

Viewpoint: Anti-vaxxers are expected to fight a coronavirus vaccine. Here's one way to deal with them

[T]he race for a [coronavirus] vaccine and the techniques being used to manufacture it are bound to activate some familiar fears. In particular, those who worry about “unnatural” medical interventions may fear the vaccine more than the pandemic it’s designed to stop.

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The trouble — at least where public perception is concerned — may begin with the vexing terms “synthetic” and “modified.” Consumers [draw strong](#) distinctions between natural and artificial. This is most obvious in the food industry, where [non-GMO](#) and [natural branding](#) command [outsized influence](#). Overcoming the stigma of “artificial” or “synthetic” is also proving to be a problem for [so-called “cultured” meat](#). Yet rejection of high-tech foods is a symptom of a broader preference for the natural and fear of the “unnatural,” which has featured in historical objections to everything from in vitro fertilization to cloning animals.

Troublingly, the natural/unnatural binary is a powerful paradigm for parents who reject some or all vaccines.

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Vaccine development ought to be conducted with the continual feedback of laypeople, upon whose willingness to vaccinate our general health depends. That means anticipating new concerns and empowering the public by soliciting their input on how to communicate about them.

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