are essentially profound transformations of an individual transitioning from socially bad to good, they are not a process of becoming another variation of folk devil, but rather of exiting the folk devil space when they reconstruct their identity and conform to societal rules and expectations. This creates tension with understanding folk devils as obstinate villains who don’t have the potential to change; if anything, it shows how the folk devil character is not so cut and dried as we imagine.

Drawing from the process of exiting, another factor about redemption narratives that complicates the folk devil concept is how individuals trying to redeem themselves are trapped in a contentious liminal space, a kind of folk devil purgatory where they are awaiting clemency and therefore still considered a folk devil until forgiven. This is reflected in both the Hills and

O'Meara case studies as they demonstrate instances of being in limbo through the mix of positive, negative or indifferent reactions from others published or quoted in the media stories. For example, Hills explicitly expresses feeling self-conscious after coming forward about the whooping cough outbreak in her family as she is aware that she put many people in her community at risk. While moral entrepreneurs have spoken positively about Hills's redemption narrative, only time will tell if she is fully forgiven.

Second, I found a dual tension that exists between the public confessional in redemption stories. I noticed in both case studies how the public confessional is both a self-policing mechanism as well as a positive sign of opportunity for identity reconstruction. The public confessional in the mainstream media usually emphasizes the importance of conforming to the moral order. Therefore, people who observe more confessionals like Hills's and O'Meara's will receive more pressure to the same. In addition, the gendered representation of only women having to confess while the husband is mostly silent embeds messages of predominant maternal responsibility for children's healthcare, such as vaccinating. On the other hand, people may be aware of how media depictions of public confessionals create a narrative of opportunity, growth and empowerment to reconstruct their identity and not be bounded by the faults of their past. This notion builds on McAdams's (2006) narrative identity as well as Burke's (1970) mortification, which essentially implies how confessing wrongdoing will help folk devils shed their previous self behind them and grow into a new moral person. Both Hills and O'Meara demonstrate the opportunity of identity reconstruction as they publicly come forward about their past anti-vaxxer beliefs, reflect on how they put their children and others at risk, apologize for their actions, and take action by advocating for vaccination, so that other parents don't have to struggle the way they did.

Third, there is much to be learned about anti-vaxxer redemption narratives aside from just researching them as case studies of folk devils. What initially enticed me to research redemption narratives was the fact that I rarely heard about anti-vaxxers changing their minds in the media. Media portrayals of anti-vaxxers usually showed them defending their views and arguing against vaccination, but it struck me as unusual to see an anti-vaxxer doing the opposite. There is much to be learned from anti-vaxxer redemption narratives, especially with regard to adequate public health communication. First, by coming forward Tara Hills and Kristen O'Meara were able to show another, more rational and sympathetic side of the anti-vaxxer identity. Hills in particular advocated to the pro-vaccine community not to treat anti-vaxxers or vaccine-hesitant people with hostility as it will just drive them away. O'Meara emphasized the importance of better doctor-patient communication, where doctors treat people who have doubts about vaccines with an open mind and less judgment in order to build trust. Finally, incorporating more personal anti-vaxxer redemption narratives like Hills's and O'Meara's will help facilitate stronger messaging to vaccine-hesitant individuals as they represent sympathetic, relatable first-hand accounts of the problem rather than scientific jargon of why vaccines are essential.

Limitations

Although my thesis provided two in-depth analyses of folk devil redemption narratives within my two case studies, my project did have some limitations. One of the main questions I asked myself is, how would the results change if the scope was broadened? My samples for each case study were limited due to the strict temporal and spatial criteria I grounded in my Google search methodology. I was limited by only looking at the top ten Google results for each region, as well as only using one sequence of keywords that stated the folk devil's names along with the vaccine-preventable disease outbreak their children contracted (an objective keyword that did not

encourage any subjective connotations about the two folk devils being anti-vaxxers). The primary reason for my strict criteria was to gather a specific scope that was manageable within the time constraints of my thesis project as well as to collect a general mainstream redemption narrative of each case study reflected in popular Google search results.

Another limitation to my thesis was my decision to use unobtrusive methods rather than incorporating human participation into my case studies, which would have fostered a more comprehensive understanding of the personal narratives of folk devils redeeming themselves. While I found personal narratives of the folk devils telling their side of the story in their blog posts, I was missing first-hand accounts of their narratives not positioned within media frames. Furthermore, my case studies were also limited in the amount of audience reactions I retrieved as I chose to look at only the articles and posts themselves and omit any public comments (e.g., found in a comments section on a web page). How would my perception of folk devil purgatory change if I was able to gather more responses to Hills's and O'Meara's story by looking at the comments?

Finally, with regards to the case studies themselves, they are lacking in both quantity and diversity. Initially, there was a lack of media coverage in general on anti-vaxxers changing their minds, and therefore I was only able to find two popular stories related to this topic to examine in my research. Also, in the two case studies I chose, I was limited from providing an intersectional view as the two folk devils featured are white, heteronormative women from middle-class households. How would the narratives change, or perhaps stay the same, if the case studies had more factors of diversity to consider? While my case studies serve as examples of redemption narratives, it is important to note how they are not entirely representative of redemption stories that may occur outside the media space.

Future Insights

Despite the limitations, my project can be used as a baseline to further investigate folk devil redemption narratives, whether related to anti-vaxxers changing their mind or incorporating another social issue. The limitations expressed in my thesis call for further research toward folk devil redemption narratives, such as acquiring interviews, gaining access to anti-vaxxer and pro-vaxxer organizations, looking at audience reactions and setting up focus groups. With regard to the unobtrusive approach of my research, I would like to broaden my knowledge on how audiences reacted to Hills's and O'Meara's stories by performing a content analysis on the comments section of each media story I retrieved, to better understand where they lie in folk devil purgatory. However, I would extend my unobtrusive approach by not just researching comment sections, but also setting up a focus group where I show laypeople clips of the stories and observe their reactions and commentaries about the folk devils in a group discussion. Analyzing conversations on this matter could help reveal the folk devil's purgatory status as well as hidden discourses that relate to moral regulations.

Looking beyond unobtrusive methods, I would conduct interviews with the women involved in each case study in order to get more unmediated reflections on their paths to redemption, and how they are dealing with stigmatization at the community level. Likewise, I would try to gain access to both anti-vaxxer community groups and pro-vaccine organizations in order to understand each side's perspective in more detail and compare it to the way media often portrays each side. On the pro-vaxxer side, I would like to investigate if there are more internal redemption narratives like Hills and O'Meara that exist in the public eye in order to reveal how anecdotal stories of changing one's mind can help combat issues of vaccine hesitancy in a growing world of information and critical perspectives.

Appendices

Appendix A: Tara Hills Dataset

A.1 Chronological List of Media Stories in Tara Hills Dataset

	Date	Source (Region)	Title	Author
1.	08/04/2015	The Scientific Parent (US)	Learning the Hard Way: My Journey for #AntiVaxx to Science	Tara Hills
2.	08/04/2015	CBC News Ottawa (CAN)	Tara Hills, Ottawa mom, changes anti-vaccination stand, but 7 kids still get sick	Not Specified
3.	09/04/2015	Ottawa Citizen (CAN)	Ottawa mother of 7 abandons anti-vaxxer views as kids hit with whooping cough	Tom Spears
4.	09/04/2015	My Secret Atheist Blog (CAN)	Ottawa mom drops anti-vaxx belief too late: seven children get sick	Not Specified
5.	10/04/2015	National Post (CAN)	Ottawa mother of seven abandons anti-vaxxer views as kids hit with whooping cough	Tom Spears
6.	10/04/2015	CTV News (CAN)	Anti-vaxxers change stance right before all 7 kids get whooping cough	Angela Mulholland
7.	10/04/2015	Raw Story (US)	Anti-vaxx mom abandons movement after all seven of her kids get whooping cough	Tom Boggioni
8.	11/04/2015	Daily Mail (UK)	How I stopped being an anti-vaxxer: mother of seven has a change of heart	Snejana Farberov
9.	11/04/2015	Truth Revolt (US)	All 7 kids in anti-vax family get whooping cough	Trey Sanchez
10.	12/04/2015	The Telegraph (UK)	Anti-vaxxer mother recants after her seven children contract whooping cough	Rob Crilly
11.	13/04/2015	The Independent (UK)	Mother changes her mind about vaccinations after all seven of her children contract whooping cough	Jamie Campbell
12.	13/04/2015	Kidspot (AUS)	Learning the hard way: My journey from anti-vax to science	Taken from The Scientific Parent
13.	13/04/2015	I Boost Immunity (CAN)	Ottawa mom changes anti-vaccination stance, but too late to prevent 7 kids get sick	Not Specified
14.	13/04/2015	Levi Quackenboss (US)	A mom's journey from anti-vax to "science:" Give me a break!	Not Specified
15.	14/04/2015	Washington Post (US)	Anti-vax mom changes her tune as all 7 of her children come down with whooping cough	Lenny Bernstein and Rebecca Schatz

16.	15/04/2015	The Scientific Parent (US)	With 7 kids in recovery from whopping cough, Tara Hills answers your questions	Tara Hills (Edited by Leslie Waghorn and Julia Bennett)
17.	15/04/2015	<i>Hamilton Spectator</i> (CAN)	Anti-vax mom changes her tune as all her 7 kids get whooping cough	Lenny Bernstein (Taken from the <i>Washington Post</i>)
18.	15/04/2015	ABC News (US)	Mom gives up anti-vax stance just before 7 children get whooping cough	Gillian Mohny
19.	16/04/2015	Ottawa Community News (CAN)	Family with whooping cough out of isolation	Adam Kveton
20.	16/04/2015	Mint Press News Desk (US)	VIDEO: Anti-vax mom changes her tune as all 7 of her children come down with whooping cough.	Taken from the <i>Washington Post</i>
21.	16/04/2015	The Chronicle (AUS)	Anti-vaxxer changes mind as seven kids catch whooping cough	Staff Reporters
22.	16/04/2015	Medical Daily (US)	Whooping cough in her 7 kids leads anti-vaxxer mother to change her mind, warn parents	Samantha Olson
23.	16/04/2015	Yahoo! 7 News (AUS)	Anti-vaccination mum's seven children catch whooping cough	Not Specified
24.	16/04/2015	The Sydney Morning Herald (AUS)	Anti-vaccination mother Tara Hills's seven children come down with whooping cough	Lenny Bernstein and Rebecca Schatz (Taken from the <i>Washington Post</i>)
25.	16/04/2015	<i>New York Daily News</i> (US)	Anti-vaxxer changes mind after her 7 kids get whooping cough	Lee Moran
26.	16/04/2015	News.com.au (AUS)	Mum whose seven kids got whooping cough at once says we need to stop vax-shaming	Emma Reynolds
27.	16/04/2015	CBC News Ottawa (CAN)	Tara Hills says anti-vaxxers need help, not hostility	Not Specified
28.	18/04/2015	Ottawa Citizen (CAN)	Vaccine-convert mom: "I really empathize with the emotions on both sides	Tom Spears

A.2 Chronological List of Visuals in Media Stories in Tara Hills Dataset

April 8, 2015—The Scientific Parent

April 8, 2015—CBC News Ottawa

April 9, 2015—Ottawa Citizen

April 9, 2015—My Secret Atheist Blog
(No Pictures of Tara Hills or family)

April 10, 2015—*National Post*

April 10, 2015—CTV News

Gavin Hills with two of his children. (Facebook)

CLOSE X

April 10, 2015—Raw Story

April 11, 2015—Truth Revolt

April 11, 2015—Daily Mail

Change of heart: Tara and Gavin Hills, have been anti-vaxxers for six years, but all that changed when their seven young children came down with whooping cough

Large brood: The Hills' six sons and a daughter between the ages of 10 months and 10 years (pictured) remain in quarantine and are being treated with antibiotics

At risk: The Hills' three eldest kids were partially vaccinated, but the four youngest ones got no shots at all, leaving them vulnerable

Public confession: Mrs Hills, pictured left and right with her husband, penned a blog post about her decision to ditch the anti-vaxxer stance

Wearry: Tara wrote that she and her husband decided to stop vaccinating their children

The Hills' youngest children are still battling the illness, but are expected to recover

April 12, 2015—The Telegraph

Tara Hills who has campaigned against immunisations for children Photo: CBC

Tara Hills' children quarantined inside their home (CBC)

Light for Riley
Light for Riley

NO VIX? NO VISIT!

RILEY

13/2/15 - 17/3/15
lost to pertussis

To protect our new baby, we ask that **ALL** our friends and family make sure they are **up to date** with their vaccinations.

Please talk to your doctor about which vaccines you may require. Immunity wears off particularly quickly for whooping cough (pertussis), so you need regular boosters.

**Thank you,
and we can't wait for you to
meet our new addition!**

LightforRiley

www.nrns.info

Are you pregnant or do you have a newborn baby?
Tag any friends or family members who may be due for their booster(s) before your bub arrives!

Feel free to share, download, print out, or even just hang on the door!...

[See More](#)

20K 1.6K 16K

The 32-day-old infant died in his parents' arms after battling the disease. He was too young to be immunised and his parents said they had asked family and friends to have boosters.

April 13, 2015—I Boost Immunity

April 13, 2015—The Independent

April 13, 2015—Levi Quackenboss

(No photos of Tara Hills or family)

April 13, 2015—Kidspot

(No photos of Tara Hills or family)

April 14, 2015—*Washington Post*

April 15, 2015—*Hamilton Spectator*

April 15, 2015—The Scientific Parent

April 15, 2015---ABC News

(No photos of Tara Hills or family)

April 16, 2015-Mint Press News Desk

(No photos of Tara Hills or family—video from *Washington Post*)

April 16, 2015—Medical Daily

(No photos of Tara Hills or family)

April 16, 2015—The Chronicle

April 16, 2015—Yahoo 7! News

April 16, 2015—*Sydney Morning Herald*

April 16, 2015—*New York Daily News*

April 16, 2015—*News.com.au*

Tara Hills basically acknowledges that her own lack of critical thinking abilities led her to the anti-vax camp
 — Charles Johnston (@TO_Chuck) [April 9, 2015](#)

A.3 Types of Media Stories in Tara Hills Dataset

News Media	Blog Posts/Website Forums	Organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CBC News Ottawa - <i>Ottawa Citizen</i> - <i>National Post</i> - CTV News - Raw Story - Daily Mail - Truth Revolt - The Telegraph - The Independent - <i>Washington Post</i> - <i>Hamilton Spectator</i> - ABC News - <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> - Yahoo! 7 News - The Chronicle - Mint Press News Desk - <i>New York Daily News</i> - Medical Daily - Ottawa Community News - CBC News Ottawa - News.com.au - <i>Ottawa Citizen</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Scientific Parent - My Secret Atheist Blog - Levi Quackenboss - Kidspot - The Scientific Parent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -I Boost Immunity

Appendix B: Kristen O’Meara Dataset

B.1 Chronological List of Media Stories in Kristen O’Meara Dataset

	Data	Title (Region)	Source	Author
1.	2015 (ND)	Voices for Vaccines (US)	Emerging from the Herd	Kristen O’Meara
2.	20/09/2016	New York Post (US)	I was an anti-vax crackpot—until this happened	Jane Ridley
3.	20/09/2016	Raw Story (US)	Anti-vaxx mom abandons the movement after all three of her kids nearly die	Travis Gettys
4.	21/09/2016	Levi Quackenboss (US)	“I was an anti-vax crackpot”	Not Specified
5.	26/09/2016	MIC.com (US)	Anti-vaxxer mom isn’t an anti-vaxxer anymore after her kids all got rotavirus	Anna Swartz
6.	26/09/2016	ABC 7 Chicago (US)	Anti-vaccine mother changes stance after children become severely ill	Tanja Babich
7.	26/09/2016	Jezebel (US)	Anti-vaccination mom changes mind after all three kids contract rotavirus	Joanna Rothkopf
8.	26/09/2016	ABC News (US)	Anti-vaxxer mom changes mind after her three kids fall ill	Not Specified
9.	27/09/2016	Huffington Post (US)	Mom changes her anti-vax stance after entire family gets sick	Landess Kearns
10.	27/09/2016	Yahoo! 7 News (AUS)	‘I put them at risk’: Anti-vax mum changes mind after all kids fall ill	Not Specified
11.	27/09/2016	Nine.news.com.au (AUS)	Anti-vax mum changes her mind after children fall ill	Staff
12.	27/09/2016	News.com.au	Anti-vaxxer mum changes her mind after her children contract stomach virus	Not Specified
13.	27/09/2016	Kidspot (AUS)	Mum-of-three Kristen O’Meara had a massive change of heart after nearly losing her three kids	Madeline Hoskin
14.	28/09/2016	The Self (US)	This anti-vaxx mom is now pro-vaccine after all 3 of her kids got sick	Amy Marturana
15.	30/ 09/2016	The Universal Life Monastery Church (US)	Anti-vaccine mom realizes huge mistake	The Universal Life Church Monastery
16.	01/10/2016	Daily Mail (UK)	‘The guilt was overwhelming’: Anti-vaxxer who thought she was ‘superior’ to her friends for not immunizing her three children changed her mind when ALL of them caught deadly virus	Jennifer Smith
17.	05/10/2016	The Vienna Report (US)	Rotavirus mom Revealed – “antivaxxer mom” has pharma ties	Not Specified
18.	10/2016 (Not Specified)	The Daily Buzz (US)	Vaccination until all of her kids contracted rotavirus	Alan Jude Ryland

B.2 Chronological List of Visuals in Media Stories in Kristen O'Meara Dataset

ND 2015—Voices for Vaccines

September 20, 2016—*New York Post*

Recently, an Australian mother posted a viral video on her 5-week-old baby battling whooping cough, also in an attempt to educate parents on the importance of vaccinations.

Video Source: Facebook/Sandra Tee via Storyful

September 20, 2016—Raw Story

September 21, 2016—Levi Quackenboss

(No Photos of O'Meara and/or family)

September 26, 2016—ABC News

September 26, 2016—ABC 7 Chicago

(Just a repeat of ABC News)

September 26, 2016—Jezebel

September 26, 2016—Mic.com

September 27, 2016—Yahoo! 7 News

September 27, 2016—Kidspot

September 27, 2016—News.au.com

September 27, 2016—Huffington Post

(No photos of Kirsten O'Meara or family)

September 27, 2016—9 news.com

(No photos of Kristen O'Meara or family)

September 28, 2016—Self Magazine

September 30, 2016—The Universal Life Church Monastery

Jenny McCarthy speaking out.

October 2016—The Daily Buzz

(No photos of Kristen O'Meara or family)

October 1, 2016—Daily Mail

Kristen O'Meara Rotavirus Vaccine HOAX

This story is a propaganda story to promote vaccines as more parents say NO to the shots.

'Anti-Vaxxer' Mom Changes Mind After Her Three Kids Fall Ill

Kristen O'Meara was a big believer in anti-vaccination research and she chose not to vaccinate her daughters — until all three were stricken with a case of rotavirus.

ABC NEWS DOG | BY ABC NEWS

Like Comment Share

Kristen O'Meara's husband Frank Szot has a brother named Lukas Szot that works for the pharmaceutical industry that promotes and is heavily invested in vaccines.

Kristen also teaches vaccine injured children with special needs.

Kristen O'Meara with Frank Szot
August 23, 2016 · 19 · 0

Married Frank Szot
August 23, 2016 with Frank Szot
See Relationship

1 Comment

Share

This viral story claims Kristen was once against vaccines and then changed her stance and had her 3 unvaccinated children recently put on an aggressive vaccine schedule to catch them up to date, since March 2015, because the family suffered from rotavirus. We knew this story was a fake because once you learn the truth about vaccines and decide not to vaccinate, you don't go back. And the rotavirus vaccine has killed many.

SHOW US THE VACCINE RECORDS KRISTEN!!!!!!!

Lukas Szot
Abbott Laboratories

Senior Finance Manager, U.S. Commercial Operations - Abbott

View his Work Ethos

190 Abbott Park Road
North Chicago, IL 60064
HQ Phone: 708-467-4190
Email format: [a]bbott.com
Direct Phone: Not Available

Lukas Szot | LinkedIn
LinkedIn · lukas-szot-6723710

Greater Chicago Area · Abbott
Senior Finance Manager, U.S. Commercial Operations - Abbott Diabetes Care. ... Regional Controller, APAC/Japan/Russia Manufacturing - Established Pharmaceutical ... Global Head of Pharmaceutical Mergers & Acquisitions / Strategic Transactions at Abbott.

B.3 Types of Media Stories in Kristen O'Meara Dataset

News Media	Blog Posts/ Website Forums	Organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>New York Post</i> - Raw Story - ABC News - ABC 7 Chicago - Mic.com - Jezebel - Huffington Post - Yahoo! 7 News - News.com.au - 9 news.com.au - <i>The Self</i> - Daily Mail - The Daily Buzz 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Voices for Vaccines - Levi Quackenboss - Kidspot - The Vienna Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Universal Life Church Monastery

Bibliography

- Alcroff, L., & Gray, L. (1993). Survivor discourse: Transgression or recuperation? *Signs*, 18(2), 260–290.
- Altheide, D. (1997). The news media, the problem frame and the production of fear. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 38(4), 647–668.
- Anker, E. (2005). Villains, victims and heroes: melodrama, media, and September 11. *Journal of Communication*, 55(1), 22–37.
- Béland, D. (2011). The unhealthy risk society: Health scares and the politics of moral panic. In S. P. Hier (Ed.), *Moral panic and the politics of anxiety* (pp. 224–235). London; New York: Routledge.
- Best, J. (2001). Social progress and social problems: Toward a sociology of gloom. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 42(1), 1–12.
- Bryman, A., Bell, E., & Teevan, J. J. (2012). *Social research methods* (Third Canadian Edition). Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Burke, K. (1970). *The rhetoric of religion: Studies in logology*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Busby, C., Jacobs, A., & Muthukumaran, R. (2017). *In need of a booster: How to improve childhood vaccination coverage in Canada*. Toronto: C.D. Howe Institute.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016, August 12). *Rotavirus*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/rotavirus/about/symptoms.html>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017, August 7). *Pertussis (Whooping Cough)*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/index.html>

- Chai, C. (2015, March 9). Who are the anti-vaxxers in Canada? New poll profiles resistant group. *Global News*. Retrieved from <https://globalnews.ca/news/1868699/who-are-the-anti-vaxxers-in-canada-new-poll-profiles-resistant-group/>
- Cohen, S. (1972). *Folk devils and moral panics: The creation of the Mods and Rockers*. (1st ed.). London, UK: MacGibbon and Kee.
- Cohen, S. (1980). *Folk devils and moral panics: The creation of the Mods and Rockers*. (2nd ed.). New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Conis, E. (2015). *Vaccine Nation: America's changing relationship with immunization*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Critcher, C. (2009). Widening the focus: Moral panics as moral regulation. *British Journal of Criminology*, 49(1), 17–34.
- Denzin, N. K. (1987). *The alcoholic self*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- deYoung, M. (2011). Folk devils reconsidered. In S. P. Hier (Ed.), *Moral panic and the politics of anxiety* (pp. 118–133). London; New York: Routledge.
- Douglas, M. (1992). *Risk and danger*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Drache, D., & Clifton, D. (2008). The troubled public sphere and media coverage of the 2003 Toronto SARS outbreak. In S. H. Keil & Roger Keil (Eds.), *Networked disease: Emerging infections in the global city* (pp. 108–122). West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Dubé, E., Laberge, C., Guay, M., Bramadat, P., Roy, R., & Bettinger, J. A. (2013). Vaccine hesitancy: An overview. *Human Vaccine & Immunotherapeutic*, 9(8), 1763-1773.

- Fasse, K., Chatman, C. J., & Martin, L. R. (2016). A comparison of language use in pro- and anti-vaccination comments in response to a high profile Facebook post. *Vaccine*, 34(47), 5808–5814.
- Fentiman, L. (2017). *Blaming mothers: American law and the risks to children's health*. New York: New York University Press.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality: An introduction* (Vol. 1). New York, NY: (R. Hurley, Trans.) Random House, Inc.
- Furedi, F. (2011). The objectification of fear and the grammar of morality. In S. P. Hier (Ed.), *Moral panic and the politics of anxiety* (pp. 90–103). London; New York: Routledge.
- Gerlach, N., & Hamilton, S. N. (2014). Trafficking in the zombie: The CDC zombie apocalypse campaign, diseaseability and pandemic culture. *Refactory: A journal of entertainment media*, 23(8), 1–17.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self identity: Self and society in the late modern age*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Gillespie, T. (2017). Algorithmically recognizable: Santorum's Google problem, and Google's Santorum problem. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(1), 63–80.
- Glantz, M. (2007). Eugene V. Debs and redemption through mortification. *Conference Papers -- National Communication Association* (pp. 1–20). Washington: National Communication Association.
- Goode, E., & Ben-Yehuda, N. (2009). *Moral panics: The social construction of deviance*. West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Gottfried, J., & Shearer, E. (2016, May 26). *News use across social media platforms 2016*.

Retrieved from <http://www.journalism.org/2016/05/26/news-use-across-social-media-platforms-2016/>

Haliczer, S. (1996). *Sexuality in the confessional: A sacrament profaned*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Hier, S. (2011). Introduction: Bringing moral panic studies into focus. In S. P. Hier (Ed.), *Moral panic and the politics of anxiety* (pp. 1–16). London; New York: Routledge.

Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. (2012). Introduction: Establishing a balance. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Varieties of narrative analysis* (pp. 1–11). Los Angeles: Sage Publications, Inc.

Hooker, C. (2008). SARS as a “health scare”. In S. H. Keil & Roger Keil (Eds.), *Networked disease: Emerging infections in the global city* (pp. 123–151). West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Hughes, J., Chau, S., & Vokri, L. (2016). Mothers’ narratives of their involvement with Child Welfare Services. *Journal of Women and Social Work*, 31(3), 344–358.

Hunt, A. (1999). *Governing morals: A social history of moral regulation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Joffe, H. (1999). *Risk and ‘the other’*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kata, A. (2012). Anti-vaccine activists, Web 2.0, and the postmodern paradigm – An overview of tactics and tropes used online by the anti-vaccination movement. *Vaccine*, 30(25), 3778–3789.

- Kolodziejski, L. R. (2014). Harms of hedging in scientific discourse: Andrew Wakefield and the origins of the autism vaccine controversy. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 23(3), 165–183.
- Levina, M. (2015). *Pandemics and the media*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Link, K. (2005). *The vaccine controversy: The history, use, and safety of vaccination*. Westport: Praeger Publishers.
- Loseke, D. R. (1999). *Thinking about social problems: An introduction to constructionist perspectives*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine De Gruyter.
- Loseke, D. R. (2009). Chapter 1: Public and personal stories of wife abuse. In S. Evan, & E. S. Buzawa (Eds.), *Violence against women in families and relationships* (Vol. 4). Santa Barbara: Praeger.
- Loseke, D. R. (2012). The empirical analysis of formula stories. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Varieties of narrative analysis* (pp. 251–269). Los Angeles: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Lynch, T. (2009). Confessions of the self: Foucault and Augustine. *Telos*, 2009(146), 124–139.
- MacDonald, N. E. (2015). Vaccine hesitancy: Definition, scope and determinant. *Vaccine*, 33(34), 4161–4164.
- Maruna, S. (2001). *Making good: How ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- McAdams, D. P. (2006). The redemptive self: Generativity and the stories Americans live by. *Research in Human Development*, 3(2-3), 81–100.
- McAdams, D. P., Reynolds, J., Lewis, M., Patten, A. H., & Bowman, P. J. (2001). When bad things turn good and good things turn bad: Sequences of redemption and contamination

- in life narrative and their relation to psychosocial adaptation in midlife adults and in students. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27(4), 474–485.
- McAdams, D. P., & McLean, K. C. (2013). Narrative identity. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22(3), 233–238.
- McRobbie, A., & Thorton, S. L. (1995). Rethinking ‘moral panic’ for multi-mediated social worlds. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 46(4), 559–574.
- McRobbie, A. (1994). Folk devils fight back. *New Left Review*, 0(203), 107–116.
- Meades, J. (2011). The duality of the devil: Realism, relationalism, and representation. In S. P. Hier (Ed.), *Moral panic and the politics of anxiety* (pp. 134–151). London; New York: Routledge.
- Mnookin, S. (2011). *The panic virus: A true story of medicine, science and fear*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Pedro, J. (2012). A collection of samples for research in Google: Design and application of a sample selection method: Results and problems of research. *Global Media Journal: Mediterranean Edition*, 7(1), 29–40.
- Poltorak, M., Leach, M., Fairhead, J., & Cassell, J. (2005). ‘MMR talk’ and vaccination choices: An ethnographic study in Brighton. *Social Science and Medicine*, 61(3), 709–719.
- Ransom, S. (2006). Book reviews: The redemptive self: Stories Americans live by, Dan P. Adams. *Journal of Postive Psychology*, 1(4), 234–236.
- Sarasin, P. (2008). Vapors, viruses, resistance(s): The trace of infection in the work of Michel Foucault. In S. H. Keil & Roger Keil (Eds.), *Networked disease: Emerging infections in the global city* (pp. 267–280). West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

- Shah, S. (2016). *Pandemic: Tracking contagions, from cholera to ebola and beyond*. New York, NY: Sarah Crichton Books.
- Singer, J. A. (2004). Narrative identity and meaning making across the adult lifespan: An introduction. *Journal of Personality*, 72(3), 437–459.
- Smith, D. R. (2006). Responding to global infectious disease outbreaks: Lessons from SARS on the role of risk perception, communication and management. *Social Science & Medicine*, 63(12), 3113–3123.
- Smith, L. (2014). On the ‘emotionality’ of environmental restoration: Narratives of guilt, restitution, redemption and hope. *Ethics, Policy & Environment*, 17(3), 286–307.
- Sorenson, M. E. (2016). Beyond the Google search bar: Evaluating source credibility in contemporary research. *Communication Teacher*, 30(2), 82–86.
- St. Cyr, J. L. (2003). The folk devil reacts: Gangs and moral panic. *Criminal Justice Review*, 28(1), 26–46.
- Statistics Canada. (2016, February 15). *Spotlight on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey: The use of media to follow news and current affairs*. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-652-x/89-652-x2016001-eng.htm>
- Stone, R. (2016). Desistance and identity repair: Redemption narratives as resistance to stigma. *British Journal of Criminology*, 56(5), 956–975.
- Ungar, S. (2001). Moral panic versus the risk society: The implications of the changing sites of social anxiety. *British Journal of Sociology*, 52(2), 271–291.
- Van den Hoonaard, D. K. (2015). *Qualitative research in action: A Canadian primer*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press.

Wald, P. (2008). *Contagious: Cultures, carriers, and the outbreak narrative*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Woolgar, S. & Pawluch, D. (1985). Ontological gerrymandering: The anatomy of social problems explanation. *Social Problems*, 32(3), 214–227.

Wright, S. (2015). Moral panics as enacted melodramas. *British Journal of Criminology*, 55(6), 1245–1262.

Yamin, F. M., & Ramayah, T. (2013). Interfacing Google search engine to capture user web search behavior. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce Studies*, 4(1) 47–63.

Case Study One: Tara Hills

Bernstein, L. (2015, April 15). Anti-vax mom changes her tune as all her 7 kids get whooping cough. *Hamilton Spectator*. Retrieved from <https://www.thespec.com/living-story/5558966-anti-vax-mom-changes-her-tune-as-all-her-7-kids-get-whooping-cough/>

Bernstein, L., & Schatz, R. (2015, April 16). Anti-vaccination mother Tara Hills' seven children come down with whooping cough. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.smh.com.au/world/antivaccination-mother-tara-hills-seven-children-come-down-with-whooping-cough-20150415-1mm0za.html>

Bernstein, L., & Schatz, R. (2015, April 14). Anti-vax mom changes her tune as all 7 of her children come down with whooping cough. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/to-your-health/wp/2015/04/14/anti-vax-mom-changes-her-tune-when-all-7-of-her-children-come-down-with-whooping-cough/?utm_term=.697acf4eb642

- Boggioni, T. (2015, April 10). Anti-vaxx mom abandons movement — after all seven of her kids get whooping cough. *Raw Story*. Retrieved from <https://www.rawstory.com/2015/04/anti-vaxx-mom-abandons-movement-after-all-seven-her-of-her-kids-get-whooping-cough/>
- Campbell, J. (2015, April 13). Mother changes her mind about vaccinations after all seven of her children contract whooping cough. *The Independent*. Retrieved from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/mother-changes-her-mind-about-vaccinations-after-all-seven-of-her-children-contract-whooping-cough-10173568.html>
- CBC News Ottawa. (2015, April 16). Tara Hills says anti-vaxxers need help, not hostility. *CBC News Ottawa*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/tara-hills-says-anti-vaxxers-need-help-not-hostility-1.3036767>
- CBC News Ottawa. (2015, April 8). Tara Hills, Ottawa mom, changes anti-vaccination stand, but 7 kids still get sick. *CBC News Ottawa*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/tara-hills-ottawa-mom-changes-anti-vaccination-stand-but-7-kids-still-get-sick-1.3025592>
- Crilly, R. (2015, April 12). Anti-vaxxer mother recants after her seven children contract whooping cough. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/canada/11530137/Anti-vaxxer-mother-recants-after-her-seven-children-contract-whooping-cough.html>
- Farberov, S. (2015, April 11). How I stopped being an anti-vaxxer: Mother of seven has a change of heart about vaccinations as her kids contract whooping cough. *Daily Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3034542/How-stopped-anti-vaxxer-Mother-seven-change-heart-vaccinations-kids-contract-whooping-cough.html>

- Hills, T. (2015, April 8). Learning the hard way: My journey from #antivaxx to science [Blog Post]. Retrieved from <https://www.thescientificparent.org/learning-the-hard-way-my-journey-from-antivaxx-to-science/>
- Hills, T. (2015, April 15). With 7 kids in recovery from whooping cough, Tara Hills answers your questions [Blog Post]. (L. Waghorn , & J. Bennett, Editors). Retrieved from <https://www.thescientificparent.org/with-7-kids-in-recovery-from-whooping-cough-tara-hills-answers-your-questions/>
- I Boost Immunity. (2015, April 13). Ottawa mom changes anti-vaccination stance, but too late to prevent 7 kids get sick. Retrieved from <https://iboostimmunity.com/articles/ottawa-mom-changes-anti-vaccination-stance-too-late-prevent-7-kids-get-sick>
- Kidspot. (2015, April 13). Learning the hard way: My journey from anti-vax to science [Reposted Blog Post]. Retrieved from <http://www.kidspot.com.au/health/family-health/real-life/learning-the-hard-way-my-journey-from-antivax-to-science/news-story/ca09957505d489284ffb0a4be412b9cf>
- Kveton, A. (2015, April 16). Family with whooping cough out of isolation. *Ottawa Community News*. Retrieved from <https://www.ottawacommunitynews.com/news-story/5558850-family-with-whooping-cough-out-of-isolation/>
- Levi Quackenboss. (2015, April 13). A mom's journey from anti-vax to "science:" Give me a break! [Blog Post]. Retrieved from <https://leviquackenboss.wordpress.com/2015/04/13/a-moms-journey-from-anti-vax-to-science-give-me-a-break/comment-page-1/>
- Mint Press News Desk. (2015, April 16). VIDEO: Anti-vax mom changes stance after 7 of her kids get whooping cough. *Mint Press News Desk*. Retrieved from

- <http://www.mintpressnews.com/video-anti-vax-mom-changes-stance-after-7-of-her-kids-get-whooping-cough/204439/>
- Mohney, G. (2015, April 15). Mom gives up anti-vax stance just before 7 children get whooping cough. *ABC News*. Retrieved from <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/mom-anti-vax-stance-children-whooping-cough/story?id=30344997>
- Moran, L. (2015, April 16). Anti-vaxxer changes mind after her 7 kids get whooping cough. *New York Daily News*. Retrieved from <http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/health/anti-vaxxer-mind-7-kids-whooping-cough-article-1.2187390>
- Mulholland, A. (2015, April 10). Anti-vaxxers change stance right before all 7 kids get whooping cough. *CTV News*. Retrieved from <http://www.ctvnews.ca/health/anti-vaxxers-change-stance-right-before-all-7-kids-get-whooping-cough-1.2321074>
- My Secret Atheist Blog. (2015, April 9). Ottawa mom drops anti-vaxx belief too late: Seven children get sick [Blog Post]. Retrieved from <http://www.mysecretatheistblog.com/2015/04/ottawa-mom-drops-anti-vaxx-belief-too.html>
- Olson, S. (2015, April 16). Whooping cough in her 7 kids leads anti-vaxxer mother to change her mind, warn parents. *Medical Daily*. Retrieved from <http://www.medicaldaily.com/whooping-cough-her-7-kids-leads-anti-vaxxer-mother-change-her-mind-warn-parents-329536>
- Reynolds, E. (2015, April 16). Mum whose seven kids got whooping cough at once says we need to stop vax-shaming. *News.com.au*. Retrieved from <http://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/health/health-problems/mum-whose-seven-kids-got->

whooping-cough-at-once-says-we-need-to-stop-vaxshaming/news-story/e2896c443021e2f8f1a51e5a4fbd1714

Sanchez, T. (2015, April 11). All 7 kids in anti-vax family get whooping cough. *Truth Revolt*.

Retrieved from <http://www.truthrevolt.org/news/all-7-kids-anti-vax-family-get-whooping-cough>

Spears, T. (2015, April 9). Ottawa mother of 7 abandons anti-vaxxer views as kids hit with whooping cough. *Ottawa Citizen*. Retrieved from <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/ottawa-mother-of-7-abandons-anti-vaxxer-views-as-kids-hit-with-whooping-cough>

Spears, T. (2015, April 10). Ottawa mother of seven abandons anti-vaxxer views as kids hit with whooping cough. *National Post*. Retrieved from <http://nationalpost.com/health/ottawa-mother-of-seven-abandons-anti-vaxxer-views-as-kids-hit-with-whooping-cough>

Spears, T. (2015, April 18). Vaccine-convert mom: 'I really empathize with the emotions on both sides'. *Ottawa Citizen*. Retrieved from <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/vaccine-convert-mom-i-really-empathize-with-the-emotions-on-both-sides>

The Chronicle. (2015, April 16). Anti-vaxxer changes mind as seven kids catch whooping cough. *The Chronicle*. Retrieved from <https://www.thechronicle.com.au/news/anti-vaxxer-changes-mind-seven-kids-catch-whooping/2608890/>

Yahoo! 7 News. (2015, April 16). Anti-vaccination mum's seven children catch whooping cough. *Yahoo! 7 News*. Retrieved from <https://au.news.yahoo.com/a/27151736/anti-vaccination-mums-seven-children-catch-whooping-cough/>

Case Study Two: Kristen O'Meara

ABC News. (2016, September 26). Anti-vaxxer mom changes mind after her three kids fall ill.

ABC News. Retrieved from <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/anti-vaxxer-mom-mind-kids-fall-ill/story?id=42351543>

Babich, T. (2016, September 26). Anti-vaccine mom changes stance after kids become severely

ill. *ABC 7 Chicago*. Retrieved from <http://abc7chicago.com/health/anti-vaccine-mom-changes-stance-after-kids-become-severely-ill/1527110/>

Gettys, T. (2016, September 20). Anti-vaxx mom abandons the movement after all three of her

kids nearly die from rotavirus. *Raw Story*. Retrieved from

<https://www.rawstory.com/2016/09/anti-vaxx-mom-abandons-the-movement-after-all-three-of-her-kids-nearly-die-from-rotavirus/>

Hoskin, M. (2016, September 27). 'I wish I had taken more time to research both sides' admits

anti-vax mum. Retrieved from <http://www.kidspot.com.au/parenting/real-life/in-the-news/i-wish-i-had-taken-more-time-to-research-both-sides-says-antivax-mum/news-story/8261942b82b2f520c1b8ca3f0e077f78>

Kearns, L. (2016, September 27). Mom changes her anti-vax stance after entire family gets sick.

Huffington Post. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/anti-vaxxer-mom-changes-mind_us_57e994bde4b0c2407cd8bdc5

Levi Quackenboss. (2016, September 21). I was an anti-vax crackpot [Blog Post]. Retrieved

from <https://leviquackenboss.wordpress.com/2016/09/21/i-was-an-anti-vax-crackpot/>

Marturana, A. (2016, September 28). This anti-vaxx mom is now pro-vaccine after all 3 of her

kids got sick. *Self*. Retrieved from <https://www.self.com/story/anti-vaxx-mom-now-pro-vaccine-after-all-3-kids-got-sick>

- News.com.au. (2016, September 27). Anti-vaxxer mum changes her mind after her children contract stomach virus. *News.com.au*. Retrieved from <http://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/parenting/babies/antivaxxer-mum-changes-her-mind-after-her-children-contract-stomach-virus/news-story/2b5120a14ff25ac9535d3af954e10677>
- Nine.com.au. (2016, September 27). Anti-vax mum changes her mind after children fall ill. *Nine.com.au*. Retrieved from <https://www.9news.com.au/world/2016/09/27/10/10/anti-vaccination-mum-regrets-decision-when-children-fall-ill>
- O'Meara, K. (2015). Emerging from the herd [Blog Post]. Retrieved from <https://www.voicesforvaccines.org/emerging-from-the-herd/>
- Ridley, J. (2016, September 20). I was an anti-vax crackpot — until this happened. *New York Post*. Retrieved from <https://nypost.com/2016/09/20/i-was-an-anti-vax-crackpot-until-this-happened/>
- Rothkopf, J. (2016, September 26). Anti-vaccination mom changes mind after all three kids contract rotavirus. *Jezebel*. Retrieved from <https://jezebel.com/anti-vaccination-mom-changes-mind-after-all-three-kids-1787084770>
- Ryland, A. J. (n.d.). She was anti-vaccination until all of her kids contracted rotavirus. *The Daily Buzz*. Retrieved from <http://the-daily.buzz/a/anti-vaccination-mom-rotavirus>
- Smith, J. (2016, October 1). ‘The guilt was overwhelming’: Anti-vaxxer who thought she was ‘superior’ to her friends for not immunizing her three children changed her mind when ALL of them caught deadly virus. *The Daily Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3817208/Anti-vaxxer-thought-superior-friends-not-immunizing-three-children-changed-mind-caught-deadly-virus.html>

Swartz, A. (2016, September 26). Anti-vaxxer mom isn't an anti-vaxxer anymore after her kids all got rotavirus. *Mic.com*. Retrieved from <https://mic.com/articles/155128/anti-vaxxer-mom-isn-t-an-anti-vaxxer-anymore-after-her-kids-all-got-rotavirus#.YE26L8NEC>

The Universal Life Church Monastery. (2016, September 30). Anti-vaccine mom realizes huge mistake. Retrieved from <https://www.themonastery.org/blog/2016/09/anti-vaccine-mom-realizes-mistake/>

The Vienna Report. (2016, October 5). Rotavirus mom revealed – “Antivaxxer mom” has pharma ties [Blog Post]. Retrieved from <http://theviennareport.us/rotavirus-mom/>

Yahoo! 7 News. (2016, September 27). ‘I put them at risk’: Anti-vax mum changes mind after all kids fall ill. *Yahoo! 7 News*. Retrieved from <https://au.news.yahoo.com/a/32739920/i-put-them-at-risk-anti-vax-mum-changes-mind-af>