

Thinking about and working with “vaccine hesitancy”: A psychological approach

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Photograph by Hakan Nural

The what: An overview of today's talk

- An introduction to “vaccine hesitancy”
- Vaccine hesitancy and this pandemic
- An overview of government statistics and research findings
- The role and potential contribution of psycholog(ies)
- The bigger picture

...and where I hope we might all end up



Photograph by Kalen Emsley









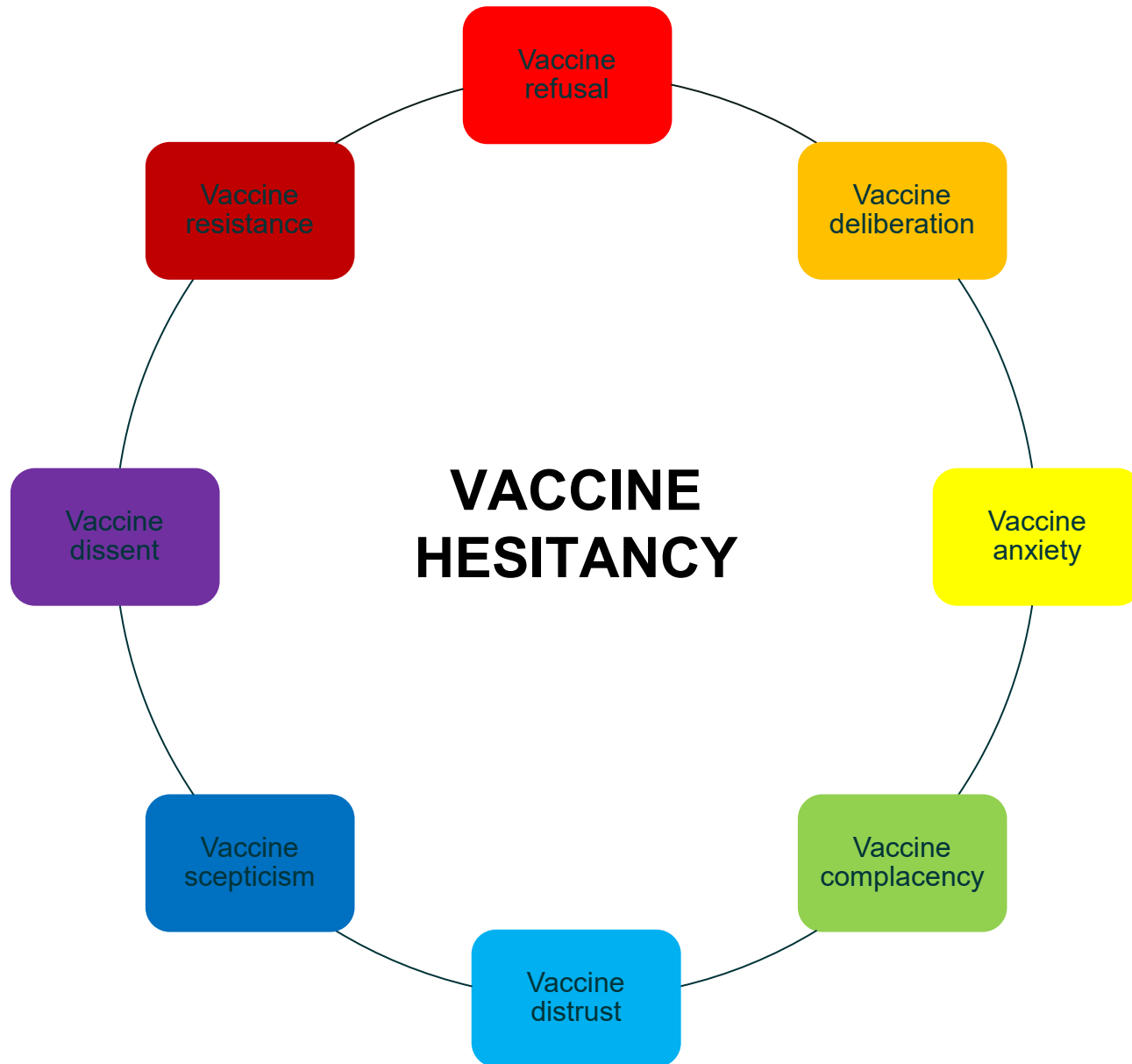
Photograph by Ehimetalor Akhere Unuabona

What is vaccine hesitancy?

Use the chat function to share your thoughts and ideas

A comment on terminology and complexity

- An important and complex issue
- “Vaccine hesitancy” - an umbrella term
- A constellation rather than something unitary
- Stemming from multiple factors



A brief history of vaccine hesitancy

- The smallpox vaccine in the late 1700s and early 1800s
- The 1853 Vaccination Act in the UK
- Andrew Wakefield's 1998 disproven claims of link between the MMR vaccine and autism
- Mandatory vaccination laws
- No clear link between vaccine uptake and mandatory vaccination
- Since 2000s a decline in vaccine confidence reported globally

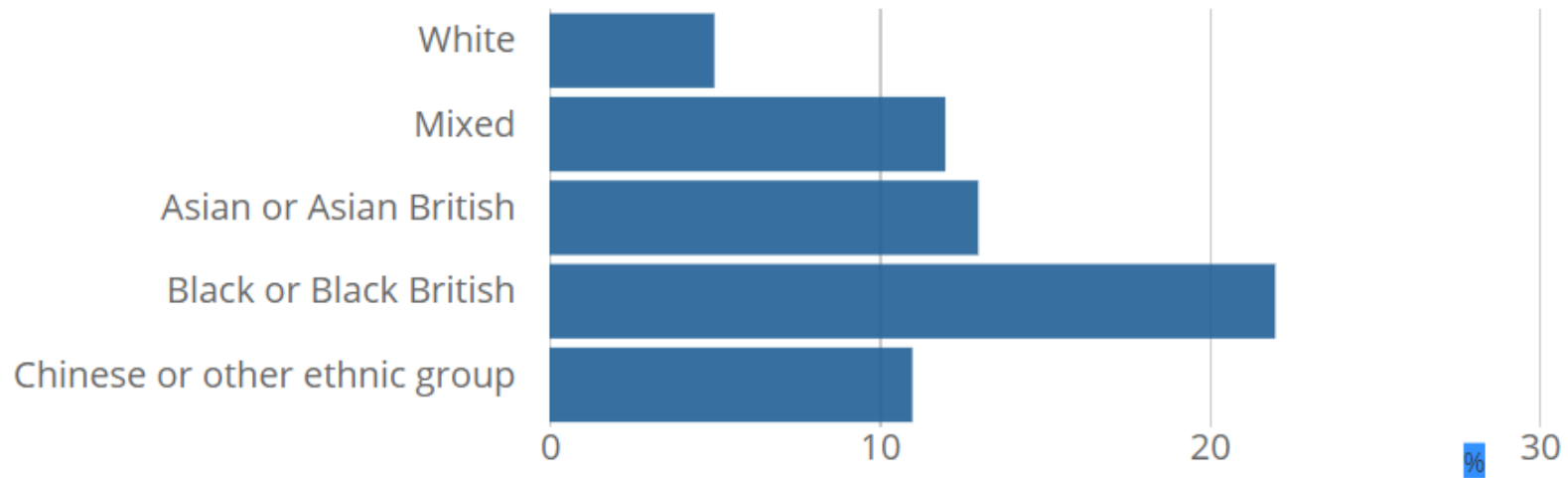
Vaccine hesitancy and the coronavirus pandemic

- High rates of vaccine acceptance among most adults in Britain
- Rates of vaccine acceptance and hesitancy vary according to ethnicity and age
- High rates of vaccine hesitancy among black or black British adults, 16-29 year olds, adults living in most deprived areas, parents living with children 0-4 years old
- Overall decreases in rates of vaccine hesitancy

“...we have seen attitudes across most of the population becoming more positive towards Covid-19 vaccination. However, there is still hesitancy among some groups, including young people, Black or Black British and those living in the most deprived areas”

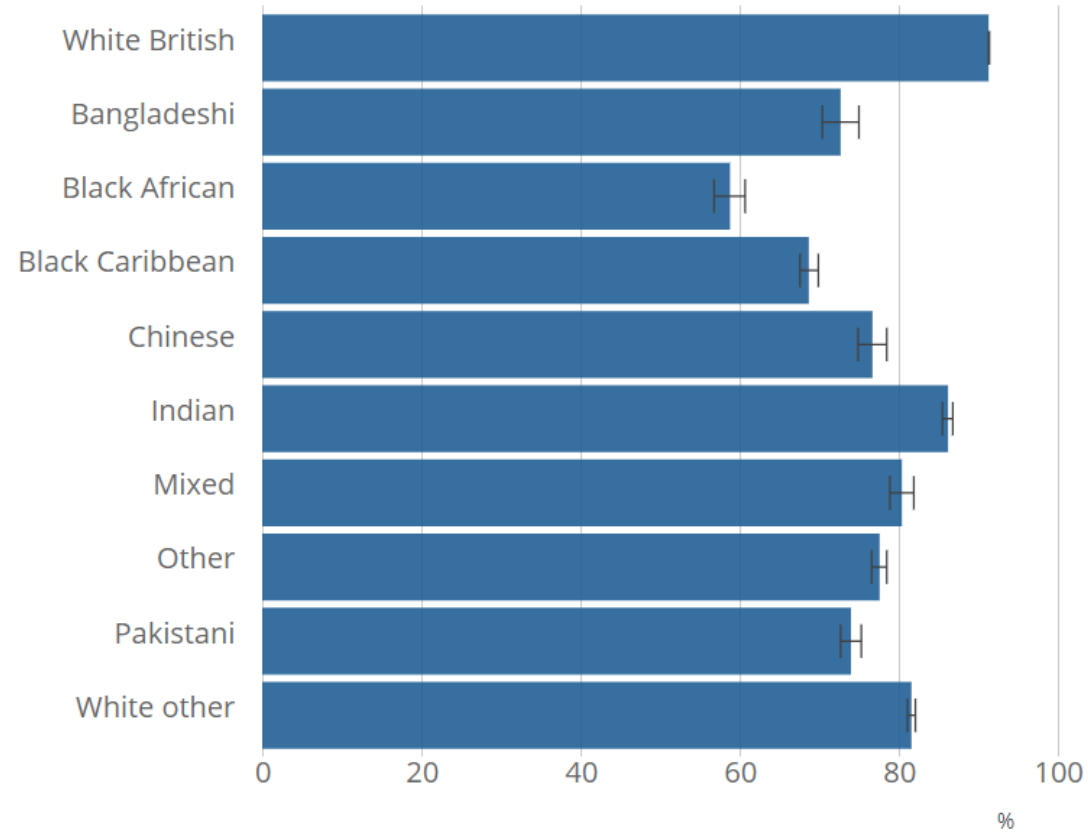
Tim Vizard, Public Policy Analysis, Office for National Statistics

Government statistics



Source: Office for National Statistics - Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Rates of vaccine hesitancy according to ethnicity, recorded in Britain between 17 February and 14 March 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics - Public Health Data Asset, National Immunisation Management Service

Rates of adults in England aged 70 or over who have received one or two doses of a COVID-19 vaccination - 11 March 2021

What are the reasons for vaccine hesitancy?

Use the chat function to share your thoughts and ideas

anxiety fear
misunderstanding
misinformation
lack of information
politics
resistance
denial
social media

Some of the common reasons for vaccine hesitancy based on the current narrative

“It’s not just fake information that might strengthen vaccine hesitancy. True information that is stripped of context could do the same thing.”

Kolina Koltai, American misinformation and vaccine researcher,
University of Washington

What's missing from this picture?

Use the chat function to share your thoughts and ideas

anxiety fear
misunderstanding
misinformation
lack of information
politics
resistance
denial
social media

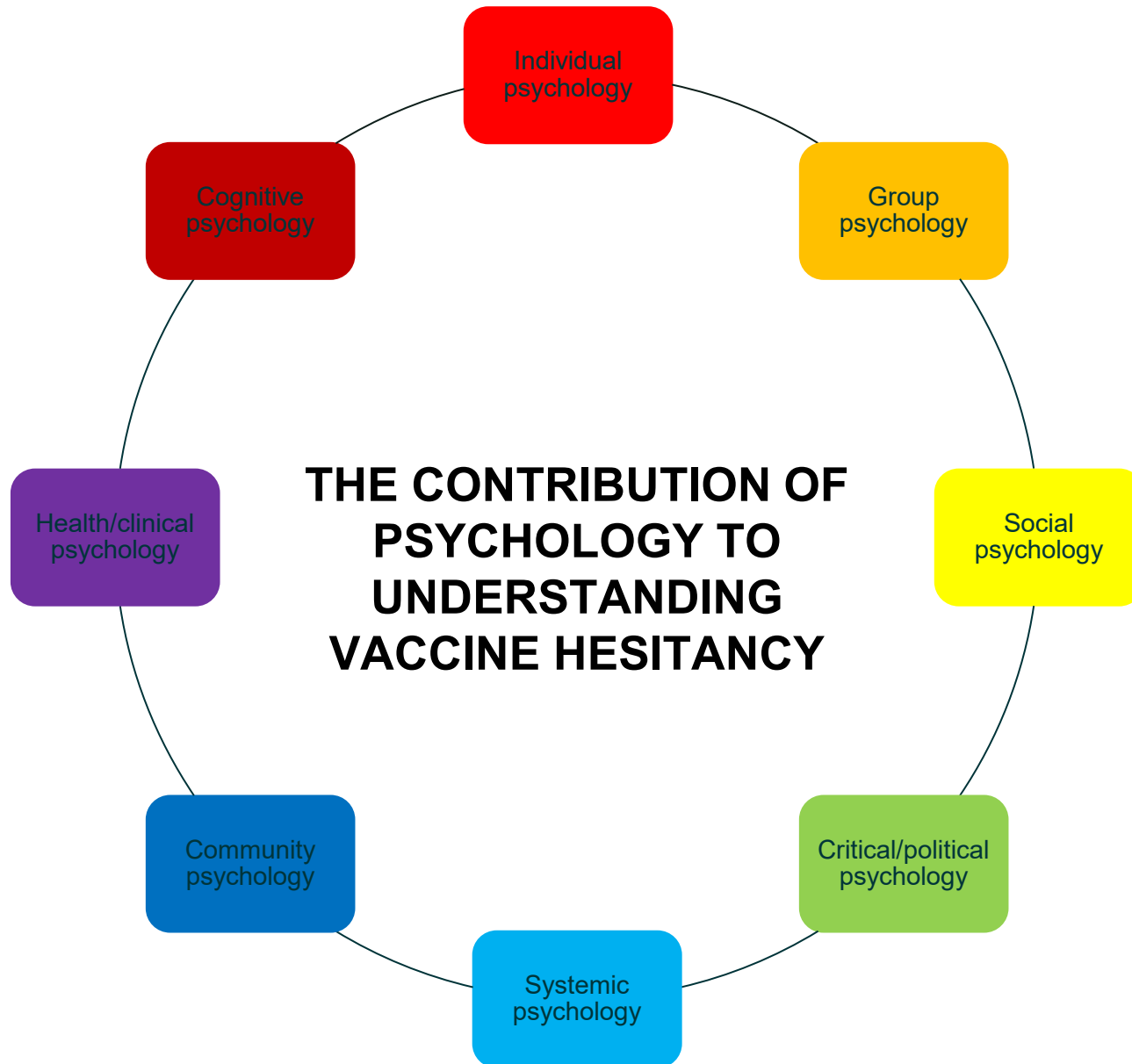
Some of the common reasons for vaccine hesitancy based on the current narrative

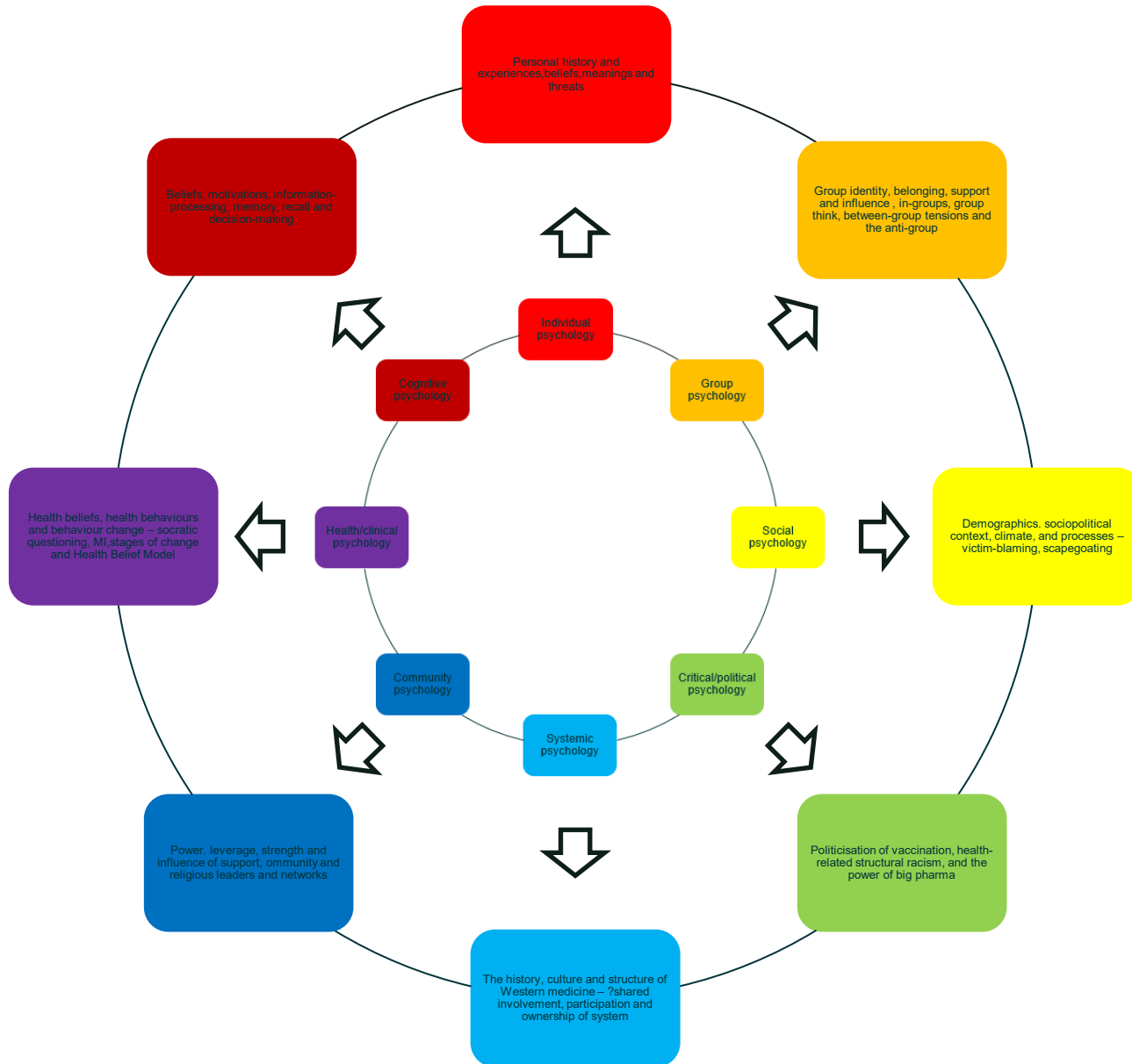
So how should we approach vaccine hesitancy and what can we do?

The contribution of psychology

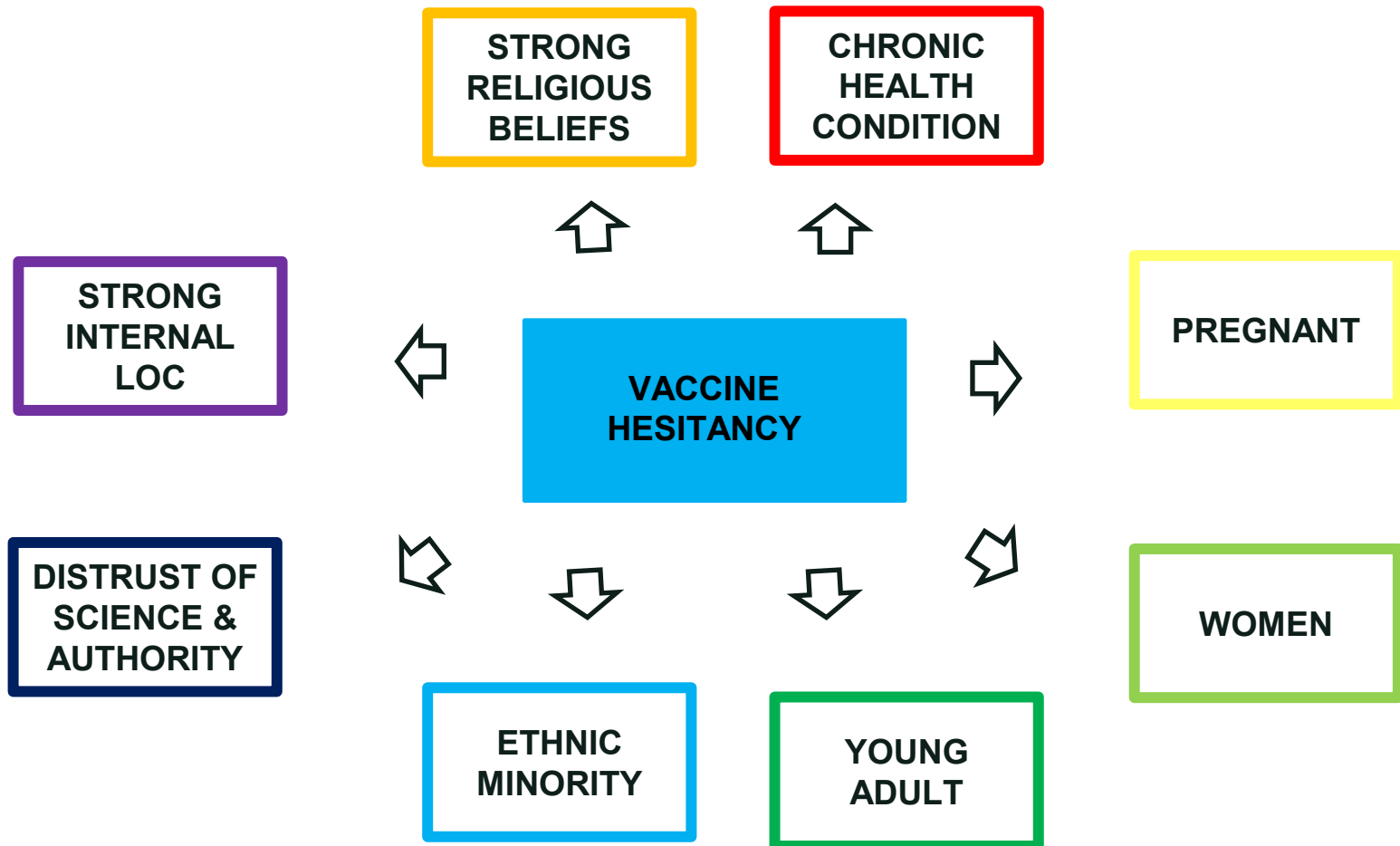


Photograph by Jael Vallee





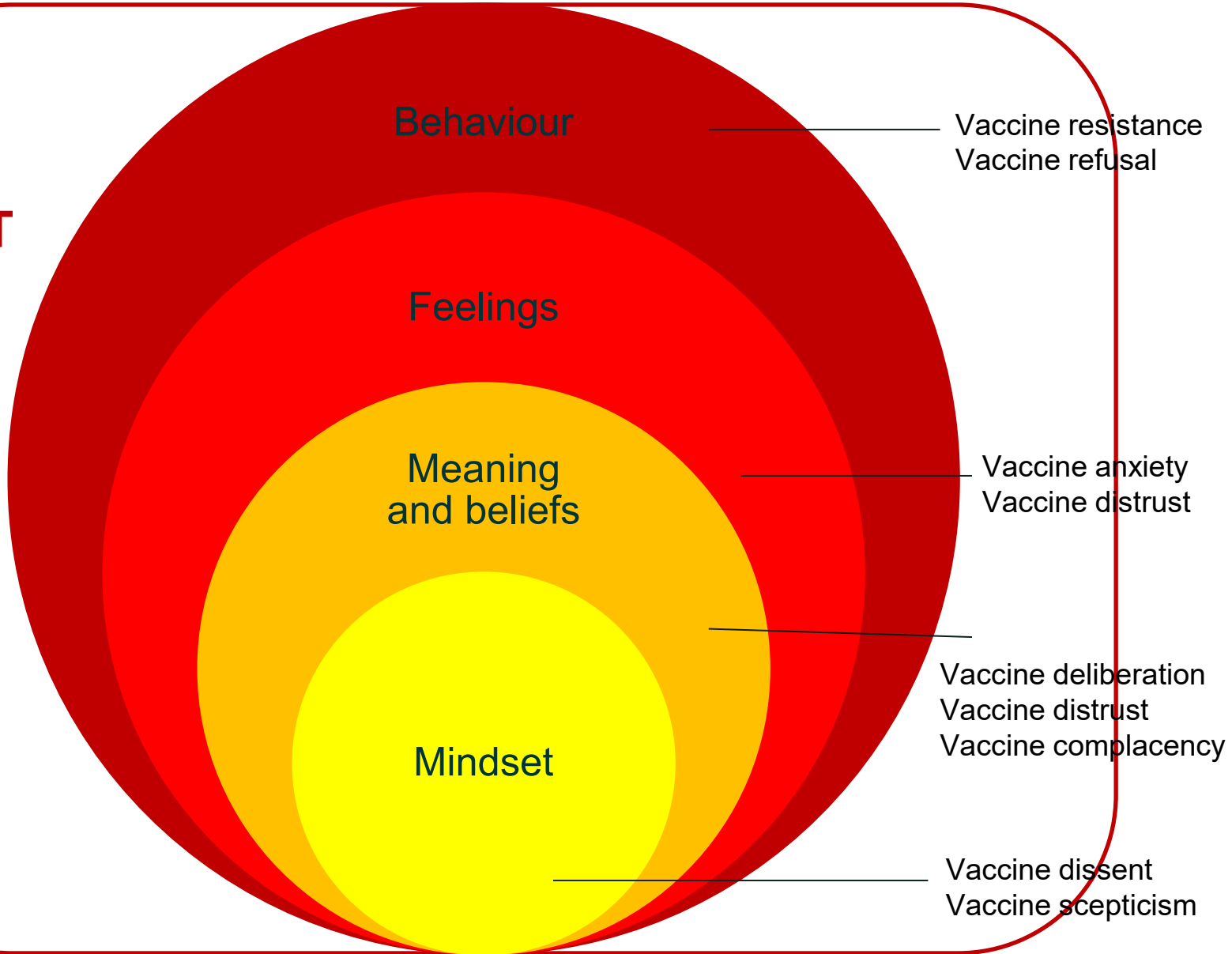
Higher rates of vaccine hesitancy – some cautious indications



The “power of persuasion” vs. an MI approach?

- The risk of “knowing best”
- The counterproductivity of trying to persuade
- When persuasion becomes coercion?
- The importance of normalising ambivalence, resistance and uncertainty
- A position of curiosity: trying to understand and learn more about what motivates each individual
- Enabling time and space for deliberation and discussion

**SOCIAL
CONTEXT**



Don't forget context!

SOCIETY



Embedding good practice into your work in vaccine hesitancy

- Take steps to build, maintain and regain trust
- Focus on your communication
- Avoid adopting the position of persuasion
- Take time to listen, understand and learn
- Avoid labelling or blaming people for their vaccine hesitancy
- Engage in anti-racist practices
- Don't forget the bigger picture - CONTEXT

Take home messages

- Vaccine hesitancy is normal not irrational
- At least 10% of population are vaccine hesitant at any time
- There are many types of vaccine hesitancy
- No single solution - a portfolio of strategies is required
- Vaccine hesitancy is emblematic of wider hesitancy and distrust
- Services need to be based on trust, equity, equality and participation
- The big picture – a need for multilevel change and a challenge to institutional racism



Photograph by Patrick Perkins

References and resources

- N. T. Brewer et al. (2017). “Increasing vaccination: Putting psychological science into action.” Psychological Science in the Public Interest, Vol. 18(3), 149-207.
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Photograph by Jon