

Conspiracy theories - which postulate the secret plots by malevolent powerful groups - have surrounded us for many years. Although they have been of interest to they have been in researchers' interest and the public's eye for a long time, they gained much more attention due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which gave fertile ground for the rise and spread of many conspiracies. Since a proliferation of conspiracy theories - both believing and disseminating - might have serious consequences, scientists are interested in examining these phenomena.

Past research indicated that conspiracy beliefs are linked to negative emotional experiences, for instance, uncertainty or anxiety. Recent studies have shown that not only emotions (or emotion-related phenomena, e.g., stress) but particularly the way people deal with them are linked to adopting conspiracy explanations. Specifically, conspiracy beliefs are underpinned by emotion dysregulation and maladaptive coping with stress. Indeed, **conspiracy theories-related phenomena are rooted in emotional processes**. A lack of psychological resources or coping skills to deal with psychological threats can lead to the transfer of negative emotions to the social world. Thus, belief in conspiracy theories can be triggered by negative emotional experiences, especially maladaptive approaches to emotions. In this project, we postulate that crucial emotion-related processes (here: core beliefs about emotions) that affect people's tendency to experience negative emotions can underpin conspiracy beliefs and conspiracy theories sharing.

Our project aims to **examine the role of maladaptive versus adaptive beliefs about emotions** (the core beliefs people hold about emotions – regarding two main dimensions: controllability and usefulness) in the endorsement of conspiracy theories and sharing conspiracy theories (spreading and discussing conspiracy theories). The literature on emotional processes underlying conspiracy theories-related phenomena is limited - not much is known about the mechanisms of these links, as well as the basic processes (e.g., core emotion beliefs) that precede emotion regulation. Moreover, the research has not paid much attention to other conspiracy phenomena, such as conspiracy sharing, which may contribute to the prevalence of conspiracies.

Therefore, our project will analyze the sources of belief in conspiracy theories and their dissemination in the domain of emotional beliefs. We argue that the outcomes of core emotion beliefs might also expand to the social sphere, shaping the way we explain world events surrounding us. We assume **that conspiracy beliefs and sharing should be higher among those with more maladaptive (vs. adaptive) emotion beliefs**. In other words, those holding more maladaptive emotion beliefs will be more prone to adopt conspiracy explanations and share conspiracy theories due to, for example, impaired emotion regulation or negative affect. Having core beliefs about the badness and uncontrollability of the crucial emotional sphere should translate to endorsing theories indicating that the world is a bad place, secretly run by powerful, malevolent groups who orchestrate all events. We will run a series of correlational and experimental studies to test these hypotheses.

**The project's results would shed new light on the emotional roots of conspiracy theories-related phenomena**, significantly expanding the current knowledge. Importantly, we will gain new insights into the so far unexplored area of conspiracy theories sharing. Finally, our research on the role of emotion beliefs in shaping conspiracy theories phenomena might further serve as promising methods of reducing the endorsement and sharing of conspiracy theories.

What are the relationships between emotion beliefs and conspiracy beliefs and sharing? Does changing emotion beliefs affect the proneness to believe and share conspiracies? We will answer these questions by implementing our project. We will inform you about the project results on our team's website: <https://psychpol.psych.pan.pl/> and on social media: <https://www.facebook.com/psychpollab>.