#### Framework excludes our affirmative as ‘not even wrong.’ The official account of topicality renders us deviant, making us scapegoats for the problems they highlight, like their lack of preparedness to debate about 9/11

Bratich 2008 (Jack Z. Bratich, Associate Professor of Journalism and Media Studies at Rutgers, *Conspiracy Panics Political Rationality and Popular Culture*, 2008, Accessed via library.nu)

To understand this form of attention, I borrow a line from Dick Hebdige on youth culture and say that conspiracy theory emerges as a category only when it is a problem. Put another way, conspiracy theories are “subjugated knowledges.” In the first of his “Two Lectures,” Foucault (1980b) distinguishes “official knowledges” from subjugated knowledges. Subjugated knowledges are “blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematic theory” (p. 80). They “have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity” (p. 83). In other words, “not even wrong.” These buried and popular knowledges can, through research and analysis, emerge to reveal the **“ruptural effects of** conflict and **struggle** that the order imposed by functionalist or **systematizing** thought is designed to mask” (p. 80). Studying conspiracy theories as subjugated knowledges would demonstrate how some accounts become dominant only through struggle. An official account comes to be official only through a victory over, and erasure of conflict with, conspiracy accounts. Among the competing accounts for any event, the official version is not merely the winner in a game of truth— **it determines who the players can be.** These constitutive and disqualifying practices are my main topic. Certainly this project will discuss particular conspiracy narratives or case studies. Yet I will focus primarily on strategies of subjugation, for they succinctly foreground the relations between power and knowledge. Despite the value of analyzing conspiracy theories as unified narratives (elaborating their characteristics, delineating their rhetorical tropes), I am more interested in assessing the forms of rationality and politics that lead us to be concerned with interpreting these narratives. In John Fiske’s (1994) terms, I evaluate “the strategies by which . . . disbelief is validated and . . . counterknowledge is discredited” (p. 192). Rather than positing the conceptual unity of conspiracy theories in order to identify their deep meaning, I analyze the discursive practices that channel, shape, incite, and deploy conspiracy theories as meaningful.1 But here I want to stress that this method is more than labeling theory. A strategy of subjugation is not just a repressive practice (though it can be that, too). Conspiracy accounts are not just excluded with sheer conceptual power by official knowledges from the public sphere. For one thing, power often incites us to discuss these subjugated knowledges (in popular culture, in journalism, in legislative bodies, in courts). These conceptual practices have a productive power for official apparatuses. Rather than being suppressed, conspiracy theories are, if anything, useful. We can begin to see this usefulness in the kinds of metaphors often employed in making sense of conspiracy theories. Numerous articles described the 1990s as an “age of paranoia” or a “culture of paranoia” (Alter, 1997; Mishra, 1995; Fukuyama, 1995; Gardner, 1997).2 “Paranoia—not the clinical but the cultural kind—may well be our national religion,” says Richard Leiby (1995) in the Style section of the Washington Post. Especially in the Oklahoma City bombing aftermath, pundits had a habit of turning “the paranoid style” (already a synthetic and abstract concept) into a sign of the historical conjuncture. The ineluctable Zeitgeist was invoked through repeated environmental tropes, as in an “atmosphere” or “climate” of paranoia. This naturalized imprecision gives the conspiracy theory “problem” the status of a mood, a tone, and an indeterminate quality. Even in scholarly analyses, meteorological metaphors abound. Elaine Showalter (1997) goes one step further, linking the weather with epidemiology: Cultural hysteria and its paranoid accelerators have caused much harm: the hysterical epidemics of the 1990s have already gone on too long, and they continue to do damage: in distracting us from the real problems and crises of modern society, in undermining a respect for evidence and truth, and in helping support an atmosphere of conspiracy and suspicion. (p. 206) Here we see a prime example of what I’m calling “conspiracy panic.” The term panic is borrowed from a sociological framework, best known in the work of Stanley Cohen. The theory essentially argues that Western society maintains its identity via the **management** and **expulsion** of deviance. A moral panic defines a minority group as folk devils, “a condition, episode, person or group of persons [who] become defined as a threat to **societal values** and interests” (Cohen, 1972, p. 9). Cohen studied mod and rocker subcultures and the means by which they were depicted as antisocial. While most of the time the cultural target is a definable group, at times it can inform phenomena like the introduction of new technologies (e.g., the early 20th-century condemnations of film and radio by religious leaders, see Bratich, 2005). Now the term applies to moral outrages over the violent effects of media on youth, video games, pornography, drug use, AIDS, cyberculture, satanic ritual abuse, pedophilia, immigration, cults. They often involve protecting some dominant group (children, white women, heterosexuals) from perceived pernicious influences. Jeffrey Weeks, in his famous work on the historical regulation of sexuality, says that a panic “crystallizes widespread fears and anxieties, and often deals with them by **not seeking the real causes of problems** and conditions which they demonstrate but by displacing them onto . . . an identified social group (1981, p. 14; quoted in Soderlund, 2002).

#### Western society needs to manage and expel deviance to maintain its identity. Anyone who believes the CIA orchestrated 9/11 or harbors other “conspiracy theories about Westerners” is considered a potential terrorist by the police

Lopez, 2013 (Ralph, September 19, “FBI calls half of populace with 9/11 doubts potential terrorists,” <http://www.digitaljournal.com/article/358624>)

A Department of Justice memo instructs local police, under a program named "communities against terrorism," to consider anyone who harbors "conspiracy theories" about 9/11 to be a potential terrorist.

The memo thus adds 9/11-official-story skeptics to a growing list of targets described by federal law enforcement to be security threats, such as those who express "libertarian philosophies," "Second Amendment-oriented views," interest in "self-sufficiency," "fears of Big Brother or big government," and "Declarations of Constitutional rights and civil liberties."

A newly released national poll shows that 48 percent of Americans either have some doubts about the official account of 9/11, or do not believe it at all.

The FBI memo entitled "Potential Indicators of Terrorist Activities Related to Sleepers" says that people who should be 'considered suspicious' of possible involvement in "terrorist activity" include those who hold the "attitude" described as " Conspiracy theories about Westerners." The memo continues: "e.g. (sic) the CIA arranged for 9/11 to legitimize the invasion of foreign lands."

#### We have normalized simulation. It is not we who will change the USFG, it is the USFG that has changed us

Pitkin 98 (hanna, Prof of polis ci @ Berkeley, The Attack of the Blob, pp 269---274)

Most striking of all is what Arendt says about ideological illusions—deliberately imposedpolicies ofunreality to which those who impose them eventually themselves fall victim. The topic is central to totalitarianism**,** which so disorients people and makes them doubt their own capacity to perceive reality that they become desperate for the security apparently offered by ideology's "entirely fictitious world." The same "aura of systematic mendacity" and widespread "practice of self-deception" formed the background for Eichmann's thoughtlessness." Still later the theme became central to Arendt's diagnosis of America **in** the era of the Vietnam War—not, of course, as totalitarian, but as exemplifying the post-totalitarian threat of the social.

Arendt depicted Americans as living in a "defactualized world," in which genuine, substantive interests and goals had been almost entirely displaced by the imposition and frantic defense of various "images" and "messages." It was becoming our world of impression management, public relations, scenarios, spin-doctors, sound-bytes, deniability, and credibility; already "image-making [had become] global policy."70 Surrounded by technocrats—by "scientifically minded brain trusters in the councils of government," who "do not think" or "judge" or perceive reality but only "calculate"—and shielded from the real world by layer upon layer of onionlike bureaucracy, **the president** at the center, supposed wielder of enormous power, **is the one most "likely to be an ideal victim of complete manipulation"** (108, 37, 9, emphasis in original).

Although the Vietnam War and even the Cold War are long past, it seems to me that the conditions Arendt thus describes have only gotten worse, particularly with the advent of various kinds of "virtual reality" provided by the communications and computer industries, by docu-dramas and infomercials, and indeed by the whole experience of watching television, playing video games, engaging in computer simulation, and "visiting sites" on the world wide web, activities that children now begin before they can even walk or talk. As Marshall McLuhan presciently argued, the problem is not primarily the content of the new media, nor the opportunity they offer for widespread indoctrination and deception, but the role that watching and "interacting" with them plays in our lives, how it shapes us: "the medium is the message."71

Indeed, as Andrew Ross has argued, the content is sometimes rebellious and critical, just as the plethora of television channels and the capabilities of the Internet could in principle be used for purposes of Arendtian politicization, but the effect of these media themselves in people's lives and thinking seems to me stronger and more pervasive than any such messages or uses. Even Ross acknowledges that despite those sitcoms and talk shows that express popular disrespect for experts and officials, the narratives somehow work to reinforce their authority: "In the end, doctors and professors and patriarchs know best."72 True, people are not taken in, but thev behave as though they were.

Vaclav Havel called it "liv|ing] within a lie." People are not required to believe the lie, **but only to live as if they did**, for by doing that they "confirm the system, fulfill the system, make the system, are the system."73 But Arendt suggested that "lie" is a notion inappropriate to the kind of disorientation induced in our world, where cynicism is not just compatible with but actively stimulates deference, withdrawal, and resentful conformity.74 Virtual reality displaces the very possibility of reality, so that character, institutions, and thought are all shaped in directions that serve the social. As Benhabib remarks, "radio talk shows have not encouraged public deliberation," and it seems to me that even those who think themselves actively engaged against "the system" too often end up fighting merely symbolic battles, diligently enforcing "correct" forms of expression rather than any more substantive changes.7'

Much of what Arendt called hopeless confusion, it seems to me, has to do with living our lives as if in a virtual rather than the real world, continually refusing our own perceptions and judgments to the contrary. Since this way of thinking greatly interferes with effective action, conditions in the real world get worse, and the gap between thought and reality widens, necessitating ever more illusion. We have much practice in what one is supposed to say (and to refrain from saying), little practice in formulating in words what we really feel or observe. We learn how to "shine it on," how to sound like an expert, how to sound agreeable and uncon-troversial, and even how to protest in standardized ways. **We do not learn how to tell it like it is,**how to bear witness, let alone how to deliberate seriously with others about what really troubles us or them,in a way that might eventuate in shared action. From childhood on, in virtually all our institutions, we reward euphemism, salesmanship, slogans, and we punish and suppress truth-telling, originality, thoughtfulness.

So we continually cultivate ways of (not) thinking that induce the social. What Arendt suggests would instead promote free citizenship is a tough-minded, open-eyed readiness to perceive and judge reality for oneself, in terms of concrete experience and independent, critical theorizing. Understanding what is going on requires an "**unpremeditated attentive facing up to . . . reality,"** swayed neither by personal escapism into a private dream world nor by conformism to public opinion**.**76 Such courageous realism is not to be confused with a cynical or behavioralist reduc-tionism in which principles and commitments are dismissed as unreal, nor with a skeptical or deconstructionist denial of objective reality itself. On the contrary, Arendt's realism is like that of Machiavelli "at his best," neither cynical nor hortatory, tough-minded about human weakness and fallibility and about the limits that true necessity sets for politics, yet recognizing the tangible, crucially important achievements of human history. Action, freedom, and justice are as real for her as greed, cowardice, and selfishness, or as bread and air, barbed wire and bombs.77

#### Fiat privileges a form of wishful naïve thinking that keeps us from investigating the truths about how power and the law operate today

Stannard, 2006 (Matthew, Feb 21, “Notes on Pierre Schlag and Normativity,” <http://legalcommunication.blogspot.com/2006/02/notes-on-pierre-schlag-and-normativity.html>)

Schlag's critique of the objectivity of law takes the form of a critique of "normativity." What is "normative legal thought?" It is when legal scholars, advocates and activists take a position on what the law **ought** to be, how it should be interpreted, etc. One of the main problems with normative legal thought, according to Schlag, is that normative thinking is **NAIVE**. Advocates are unaware, or at least seem to be unaware, of how power works, whose hands are on the real levers of power, who essentially "owns" the law. Because of this, legal scholars, advocates, and activists constantly say "this should be done," "there ought to be a law that says this," "the law should be interpreted in this way..." In a larger sense, they say "we need more justice..." etc. They become SELF-SATISFIED with their rhetoric about the way things ought to be, and **this** self-satisfaction ***obscures the real reasons things are the way they are***--such as the way in which corporate and capitalist interests control the political and legal process, the way in which implicit and entrenched racism, sexism, classism, etc., overwhelms the supposed solvency of normative legal advocacy.

#### Policies are made by elites behind closed doors to maintain power and control. We have fallen for the rhetoric of liberalism, unwilling to believe the u.s. government would help orchestrate something like 9/11 and kill American citizens

Mearsheimer 2k3 (John, ‘the tragedy of great power politics,’ p. unknown, google books)

Because Americans dislike realpolitik, public discourse about foreign policy in the United States is usually couched in the language of liberalism. Hence the pronouncements of the policy elites are heavily flavored with optimism and ***moralism***. American academics are especially good at promoting liberal thinking in the marketplace of ideas. ***Behind closed doors***, however, the elites who make national security policy speak mostly the language of power, not that of principle, and the United States acts in the international system according to the dictates of realist logic. In essence, a discernible gap separates ***public rhetoric*** from the ***actual conduct*** of American foreign policy.

#### Fiat is a trap

Foucault 88— (Michel, interview with Alessandro Fontana, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984* pg 51-52)

FOUCAULT I believe too much in truth **not to suppose that there are different truths and different ways of speaking the truth**. Of course, **one** can't expect **the government to tell the truth**, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. On the other hand, **we can demand of those who govern us** a certain truth **as to** their ultimate aims**,** the general choices of their tactics**, and** a number of particular points in their programs: this is the parrhesia (free speech) of the governed, **who** can **and** must **question those who govern them**, in the name of the knowledge, the experience they have, **by virtue of being citizens**, of what those who govern do, of the meaning of their action, of the decisions they have taken.

However, **one must** avoid a trap in which **those who govern try to catch intellectuals** and into which they often fall: "Put yourselves in our place and tell us what you would do." **It is** not **a question one has to answer**. To make a decision on some question **implies a knowledge of evidence that is refused us**, an analysis of the situation that we have not been able to make. This is a trap. Nevertheless, as governed, **we have a** perfect right **to ask questions about the truth**: "What are you doing, for example, when you are hostile to Euromissiles, or when, on the contrary, you support them, when you restructure the Lorraine steel industry, when you open up the question of private education."

#### Our critical praxis solves better than fiat – proscriptive discourse immobilizes power relations

Foucault ‘80 (Michel, “Questions of Method,” in “The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality,” (1991), by Michel Foucault, Graham Burchell, and Colin Gordon, p. 82-85)

You're quite right to pose this problem of quite the same as being in prison - are not likely to find advice or instructions in my books that tell them 'What is to be done'. But my **project** is precisely to bring it about that they **'no longer know what to do'**, so that the acts, gestures, discourses which up until then had seemed to go without saying become problematic, difficult, dangerous. This effect is intentional. And then I have some news for you: for me the problem of the prisons isn't one anaesthesis, one which is of capital importance. It's quite true that I don't feel myself capable of effecting the 'subversion of all codes', 'dislocation of all orders of knowledge, 'revolutionary affirmation of violence', 'overturning 'of all contemporary culture', these hopes and prospectuses which currently underpin all those brilliant intellectual ventures which I admire all the more because the worth and previous achievements of those who undertake them guarantees an appropriate outcome. My project is far from being of comparable scope. To give some assistance in wearing away certain self-evidences and commonplaces about madness, normality, illness, crime and punishment; to bring it about, together with many others, that certain phrases can no longer be spoken so lightly, certain acts no longer, or at least no longer so unhesitatingly, performed; to contribute to changing certain things in people's ways of perceiving and doing things; to participate in this difficult displacement of forms of sensibility and thresholds of tolerance - I hardly feel capable 'of attempting much more than that. If only what I have tried to say might somehow, to some degree, not remain altogether foreign to some such real effects ... And yet I realize how much all this can remain precarious, how easily it can all lapse back into somnolence. But you are right, one has to be more suspicious. Perhaps what I have written has had an anaesthetic effect. But one still needs to distinguish on whom. To judge by what the psychiatric authorities have had to say, the cohorts on the right who charge me with being against any form of power, those on the left who call me the 'last bulwark of the bourgeoisie' (this isn't a 'Kanapa phrase'; on the contrary), the worthy psychoanalyst who likened me to the Hitler of Mein Kampf, the number of times I've been 'autopsied' and 'buried' during the past fifteen years - well, I have the impression of having had an irritant rather than anaesthetic effect on a good many people. The epidermi bristle with a constancy I find encouraging. A journal recently warned its readers in deliciously Petainist style against accepting as a credo what I had had to say about sexuality ('the importance of the subject', 'the personality of the author' rendered my enterprise 'dangerous'). No risk of anaesthesis in that direction. But I agree with you, these are trifles, amusing to note but tedious to collect. The only important problem is what happens on the ground. We have known at least since the nineteenth century the difference between anaesthesis and paralysis. Let's talk about paralysis first. Who has been paralyzed? Do you think what I wrote on the history of psychiatry paralyzed those people who had already been concerned for some time about what was happening in psychiatric institutions? And , seeing what has been happening in and around the prisons, I don't think the effect of paralysis is very evident there either. As far as the people in prison are concerned, things aren't doing too badly. On the other hand, it's true that certain people, such as those who work in the institutional setting of the prison - which is not for the 'social workers' but one for the prisoners. And on that side, I'm not so sure what's been said over the last fifteen years has been quite so - how shall I put it? - demobilizing. But paralysis isn't the same thing as anaesthesis - on the contrary. It's in so far as there's been an awakening to a whole series of problems that the difficulty of doing anything comes to be felt. Not that this effect is an end in itself. But it seems to me that 'what is to be done' ought not to be determined from above by reformers, be they prophetic or legislative, but by a long work of comings and goings, of exchanges, reflections, trials, different analyses. If the social workers you are talking about don't know which way to turn, this just goes to show that they're looking, and hence are not anaesthetized or sterilized at all- on the contrary. And it's because of the need not to tie them down or immobilize them that there can be no question for me of trying to tell 'what is to be done'. If the questions posed by the social workers you spoke of are going to assume their full amplitude, the most important thing is not to bury them under the weight of prescriptive, prophetic discourse. The necessity of reform mustn't be allowed to become a form of ~~blackmail~~ serving to limit, reduce or halt the exercise of criticism. Under no circumstances should one pay attention to those who tell one: 'Don't criticize, since you're not capable of carrying out a reform.' **That's ministerial cabinet talk**. Critique doesn't have to be the premise of a deduction which concludes: this then is what needs to be done. It should be an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is. Its use should be in processes of conflict and confrontation, essays in refusal. It doesn't have to lay down the law for the law. It isn't a stage in a programming. It is a challenge directed to what is. The problem, you see, is one for the subject who acts - the subject of action through which the real is transformed. If prisons and punitive mechanisms are transformed, it won't be because a plan of reform has found its way into the heads of the social workers; it will be when those who have to do with that penal reality, all those people, have come into collision with each other and with themselves, run into dead-ends, problems and impossibilities, been through conflicts and confrontations; when critique has been played out in the real, not when reformers have realized their ideas.