2

The History of Conspiracy Theory Research

A Review and Commentary

MICHAEL BUTTER AND PETER KNIGHT

Today conspiracy theories exist in all cultures and societies. While there are precursors in antiquity, there is evidence that their modern form emerged during the transition from the Early Modern period to the Enlightenment.[1] Conspiracy theory research, by contrast, is a relatively new phenomenon. While historians occasionally touched upon the subject already during the first decades of the twentieth century, "conspiracy theory" emerged as an identifiable category of scholarly discourse and an object of concern only during the second half, not least because—except for a few isolated examples—the very label did not enter wide circulation until that time.[2]

This chapter outlines the history of academic research on conspiracy theories in English. We begin with an account of early studies conducted in various disciplines which led to Richard Hofstadter's famous conceptualization of conspiracy theorizing as the manifestation of a "paranoid style" in the 1960s—a conceptualization that has both inspired and impeded research.[3] We then proceed systematically rather than chronologically, moving from disciplines that have not entirely overcome the pathologizing approach to conspiracy theories to those that have adopted alternative approaches. Accordingly, the second section is dedicated to studies in social psychology and political science. Scholars from these disciplines largely share Hofstadter's concern about conspiracy theories, but they have increasingly employed quantitative methods to pin down the factors that lead people to believe in conspiracy theories or to engage in underlying conspiracy thinking. The third section discusses the work of analytical philosophers, who have sought to provide more precise definitions of the term and to distinguish between warranted and unwarranted theories. The final section is devoted to the "cultural turn" in conspiracy theory research, whose proponents have been challenging the

dominant pathologizing approach since the late 1990s. The chapter closes with an evaluation of the current state of the debate and makes some recommendations for future research.

The Emergence of the Pathologizing Paradigm: From the Beginnings to Richard Hofstadter (1930s to 1960s)

The early history of conspiracy theory research has been convincingly related by Katharina Thalmann, whose account builds on and expands earlier work by Jack Bratich and Mark Fenster.[4] According to Thalmann, scholarly interest in the phenomenon emerged during the 1930s and 1940s under the influence of the two world wars and the rise of totalitarianism.[5] Three different strands are discernible in the initial phase. Political psychologists like Harold Lasswell and Theodor Adorno identified personality types particularly prone to what they considered the irrational practice of conspiracy theorizing, "the agitator" in Lasswell and "the authoritarian personality" in Adorno.[6] While they thus focused on individual traits and psychological causes, sociologists Leo Loewenthal and Norbert Guterman related belief in conspiracy theories to the complexities of modernization and the emergence of mass societies.[7] Anticipating the work of cultural studies scholars fifty years later, in 1949 Loewenthal and Guterman regarded "conspiracy theorizing [as] a meaning-making cultural practice that was worth analyzing and studying."[8]

However, neither the political psychologists nor the sociologists came up with a label for the phenomenon they were studying. This task fell to Karl Popper, a historian of science, who described in the late 1940s what he called *the conspiracy theory of society* as an utterly simplistic and, more importantly, unscientific way of understanding social relations, which had emerged as a reaction and in opposition to the Enlightenment.[9] Although Popper acknowledged that Marx himself was careful to distance himself from what would later be called conspiracy theories, so-called Vulgar Marxism (but also other forms of "totalitarian" thinking such as Nazism) fell into the trap of attributing historical causation to conspiracies of, say, the ruling class or capital itself. If, for Popper, these simplistic forms of historicism committed the intellectual error of ascribing agency to impersonal forces, then the opposite tendency—blaming every unfortunate turn of events on an intentional conspiracy of powerful individuals behind the scenes—was equally guilty of misunderstanding how history works. Popper insisted that the kind of large-scale, coordinated action imagined by conspiracy theorists was impossible because of the inevitability of unintended consequences in complex societies. History, for Popper, should more properly be thought of as the product of an invisible hand (in Adam Smith's term) than a hidden hand.

While these scholars had looked primarily to Europe, the rise of McCarthyism during the 1950s focused the attention of the next generation of researchers on the United States. Scholars such as Edward Shils and Seymour Martin Lipset, and also journalists like Richard Rovere, regarded conspiracy theories as both irrational and unscientific and worried about their harmful effects on American politics.[10] These fears increased further when, during the 1960s, the most vocal proponents of conspiracy theories were no longer representatives of the two major parties and thus the political center, but the members of the John Birch Society.[11] As a result of this shift, consensus historians and pluralist political scientists like John Bunzel, Seymour Martin Lipset, and Earl Raab began to consider conspiracy theories as both symptoms and articulations of extremism.[12] Forging "a link between anti-democratic extremism on the one hand and irrational, unscientific conspiracy theories on the other," they cast conspiracy theories as dangerous to pluralist societies in general and the United States in particular, while simultaneously relegating them to the margins of society.[13]

This way of understanding conspiracy theories climaxed in Richard Hofstadter's famous concept of the "paranoid style," which synthesized most of the ideas put forth by the scholars discussed so far. First, like most scholars of the time, Hofstadter discarded the more neutral sociological perspective of Loewenthal and Guterman and projected conspiracy theories as a minority phenomenon that threatened the liberal-democratic consensus.[14] Second, by drawing on the concept of paranoia, Hofstadter, like Lasswell and Adorno, pathologized conspiracy theorists, even though he claimed not to.[15] Finally, like Popper, Hofstadter regarded conspiracy theories as unscientific.[16]

The impact of Hofstadter's conceptualization of conspiracy theory cannot be overestimated. While he did not coin the term *conspiracy theory* (and indeed, rarely used the phrase), his understanding of the phenomenon influences how considerable parts of the public, the media, and academics all over the world have conceived of the topic thus labeled ever since. Because of Hofstadter, paranoia and conspiracy theory have been almost inextricably linked. This has been beneficial to conspiracy theory research, because it has provided researchers across the board with an easy-to-grasp paradigm that can be applied to different historical and cultural contexts and that continues to be relevant in the present, not least with his focus on the connection between conspiracy belief and status anxiety. Moreover, Hofstadter's emphasis on the importance of "style" in conspiracy theorizing has helped pave the way not only for studies that focus on underlying conspiracy thinking as a "style" of thought, but also for those that focus on the aesthetic and narrative dimensions of conspiracy theories, their rhetorical transmission, or their dramatizations in films and novels.[17]

At the same time, however, Hofstadter's approach to conspiracy theories has impeded research because it pathologizes and marginalizes them. The consequences are particularly obvious in the field of history, where researchers have frequently

encountered conspiracy theories that were clearly neither minority phenomena nor articulated by people who should be described as paranoid.[18] Since Hofstadter's theorization of conspiracy theory (the only one available for a long time) was unfit to capture what these scholars observed, most of them either did not refer at all to the theoretical research on the issue in their discussions of specific visions of conspiracy, or they drew on Hofstadter's concept of the paranoid style even though its implications obviously contradicted their findings. Consequently, the engagement of these scholars with the phenomenon was, despite their valuable contributions to scholarship, not as nuanced and productive as it surely would have been if a more neutral theorization of conspiracy theory had been available.

What is more, even scholars who reject or at least modify Hofstadter's premises often do not entirely escape his powerful conceptualization. Michael Pfau's *The Political Style of Conspiracy: Chase, Sumner, and Lincoln* rather unconvincingly distinguishes between a paranoid style of the fringe and a political style of the center in antebellum America to present the conspiracy theories that he focuses on as an exception to the rule.[19] In looking at eighteenth-century America, Gordon Wood makes a far more compelling case that conspiracy theorizing was a rational activity that was firmly rooted in the social mainstream and evidence of sophisticated Enlightenment thinking, but then suggests that this changed at the turn of century, implying that Hofstadter's paranoid style adequately describes conspiracy theories in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[20] However, as historian Geoffrey Cubitt has put it: "Quite simply, this recession [that Wood postulates] shows very little signs of having happened during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries."[21]

Perpetuating and Carefully Challenging the Pathologizing Paradigm: Research in Psychology and Political Science (1990s to the Present)

Although there are, as we have seen, obvious ties to psychology and political science in early conspiracy theory research, both disciplines were initially slow to investigate the topic. A discussion of the reasons for this delayed engagement is beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to say that scholars from both disciplines very likely regarded conspiracy theories for a long time as a fringe curiosity undeserving of serious discussion. What is more, in political science the focus on partisanship, ideology, and issue positions during the 1950s and 1960s, and later the dominance of the rational choice paradigm (which held that opinions were rational as opposed to purely social-psychological) was surely a factor, since conspiracy theories—cast by Hofstadter and most of his predecessors as irrational and unscientific—did not really fit either of these paradigms. However, as researchers from both disciplines recognized that the phenomenon is widespread and has potentially serious consequences, they began to engage with the issue. In psychology an interest in

conspiracy theories began to emerge in the 1990s, while in political science it took longer. The widespread conspiracy theories surrounding Barack Obama appear to have motivated most research in this field. In recent years, there has been a significant flourishing of empirical studies in both disciplines.

Despite the increasing recognition that conspiracy theories are a mainstream phenomenon, most studies in psychology until today share at least some of Hofstadter's assumptions, even though they rarely refer to him in anything more than the most general way. Early research tended to take for granted that conspiracy theories are held by distinctive kinds of people with identifiable and flawed characteristics, and most work in the field holds that belief in conspiracy theories is irrational.[22] Ted Goertzel, who provided one of the first and most influential studies using survey data, came even closer to Hofstadter when he argued that conspiracy beliefs are "monological," that is, they serve as a complete worldview such that people who believe in one conspiracy theory tend to believe in them all.[23] This idea is still maintained by more recent studies but has also been challenged by other researchers, who find that sometimes conspiracy beliefs are topic-specific.[24]

Generally, work in psychology has sought to profile believers and to enumerate the personality and cognitive factors involved in underlying conspiracy thinking, what is sometimes termed—in a phrase that evokes an unwarranted level of diagnostic precision—"conspiracy ideation."[25] Once again following Hofstadter (albeit not always directly), some researchers have investigated the supposed link between conspiracy thinking and forms of psychopathology, but have reached little agreement. Psychologists have linked conspiracy thinking and belief in specific conspiracy theories to the traits of a "damaged" psyche including paranoia, schizotypy, distrust, suspiciousness, obsession with hidden motives, heightened threat sensitivity, anomie, feelings of alienation, cynicism, uncertainty, powerlessness, anxiety and perceived loss of control.[26] Although some researchers have found some correlations between conspiracy thinking and elements of the so-called Big Five personality differences (e.g., a negative relation to agreeableness, connected with a suspicion of others) and have suggested that individual differences in "conspiracy ideation" are stable over time, others have found that the conspiracy theorist does not have a distinctive personality and that circumstantial factors are needed to trigger the personality traits.[27]

In terms of methodology, many psychological studies employ questionnaires that rank the respondent on scales measuring conspiracy thinking or belief in a range of specific conspiracy theories, and then test out variables that might be associated with high or low rates. There has been a proliferation of different scales, such as the Belief in Conspiracy Theories Inventory, the Generic Conspiracist Beliefs Scale, and the Conspiracy Mentality Scale, but no agreement on a single measure yet.[28] Although most surveys measure belief in well-known conspiracy theories, some researchers make up conspiracy theories to measure endorsement.[29] Other researchers have also begun to move beyond surveys to experimental manipulation

of attitudes in their quest to identify the variables and mechanisms involved in "conspiracy ideation." They find, for example, that people who have been induced into experiencing a sense of emotional uncertainty or a loss of control are more likely to draw on conspiratorial interpretations of events.[30] Many researchers are increasingly concerned with the harmful social and political effects of conspiracy theories, with findings that mere exposure makes it less likely, for example, for people to try to reduce their carbon footprint or have their children vaccinated.[31] Others have conducted experiments to show that belief in potentially harmful conspiracy theories can be reduced with a task that increases analytic thinking.[32]

Compared to the large body of psychological studies that have been published since *ca*. 2007, there is still comparatively little research in political science, where scholars now mainly rely on polling data to detect factors that fuel belief in conspiracy theories. All of the empirical studies have begun to converge on the result that conspiracy theorizing is not a fringe phenomenon but a rather a fairly normal pastime. For example, about 60%, 25%, and 25% of Americans believe in JFK assassination, birther, and truther conspiracy theories respectively.[33]

Studies differ, however, with regard to the causes researchers identify for the belief in conspiracy theories. Identified causal mechanisms range from epistemological problems to political asymmetries to feverish worldviews. Cass Sunstein and Adrian Vermeule hold that conspiracy theories are the result of "crippled epistemology"; that is, they arise when people either lack information or do not process it properly.[34] Uscinski and Parent argue that in the United States, "conspiracy theories are for losers," suggesting that they arise among groups who feel threatened, powerless, and insecure, most often as a result of being on the losing side of the partisan divide following an election.[35] By contrast, Oliver and Wood come closest to a psychological explanation by arguing that conspiracy theories are caused by the predisposition to attribute events to the machinations of invisible forces, and to perceive the world as a Manichean struggle between good and evil.[36] Finally, Sunstein and Vermeule argue that conspiracy theories are far more a matter of the political right than of the left, whereas Uscinski and Parent, Oliver and Wood, as well as Miller, Saunders, and Farhart reject this claim.[37] They all contend, though, that political convictions and situations determine which conspiracy theories individuals believe in.

Since these studies all hold that conspiracy theories are a widespread phenomenon in American culture, they all more or less explicitly reject the correlation between conspiracy theories and personality disorders that is so prominent in psychology. Because they identify a cause—misinformation—that, in theory, could be remedied, Sunstein and Vermeule openly reflect about possible cures for conspiracy beliefs. They suggest, however, that once people have begun to believe in a conspiracy theory, it is almost impossible to convince them otherwise. This finding has been recently corroborated in further studies.[38] Uscinski and Parent as well as Oliver and Wood largely refrain from offering remedies, largely because

their findings suggest that conspiracy theories are such an integral part of American culture that they will not go away. Yet, they are still largely pessimistic about conspiracy theories. This distinguishes them from some of the analytical philosophers discussed below.

The Debate in Analytical Philosophy on Warranted and Unwarranted Conspiracy Beliefs (Mid-1990s to the Present)

Charles Pigden opened up a new set of debates in analytical philosophy by challenging Karl Popper's fundamental assumption that conspiracy theories are necessarily mistaken.[39] Pigden, along with subsequent contributions from David Coady and Lee Basham, insisted that conspiracy theories are not *prima facie* irrational, not least because there are many historical examples of conspiracy theories that could broadly be construed as successful.[40] Instead of dismissing all conspiracy theories out of hand, researchers must therefore examine them on a case-by-case basis for their potential validity. This argument has recently been reiterated by Matthew Dentith in the most comprehensive monograph so far in this subfield.[41]

In contrast, other philosophers such as Brian Keeley, Jeffrey Bale, and Juha Räikkä have sought to make sense of what they see as the common intuition that there is a distinction between plausible analyses of political conspiracies and unwarranted conspiracy theories, even if in practice the boundaries between the two are sometimes blurred at the edges.[42] For Keeley, even if there is not (in the mode of Popper) an a priori reason to dismiss all conspiracy theories, there is nevertheless a prima facie case to be made that unwarranted conspiracy theories—those, for example, which have grown too large to not be detected and exposed—are the result of flawed thinking. Steve Clarke, for example, looking to social psychology, identifies the "fundamental attributional error" as a key intellectual vice of conspiracy theorists.[43]

Although the debate in analytical philosophy has tended to revolve around the definition of conspiracy theory and the question of its rationality, it has often ignored the fact that the very term *conspiracy theory* is not a neutral, objective label but a pejorative dismissal of an allegedly "crippled epistemology."[44] Likewise, although philosophers have sought to determine the inherent justifiability of this way of viewing historical causality and (in some cases) to identify the intellectual flaws, there has been little interest in systematically considering the social, political, and cultural circumstances that might make conspiracy theories more warranted in some historical and geopolitical settings than others. In many of these essays, the same handful of familiar examples of conspiracy theories are cited, and the underlying assumption is that the phenomenon of conspiracy

theory has a stable, identifiable logic that holds true in all times and places. This is simply not borne out by the historical record or anthropological studies of how conspiracy theories work in other cultures. The debate has also tended to be self-contained within the discipline of philosophy and rarely engages in a sustained way with discussions of conspiracy theories in other disciplines, while those other disciplines (especially social psychology) likewise have failed to take up some of the interesting challenges posed by the debate on distinguishing between warranted conspiracy theories (in the sense of better evidenced or reasoned, but not necessarily true) and unwarranted ones.

Challenging the Pathologizing Paradigm: Cultural History and Cultural Studies (Late 1990s to the Present)

Since the late 1990s, a number of important studies have been published in the fields of cultural history and cultural studies. Fueled by the pervasiveness of conspiracy discourses in American films and TV shows, on the media, and in early Internet newsgroups at the turn of the millennium, these works either focus exclusively on the contemporary period or make a larger historical argument in order to explain the prominence of conspiracy theorizing in the present. The most conservative of these studies is Michael Barkun's *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptical Visions in Contemporary America*.[45] Situated at the crossroads of historical analysis and qualitative political science, he observes that conspiracy theories have been moving from the fringe to the center of American culture, though he does not challenge the pathologization of conspiracy theory and even reaffirms the Hofstadterian link to paranoia. This distinguishes his study from those by Robert Goldberg and Kathryn Olmsted, who approach the topic more neutrally.[46] Goldberg explores the deep immersion of popular culture into conspiracy scenarios in recent decades and investigates how conspiracy theories allow many people to make sense of the world they are living in. Olmsted argues that American conspiracy theories have undergone a major shift at the time of World War I. While earlier versions had focused on external threats to the federal government, twentieth-century versions cast the government as conspiring against the people. The focus on the rhetorical and narrative qualities of conspiracy theories, and the refusal to pathologize their proponents—Olmsted explicitly sees conspiracy theories as "understandable responses to conspiratorial government rhetoric and actions"—aligns them with work in cultural studies.[47]

The first wave of the works in cultural studies comprises the work of Jodi Dean, Mark Fenster, Timothy Melley, and Peter Knight.[48] Without directly referencing them, these studies approach the topic in the tradition of Loewenthal and Guterman because they refuse to pathologize conspiracy theorists. Instead, like them, they hold that conspiracy theories are indicators of larger anxieties and concerns. They

also agree that conspiracy theories are no longer a fringe phenomenon but became part of the mainstream after World War II.

For Dean, conspiracy theories about alien abduction are symptoms of a distrust in politicians and institutions that permeates American culture.[49] In similar fashion, Melley understands conspiracy theories as an expression of "agency panic," a concern about a loss of autonomy and challenges to traditional notions of identity in the present.[50] He also makes clear that the "paranoid" imagination of vast organizations and systems as conspiracies controlling individual and collective behavior, in both fictional and factual texts alike in the Cold War, share many assumptions with works of popular social theory from the period that likewise betray an anxiety about the controlling influence of social forces. Like Melley, the sociologist Luc Boltanski in his study of Anglo-American detective fiction draws attention to the potentially confounding similarities between the "hermeneutic of suspicion" (in Ricoeur's phrase) that is at the heart of most critical social theory and the operating assumption of conspiracy theory that nothing is as it seems.[51]

Like Melley and Dean, Knight also holds that under the conditions of postmodernity, conspiracy theories no longer simply affirm collective identities or scapegoat certain groups, but perform a variety of other functions. They articulate "increasing doubt and uncertainty" about power, identity, and agency.[52] Moreover, he observes that many Americans engage with conspiracy theories in self-conscious and ironic fashion, treating them "as if" they were true, rather than fully believing in them.

By contrast, Fenster focuses more on the ways in which conspiracy theories affect democratic politics. For him, conspiracy theories are "non-necessary element[s] of populist ideology" and thus posit a struggle between the people and those in power.[53] They misrepresent political realities but must be taken seriously because they hint at crises of representative democracy. They are not aberrations that threaten democracy from the extremist margins, but inherent components of all democratic societies.

The critique of pathologization central to these studies was taken up in a slightly different fashion by Jack Bratich. He argues that "conspiracy theory" as a category only exists to delegitimize certain forms of knowledge that are unwanted by elites or the public at large. He rightly points out that there are, even in the present, many conspiracy theories that escape this label such as the one forged by the Bush administration after 9/11 about the collaboration of al-Qaida and Saddam Hussein. Accordingly, conspiracy theories constitute a form of subjugated knowledge (in the Foucauldian sense) that is dismissed by experts and elites but which has never lost its "commonsensical appeal," which might explain why the anonymous polls conducted by political scientists find that so many Americans believe in conspiracy theories.[54] Clare Birchall is also interested in the status of conspiracy theories as knowledge and, like Bratich, she draws on Foucault and the sociology of knowledge to explain the status of conspiracy theories.[55] She describes conspiracy theories as

a form of popular knowledge that circulates outside of official channels. However, unlike Bratich, she suggests that the distinction between official and subjugated forms of knowledge is eroding in the present, largely because of the influence of the Internet. Conspiracy theories in particular, she argues, have become more accepted because of 9/11.[56] And, like Knight, she emphasizes the playful way people engage with heterodox forms of knowledge. Finally, the status of conspiracy theories as knowledge is also at the center of Michael Butter's study of conspiracist visions from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries in American culture. Synthesizing the work done by cultural studies scholars and the findings of the historians discussed at the end of the first section, he suggests that American conspiracy theories for a long time generated official knowledge, which changed only during the 1960s, exactly at the moment when the concerns about them reached the mainstream with the writings of Hofstadter.[57]

Conclusion: Plotting a Transdisciplinary and Transnational Future

As this overview shows, like conspiracy theories themselves, conspiracy theory research is currently mushrooming (or, perhaps more accurately, even if conspiracy theories are not necessarily more widespread than in the past, then conspiracy theories as a social problem have become prominent in part because both academic research and popular journalism have turned them into an object of inquiry). We have restricted ourselves here to fields that have already produced a substantial body of works, and have not discussed the ever more numerous contributions from scholars in disciplines that are just beginning to address the issue. Middle Eastern Studies, for example, where research had for a long time been impeded by Pipes' application of the pathologizing paradigm, has recently produced more nuanced studies.[58] Other disciplines, such as religious studies or ethnology, have also contributed at least a few studies to the understanding of conspiracy theory.[59] Moreover, we have also bypassed here the considerable body of research published in languages other than English.[60]

However, as our overview has also made clear, the various disciplines operate with vastly different conceptualizations of conspiracy theory. Research in psychology and research in cultural studies, for example, approach the subject from almost diametrically opposed premises, and there is little dialogue between the two. The fundamental assumptions of each discipline are at odds: Where psychologists are keen to find the *universal* predictors and drivers of conspiracy ideation beyond local difference, cultural historians are concerned to investigate the ways that conspiracy theory has functioned in *specific* historical, political, and media environments, arguing that even the very concept of "conspiracy theory" as a describable social and psychological phenomenon has its own history that cannot simply be taken

for granted. It remains an open question whether more research into conspiracy theories in different cultures, regimes, and periods will produce a convergence on a single analytical model, or whether it will only reveal further complexities and contradictions.

Conversely, scholars from quantitative disciplines such as psychology and political science find the narrowness of the evidence base in cultural and historical studies frustrating, even if they find the hypotheses intriguing. Scholars in both camps sometimes point to work conducted in the other field in their introductions, but rarely ever seriously engage with it. Thus, there is no cross-disciplinary dialogue on contradictory findings and differing methodologies. Moreover, even those who draw on the findings of different disciplines are usually only aware of work published in the two or three languages they know. Due to the narrow perspectives of individual researchers, scholarship on conspiracy theory is fragmented and has not yet been able to answer various overarching questions and provide meaningful comparisons between the case studies. The enormous progress made over the last couple of years is thus in danger of being stalled, as scholars tend to reinvent the wheel instead of truly advancing knowledge.

Yet, whereas a decade ago there was a real lack of any detailed research, there is now a sufficient basis to push conspiracy theory research a step further. Research across the disciplines has reached a critical mass that now makes transdisciplinary and transnational research projects both feasible and desirable. Such projects, though, will demand intellectual openness from their practitioners. Researchers must be ready to seriously engage with colleagues who approach the topic from vastly different angles and with sometimes diametrically opposed assumptions. In other words, they must display exactly the openness to opposing ideas which conspiracy theorists are thought to lack.

Notes

1. Popper, Karl R. 2002. *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*. New York: Routledge; Wood, Gordon S. 1982. "Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style: Causality and Deceit in the Eighteenth Century." *William and Mary Quarterly* 39(3): 402–441; Zwierlein, Cornel, and Beatrice de Graaf. 2013. "Security and Conspiracy in Modern History." *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 38(1): 7–45; Pagán, Victoria E. 2012. *Conspiracy Theory in Latin Literature*. Austin: University of Texas Press; Roisman, Joseph. 2006. *The Rhetoric of Conspiracy in Ancient Athens*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
2. Cochin, Augustin. 1909. *La Crise de l'Histoire Révolutionnaire: Taine et M. Aulard*. Paris: Honoré Champion; Stauffer, Vernon. 1918. *New England and the Bavarian Illuminati*. Diss. New York: Columbia University Press; McKenzie-McHarg, Andrew. 2018. *The Hidden History of Conspiracy Theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
3. Hofstadter, Richard. 1995. *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

4. Thalmann, Katharina. 2014. "'John Birch Blues': The Problematization of Conspiracy Theory in the Early Cold-War Era." *COPAS* 15(1). https://copas.uni-regensburg.de/article/view/182 (Accessed December 18, 2017); Bratich, Jack Z. 2008. *Conspiracy Panics: Political Rationality and Popular Culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press; Fenster, Mark. 2008. *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture*. Rev. ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
5. Thalmann, " 'John Birch Blues,' " 6.
6. Lasswell, Harold D. 1986. *Psychopathology and Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 78; Adorno, Theodor W., Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson, and R. Nevitt Sanford. 1950. *The Authoritarian Personality: Part Two*. New York: Wiley, 611.
7. Loewenthal, Leo and Norbert. Gutermann. 1949. *Prophets of Deceit: A Study of the Techniques of the American Agitator*. New York: Harper.
8. Thalmann, " 'John Birch Blues,' " 7.
9. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, 94. Italicized text in the original.
10. Shils, Edward. 1956. *The Torment of Secrecy: The Background and Consequences of American Security Politics*. New York: Free Press; Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1955. "The Sources of the Radical Right." In *The New American Right*, ed. Daniel Bell. New York: Criterion; Rovere, Richard H. 1959. *Senator Joe McCarthy*. New York: Harper Colophon.
11. Thalmann, " 'John Birch Blues,' " 11.
12. Bunzel, John H. 1967. *Anti-Politics in America: Reflections on the Anti-Political Temper and Its Distortions of the Democratic Process*. New York: Knopf; Lipset, Seymour Martin, and Earl Raab. 1970. *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790–1970*. New York: Harper.
13. Thalmann, " 'John Birch Blues,' " 11.
14. Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style*, 7, 39.
15. Bratich, *Conspiracy Panics*, 31–32.
16. Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style*, 36–37.
17. Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories*, 36.
18. Bailyn, Bernarnd. 1967. "Foreword." In *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. Cambridge: Belknap; Davis, David Brion. 1970. *The Slave Power Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press; Boyer, Paul, and Stephen Nissenbaum. 1974. *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press; Schwartz, Barry. 1987. *George Washington: The Making of an American Symbol.* New York: Free Press; Foner, Eric. 1995. *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press.
19. Pfau, Michael. 2005. *The Political Style of Conspiracy: Chase, Sumner, and Lincoln*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.
20. Wood, "Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style."
21. Cubitt, Geoffrey. 1989. "Conspiracy Myths and Conspiracy Theories." *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 20(1): 18.
22. Wood, Michael J., Karen M. Douglas, and Robbie M. Sutton. 2012. "Dead and Alive: Beliefs in Contradictory Conspiracy Theories." *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 3(6): 767–773.
23. Goertzel, Ted. 1994. "Belief in Conspiracy Theories." *Political Psychology* 15(4): 731–742.
24. Swami, Virna, Tomas Chamorro-Pemuzic, and Adrian Furnham. 2010. "Unanswered Questions: A Preliminary Investigation of Personality and Individual Difference Predictors of 9/11 Conspiracist Beliefs." *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 24(6): 749–761; Sutton, Robbie M., and Karen M. Douglas. 2014. "Examining the Monological Nature of Conspiracy Theories." In *Power, Politics, and Paranoia*. eds. Jan-Willem van Prooijen and Paul A. M. van Lange. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
25. Lewandowsky, Stephan, Gilles E. Gignac, and Klaus Oberauer. 2013. "The Role of Conspiracist Ideation and Worldviews in Predicting Rejection of Science." *PloS ONE* 8(10). https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0075637 (Accessed December 18, 2017).

26. Darwin, Hannah, Nick Neave, and Joni Holmes. 2011. "Belief in Conspiracy Theories: The Role of Paranormal Beliefs, Paranoid Ideation and Schizotypy." *Personal and Individual Differences* 50(8): 1289–1293; Baron, David, Kevin Morgan, Tony Towell, Boris Altemeyer, and Viren Swami. 2014. "Associations between Schizotypy and Belief in Conspiracist Ideation." *Personality and Individual Differences* 70(November): 156–159; Abakalina-Paap, Marina, Walter G. Stephan, Traci Craig, and W. Larry Gregory. 1999. "Beliefs in Conspiracies." *Political Psychology* 20(3): 637–647; Goertzel, "Belief in Conspiracy Theories"; Swami, Chamorro-Pemuzic, and Furnham, "Unanswered Questions"; Grzesiak-Feldman, Monika. 2013. "The Effect of High-Anxiety Situations on Conspiracy Thinking." *Current Psychology* 32(1): 100–118; Jolley, Daniel. 2013. "Are Conspiracy Theories Just Harmless Fun?" *The Psychologist* 26(1): 60–62.
27. Swami, Chamorro-Pemuzic, and Furnham, "Unanswered Questions"; Imhoff, Roland, and Martin Bruder. 2014. "Speaking Truth to (Un)Power: Conspiracy Mentality as a Generalised Political Attitude." *European Journal of Personality* 28(1): 25–43; Brotherton, Robert, Christopher C. French, and Alan D. Pickering. 2013. "Measuring Belief in Conspiracy Theories: The Generic Conspiracist Beliefs Scale." *Frontiers in Psychology* 4 (May). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00279 (Accessed December 18, 2017).
28. Swami, Viren, Martin Voracek, Stefan Stieger, Ulrich S. Tran, and Adrian Furnham. 2014. "Analytical Thinking Reduces Belief in Conspiracy Theories." *Cognition* 133.3(3): 572–585; Brotherton, French, and Pickering, "Measuring Belief in Conspiracy Theories"; Imhoff and Bruder, "Speaking Truth to (Un)Power."
29. Leman, Patrick J., and Marco Cinnirella. 2013. "Beliefs in Conspiracy Theories and the Need for Cognitive Closure." *Frontiers in Psychology* 4(June). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00378 (Accessed December 18, 2017).
30. Whitson, Jennifer A., Adam D. Galinsky, and A. Kay. 2015. "The Emotional Roots of Conspiratorial Perceptions, System Justification, and the Belief in the Paranormal." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 56(January): 89–95.
31. Jolley, Daniel, and Karen M. Douglas. 2014. "The Effects of Anti-Vaccine Conspiracy Theories on Vaccination Intentions." *PLoS ONE* 9(2). https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0089177 (Accessed December 18, 2017); Jolley, Daniel, and Karen M. Douglas. 2014. "The Social Consequences of Conspiracism: Exposure to Conspiracy Theories Decrease Intentions to Engage in Politics and to Reduce One's Carbon Footprint." *British Journal of Psychology* 105(1): 35–56.
32. Swami, Voracek, Stieger, Tran, and Furnham, "Analytical Thinking Reduces Belief in Conspiracy Theories."
33. Oliver, J. Eric, and Thomas J. Wood. 2014. "Conspiracy Theories and the Paranoid Style(s) of Mass Opinion." *American Journal of Political Science* 58(4): 952–966; Sunstein, Cass R., and Adrian Vermeule. 2009. "Conspiracy Theories: Causes and Cures." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 17(2): 202–227; Uscinski, Joseph E., and Joseph M. Parent. 2014. *American Conspiracy Theories.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
34. Sunstein and Vermeule, "Conspiracy Theories: Causes and Cures," 211.
35. Uscinski and Parent, *American Conspiracy Theories*, 130.
36. Oliver and Wood, "Conspiracy Theories and the Paranoid Style(s) of Mass Opinion," 953.
37. Miller, Joanne M., Kyle L. Saunders, and Christina E. Farhart. 2015. "Conspiracy Endorsement as Motivated Reasoning: The Moderating Roles of Political Knowledge and Trust." *American Journal of Political Science* 60(4): 824–844.
38. Nyhan, Brendan, Jason Reifler, and Peter A. Ubel. 2013. "The Hazards of Correcting Myths about Health Care Reform." *Medical Care* 51(2):127–132; Nyhan, Brendan, and Jason Reifler. 2015. "Does Correcting Myths about the Flu Vaccine Work? An Experimental Evaluation of the Effects of Corrective Information." *Vaccine* 33(3): 459–464.
39. Pigden, Charles. 1995. "Popper Revisited, or What is Wrong with Conspiracy Theories?" *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 25(1): 3–34.

40. Ibid.; Coady, David. 2013. "Conspiracy Theories and Official Stories." *International Journal of Applied Philosophy* 17(2): 197–209; Basham, Lee. 2003. "Malevolent Global Conspiracy." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 34(1): 91–103.
41. Dentith, Matthew R.X. 2014. *The Philosophy of Conspiracy Theories.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
42. Keeley, Brian L. 1999. "Of Conspiracy Theories." *The Journal of Philosophy* 96(3): 109–126; Bale, Jeffrey M. 2017. "Political Paranoia vs. Political Realism: On Distinguishing between Bogus Conspiracy Theories and Genuine Conspiratorial Politics." *Patterns of Prejudice* 41(1): 45–60; Räikkä, Juha. 2009. "On Political Conspiracy Theories." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 17(2): 185–201.
43. Clarke, Steve. 2002. "Conspiracy Theories and Conspiracy Theorizing." *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 32(3): 131–150.
44. Husting, Ginna and Martin Orr. 2007. "Dangerous Machinery: 'Conspiracy Theorist' as a Transpersonal Strategy of Exclusion." *Symbolic Interaction* 30(2): 127–150.
45. Barkun, Michael. A 2003. *Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptical Visions in Contemporary America.* Berkeley: University of California Press.
46. Goldberg, Robert Alan. 2001. *Enemies Within: The Culture of Conspiracy in Modern America.* New Haven: Yale University Press; Olmsted, Kathryn S. 2009. *Real Enemies: Conspiracy Theories and American Democracy, World War I to 9/11.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
47. Ibid., 11.
48. Dean, Jodi. 1998. *Aliens in America: Conspiracy Cultures from Outerspace to Cyberspace.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories*; Melley, Timothy. 2000. *Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Knight, Peter. 2000. *Conspiracy Culture: From Kennedy to the X-Files*. London: Routledge.
49. Dean, *Aliens in America*, 17.
50. Melley, *Empire of Conspiracy*, 7.
51. Boltanski, Luc. 2014. *Mysteries and Conspiracies: Detective Stories, Spy Novels and the Making of Modern Societies.* Trans. C. Potter. Cambridge: Polity Press.
52. Knight, *Conspiracy Culture*, 10.
53. Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories*, 84.
54. Bratich, *Conspiracy Panics*, 7.
55. Birchall, Clare. 2006. *Knowledge Goes Pop: From Conspiracy Theory to Gossip.* Oxford: Berg.
56. Ibid., 33.
57. Butter, Michael. 2014. *Plots, Designs, and Schemes: American Conspiracy Theories from the Puritans to the Present.* Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter.
58. Pipes, Daniel. 1996. *The Hidden Hand: Middle East Fears of Conspiracy*. Basingstoke: Macmillan; Gray, Matt C. 2010. *Conspiracy Theories in the Arab World: Sources and Politics.* London: Routledge; Butter, Michael, and Maurus Reinkowski, eds. 2014. *Conspiracy Theories in the United States and the Middle East: A Comparative Approach.* Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter.
59. West, Harry G. and Todd Sanders, eds. 2003. *Transparency and Conspiracy: Ethnographies of Suspicion in the New World Order.* Durham: Duke University Press; Dyrendal, Asbjorn. 2015. "Confluence of Spirituality and Conspiracy Theory?" *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 30(3): 367–382.
60. Taguieff, Pierre-André. 2005. *La Foire aux illumines. Ésotérisme, théorie du complot, extrémisme.* Paris: Mille et une nuits; Klausnitzer, Ralf. 2007. *Poesie und Konspiration: Beziehungssinn und Zeichenökonomie von Verschwörungsszenarien in Publizistik, Literatur und Wissenschaft 1750–1850.* Berlin: de Gruyter; Blanusa, Nebojsa. 2011. *Teorije zavjera I hrvatska politicka zbilja 1980–2007.* Zagreb: Plejada.