"The Time to Unite Is Now": The Revival of the Anti-Vaccination Movement with the Autism-Vaccine Debate and Jenny McCarthy’s Co-optation of the Second Wave Feminist Rhetoric of Our Bodies, Ourselves

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Abstract:
Over the past decade, the United States experienced a revival in the anti-vaccination movement with the development of the autism-vaccine debate. The most notable personality in this autism-vaccination debate is Jenny McCarthy, author of three books pertaining to autism, Louder Than Words, Healing and Preventing Autism, and Mother Warriors. Through her discussion of the challenges faced navigating the diagnosis of her son with autism, she employs a similar combination of rhetoric to the second-wave feminist text, Our Bodies, Ourselves. Analogous to the purpose of Our Bodies, Ourselves in second-wave feminism, this analysis explores how McCarthy effectively redefines the contextual ethos of the autism-vaccination debate, empowers mothers as experts of their child’s health, and unites her audience as a collective motherhood.