

# Conspiracy theories and their appearance

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Conspiracy theories have existed since the dawn of time. From the time of the Roman emperors to our modern society, people have created theories to help explain certain situations. They are the center of debate among many, including scientists, scholars, and celebrities. These are theories about if the Earth is flat or not, if USA astronauts really landed on the moon, what the actual plot of the 9/11 attack was, and so on. Whether the theories are accurate or not, they provide different opinions and a good topic for conversation.

To understand the world of conspiracy theories, you first have to know what a conspiracy theory is. David Coady, a lecturer in philosophy at the University of Tasmania, Australia, claims that there are two parts to a conspiracy theory. The first is that it involves a group of agents acting together because conspiring alone isn't effective. The second part is that a conspiracy starts off secretly because they're usually unorthodox ways of thinking. (Coady, 1). These are features that are also suggested by the actual word itself. The word "conspire" splits up into the Latin words con- which means "with", and -spirare which means "to whisper", suggesting a secret shared among others (Mahoney).

If one were to look back into history, examples of conspiracy theories can be found throughout all different eras and cultures. For example, the death of the Roman emperor, Nero Claudius Caesar. In ancient times, conspiracy theories were being spread about the death of the emperor who supposedly committed suicide in 68 AD ("The Great Fire of Rome"). Some of these theories claimed that Nero faked his death and was secretly still alive, plotting to return and take his throne back; other theories said that Nero

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actually was dead, but would return from the dead to take his throne (“The Great Fire of Rome”).

There are many examples of conspiracy theories in today’s society. New technology such as smartphones and social media that makes communication easy has also made conspiracy theories so much easier to share and access. It doesn’t take much to get your story out and available to the entire world, so stories can be created and shared all the time.

They can also have an impact on the health and safety of whole populations. According to Kurt Eichenwald and his article ‘The Plots to Destroy America; Conspiracy theories are a real and present danger’, in 2008, no one in America caught measles, and only 49 contracted whooping cough – both diseases easily avoidable through vaccination. Five years later, measles infected at least 276 people in the U. S., and cases of the cough exploded to at least 22, 616. Medical experts associated this trend to declining numbers of people being vaccinated, because of a conspiracy that doctors and pharmaceutical companies are hiding the dangers of the shots to protect profits. Now, because of this false conspiracy promoted by scientific frauds and celebrities, vaccine-preventable diseases that were about to leave the United States are staying here (Eichenwald). ‘These kinds of theories have the effect of completely distorting any rational discussion we can have in this country,’ says Mark Potok, a senior fellow at the Southern Poverty Law Center. ‘They are having a real impact now.’ (Eichenwald).

Scholars and scientists are usually very dismissive of conspiracy theories. It is argued that these intellectuals are entitled to an attitude of skepticism

toward the theories because conspiracy theorists have an irrational tendency to continue to believe in conspiracy theories, even after there has been researching done to prove that it is false (Clarke).

True or not, conspiracy theories play a large role in our society and history. Without these interesting and bizarre theories, some people wouldn't be interested in things like politics and wouldn't want to look into it more. Without these theories, certain situations wouldn't be investigated, even if the claims against them are far fetched, such as NASA faking the moon landing.

## **Works Cited**

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