

### Conspiracy Theories

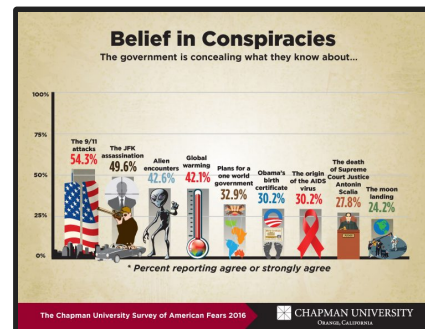
#### Too Many Connections



George Matthews, Plymouth State University

2020

### The Puzzle of Conspiracy Theories



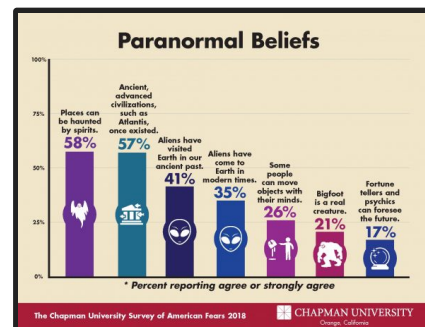
- They enjoy widespread and growing support and yet have little evidence in favor of them.

### The Puzzle of Conspiracy Theories



- They are predictable in their emergence in times of crisis and great social stress.

### The Puzzle of Conspiracy Theories



- They are individually easy to debunk or disprove, even as they seem impossible to combat on a wider scale.

### The Puzzle of Conspiracy Theories



- They are dangerous since they amplify inter-group hostility, encourage violence and subvert efforts to deal with social problems.

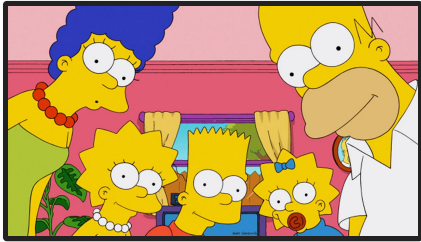
### Approaches to Conspiracy Thinking

#### 1. Accept them.

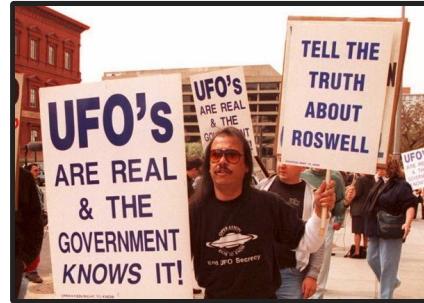


*Approaches to Conspiracy Thinking*

2. Debunk them one at a time.

*Approaches to Conspiracy Thinking*

3. Accept relativism about them.

*Approaches to Conspiracy Thinking*

4. Try to explain them.

*Elements of Conspiracy Thinking*

- Search for control and meaning in a world out of control and confusing.

*Elements of Conspiracy Thinking*

- Someone is to blame and we can thus do something about our predicament.

*Elements of Conspiracy Thinking*

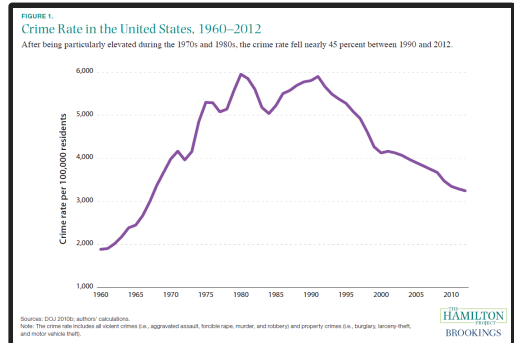
- Symbolic connections, hidden meanings, deep significance of events, invisible agents – these ideas resonate with magical thinking and come naturally to us.

### Elements of Conspiracy Thinking

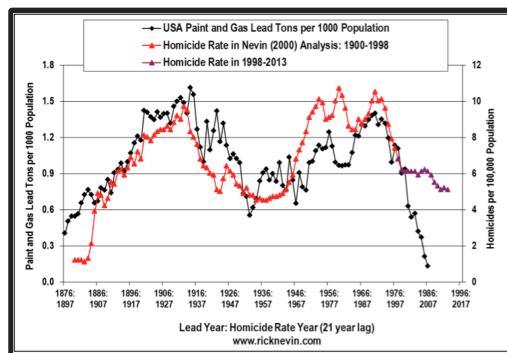


- Common narrative: there is a nefarious plot, organized by a secret elite, which most people don't see or suspect, but I have figured it out and now they are trying to kill me.

### Another Puzzle

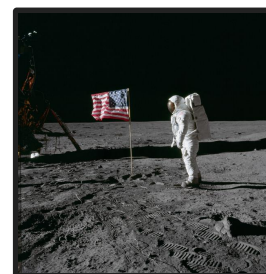


### The Criminal Element



### Find out more

Wikipedia's List of Conspiracy Theories  
Conspiracy Theories Cannot Be Stopped  
Conspiracy Theories are Dangerous  
The Secret History of Lead



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