Paradoxical Thinking as a Gateway to Socio-Cultural Insights

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Paradoxical thinking can reveal complex emotions and beliefs, even self-contradictory behaviors. It can also provide a gateway to the socio-cultural forces that underpin a topic. In a project on IT security, we encountered a participant whose paradoxical beliefs influenced his approach to managing risk in his personal life. Though as an IT security director, he ‘immunized’ his company against potential security breaches and data loss, as a father he chose not to have his son immunized against disease, even though he went to great lengths to protect him in every other way. This encounter inspired me to delve more deeply into the socio-cultural context surrounding the opposition to vaccination in the U.S.

Public Domain image, Wikipedia. The Cow-Pock – or the Wonderful Effects of the New Inoculation! Print (color engraving), James Gillray, published June 12, 1802 by H. Humphrey, St. James's Street, London.

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