Six

ONCE MORE, WITH FEELING: CONSPIRACY THEORIES, CONTEMPT, AND AFFECTIVE GOVERNMENTALITY

Ginna Husting

When people ask me about my work, I often explain that I study media and conspiracy theories, and the ensuing conversation unfolds in a strikingly uniform way. Last week during an appointment, a dermatologist asked me about my academic specialty; I brought up conspiracy theories, and he immediately launched into a conversation about JFK. He asked if I had seen the 1992 JAMA articles reviewing the medical data on the assassination (I hadn't), and told me about a conspiracy theory running through the medical profession, "which just goes to show," he said, "that even really intelligent, educated people believe in these things!" He then launched into a kind of "test" to see which conspiracy theories I knew best. He said he hears them almost every day; most of his clients are "the real middle American public," (I think he meant "the working class," which accounts for most of his clientele), and he is stunned by the things they tell him. He even said he's actually baited patients a couple of times—just to see if he can construct a theory too extreme even for his most "paranoid" clients. He's never yet succeeded, he said. We spent an extra 10 post-biopsy minutes of his packed schedule talking about conspiracy theorists; his nurse fluttered behind him, unable to interrupt but anxious about the passing of time.

One of the oddest and most predictable parts of this conversation is this: I wasn't able to get him to understand what it is I study: people's anxieties about conspiracy theorists, and the way the term carries a rhetorical punch, lumping any claimant into the category of wingnuts. When I told him that I'm interested in the rhetorical force and cultural politics of the phrase, he simply returned to his list of prominent theories. "Have you heard of the Bilderburger?" people will ask. "Or the new Strauss-Kahn paranoia that the French are making up?"

This story provides an apt entry point into my concern about conspiracy theories: that even "smart, educated people" find it hard to "go meta" and think about cultural uses of the phrase and the discourse of anxiety about the conspiracy theorists among us. Investment in the problem is so deep that interlocutors can very rarely bracket it for a moment and ask how a phrase like "conspiracy theorist" might be part of a cultural politics sculpting the limits of what we can reasonably say, think, feel, and know. To do this bracketing is

not to suggest that Elvis lives, or that aliens shot JFK; it **is** however to suggest that each knowledge claim must be taken on its own terms and evaluated without binding it to a sloppy category of "kooky" conspiracy theories. Jack Bratich is right to point out that the fuzziness of the phrase: its openness as a category "closely approximates that of the 'terrorist' (the whatever enemy)" (Bratich 2008, 12).

In this paper, then, I trouble some key analytical moves in the burgeoning field of conspiracy studies, and explore alternative approaches which link it to two strands of current social theorizing—governmentality and the politics of affect. First, I go "meta" to ask how the production of knowledge about knowledge itself becomes a form of politics. Here I follow Bratich's work on conspiracy theories as part of neoliberal governmentality, understanding public anxiety over conspiracy theories to be one instance of a set of "series of prevention strategies for dissent" (p. 12) in neoliberal political economies. Second, I show how a fuller analysis of conspiracy theory discourse requires developing the cultural politics of contempt, or the notion of affective governmentality (Ahmed 2004b; Illouz 2007; Ferguson 2010). Here I sidestep the contentious "affective vs. emotional" politics debate (Barnett 2008; Pain 2009; Vrasti forthcoming), taking a largely agnostic, post-structuralist approach as I link conspiracy panics the political functions of emotion.

I argue that current struggles over the use of the phrase conspiracy theory work in and through a politics of contempt. I use Arendt's theorization of political action to argue that the emotionality of U.S. conspiracy panic discourse effectively polices the boundaries of what is sayable, knowable, thinkable, and perhaps "feelable," from the unsayable/unknowable/unthinkable; from the patently ridiculous, pathological, and emotionally suspect. Such abject kinds of knowing place the knower out of bounds of reasonable politics, and for Arendt, violate the conditions on which political action must rest. The argument will have three parts; first an overview of current studies of conspiracy theories; second, an exploration of conspiracy panics as a form of emotionalized governmentality; and third, an exploration of the functions and effects of contempt in conspiracy panic discourse.

The Trouble with Conspiracy Studies: Asking One Set of Questions, Foreclosing Another

Since Lippman and Hofstadter DATE, a rich scholarship has grown on conspiracy theorizing. Husting and Orr (2007) show exponential growth in popular news coverage of the phrase "conspiracy theorist" over the past twenty years, with scholarly publications on conspiracy theories following just behind (Bratich 2008). The scholarship of conspiracy theories is rich and cross-disciplinary, ranging from political science and neuropsychology to cultural and literary studies.[1] This new field tends to approach the study of conspiracy theories in three ways: classification, explanation, and risk assessment of their

effects. Much of the work embraces at least two of these approaches. For example, Clarke (2006), Keeley (1999) and others in philosophy classify most conspiracy claims as a form of unwarranted knowledge claim that can be dismissed a priori (that is, without seriously listening to or considering the claim and claimant). Basham (2001) and Pigden (1995, 2007) contest this conclusion, arguing *inter alia* that no form of knowledge claim should be deemed "dismissable" before it is considered.

By far the largest area of current work is the study of the hidden causes behind constructing, believing in, and circulating conspiracy theories. This dietrological work constitutes the dominant form of commentary among academics (Bratich 2008) but also prevails among journalists and political bloggers. Such analyses ask why such theories are propagating now (usually citing the increase in media uses of the term over the past 20 years, and the 1997 first appearance of the term in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1997 Knight 2002) as evidence of the rise of the problem). Answers range from the increasing deluge of digital information and the easy spread of rumor on the internet to increases in global governance and forms of capital which are confusing to everyday citizens. Finally, a whole swathe of this literature points to the characteristics of certain groups which are associated with "conspiracy thinking"— in U.S. conspiracy discourse, these consist of people in the Middle East, citizens of nondemocratic, non-Western nations, and communities of color in the United States. Some of this literature is racist and nationalist— positing the tribal mind of the Arab other as one which cannot grasp how democracy works. But much of this literature, when not overtly racist, is patronizing—a form of "these people aren't crazy, just ignorant and backward given their history of oppression," (Goertzel 1994; Simmons & Parsons 2005). Some is not—witness, for example, Kelman's recent study of the reasonableness of African American stories framing the failure of the levee in New Orleans as intentional on the part of the Army Corps of Engineers (2009). His analysis demonstrates a history of intentional forms of sabotage from white government and corporate actors in taking, polluting, and weakening residential areas inhabited primarily by African Americans in Louisiana. Under such conditions, stories about the levee and flooding become not "crazy" but legitimate attempts to understand a confusing and difficult phenomenon.

Done well, the dietrological approach to conspiracy theorization reveals some of more troubling aspects of globalized political economies and its inequalities. But because it tends to psychologize the subjects of its analysis, it misses the political work being done on a larger scale by increasing popular discourse about the rise of conspiracy theories. According to Jack Bratich the category of conspiracy theorists/theories has emerged as a threat to liberal democracy in the United States and elsewhere. Following Satanic day cares (cite), rap music, and immigrants, conspiracy theories have now become the focus of moral concern, public indignation, academic and political analysis.

Conspiracy theory discourse displays fetishized, certainly ritualized, disputes over what is and is not a conspiracy theory, what is or is not "delusional," and why so many people seem to be swept up by them. Conspiracy theorists, for example, are pathological ("loony"), childlike (will believe anything—Keller 2011), naïve, paranoid (Hofstadter 1964). Simultaneously, though, conspiracy theorists are persuasive, and seem logical and coherent, which makes them dangerous to the rest of us—we may be "taken in" by their seductive skepticism and magical thinking (Pipes 1997). This narrative of conspiracy theories and their dangers is continually rearticulated in left, right, and center popular political discourse.

The proliferation of anxious stories in popular culture over the dangers of conspiracy theories concern does certain kinds of political work. It calls into being a particular kind of other—the conspiracy theorist, who believes in "Roswell" *and* the Kennedy conspiracies, but who all the same is often difficult to identify, since the theory itself looks reasonable on its surface. Ultimately, conspiracy discourse, like other moral panics, works toward reaffirming for an anxious public the value of political norms of openness, trust in democracy, faith in the transparency of government and corporate politics. Such boundary maintenance and social unification may be critically important in an age of staggeringly large-scale organizations and inequities of access to power and resources.

Conspiracy Theories, Rationality's Limits, and Governmentality

But as Bratich points out, if conspiracy discourse is a moralized discourse, it is also exemplary of neoliberal governmentality. Central to Foucault's work on modernity is the means by which subjects are governed. By government Foucault is famously not necessarily or primarily referring to the state; instead, governmentality's referent hearkens back to older usages of "govern"—as in guiding or governing one's behavior, governing ones' self or one's child or a household (Foucault 2010, 48). Unmoored from the state, governmentality is the "conduct of conduct," or a form of "government from a distance," in which knowledges, rationalities, procedures, beliefs, and "best" practices (from statistical analysis of a population to techniques for positive thinking) govern a population by creating subjects who govern themselves.

Said differently, neoliberalism has particular practices, working definitions, and values that define rationality in particular ways, and link it to the practice of democracy and the activities of citizen/subjects; "rationalities of rule are specific ways of thinking about how to govern at particular times and places. [They] are discursive; they propose strategies, suggest reforms, identify problems, recommend solutions and constitute a series of suppositions, instructions and assumptions which are encapsulated in discourses and knowledges that guide, advise and inform our ways of being in the world" (Campbell 2010, 36).

To understand any political culture, then, we want to look at how it defines truth versus falsehood, and reasonable versus unreasonable thought. We must look at how certain discourses, organizations, experts, and programs construct "fields of possibility" for what counts as fact, truth, reason, reasonable political thought, action, and speech. What particular notions/practices govern the reasonable limits of (what is defined as) freedom in any particular moment. What Vrasti says for liberalism here goes for neoliberalism in particular;

> [It] is not limited to providing a simple guarantee of liberties (freedom of the market, of private property, of speech) that exist independently of governmental practice. Quite on the contrary: liberalism organizes the conditions under which individuals could and should exercise these liberties. In this sense freedom is not…the (negative) right of individuals to confront power, but the positive effect of governmental action. (Lemke 2010, 35)

Liberalism *creates* certain kinds of freedom (and not others) through which liberal subjects are constructed; they are in turn expected to manage their freedoms wisely and well. But as Lemke notes, "in the very same production of freedom, liberalism also endangers the freedom it constitutes. It is precisely the 'free play of forces inside liberal forms of government that threatens these liberties and necessitates new interventions to 'protect' or 'stabilize' them" (Lemke 2009, 46–47). One of the signal violations of a conspiracy theorist is that s/he does not govern her reason well, something which requires the classification, monitoring, and analysis of conspiracy theories.

If what counts as citizenship in a neoliberal political economy is bound up with the exercise of freedom (Bratich 2008)—freedom to, for example, decide in what consists the good life, or the rational exercise of deliberation in "the public sphere"—then Foucault asks us to recognize the following *as effects of neoliberal governmentality:* citizens; the freedom they exercise in acting, questioning, thinking about politics; the limits of rational inquiry into the honesty of political and journalistic authorities, also into the fairness and transparency of political and economic power.

Approached this way, conspiracy theory discourse in fact serves to construct, circulate, and enact a "well-tempered" citizen in liberal politics who is vigilant but not obsessive about the state and its power. Thus much popular discourse on conspiracy theorizing attempts to gauge its distance from sane, reasonable discourse; a recent post about conspiracy theories in Democratic Underground, a prominent liberal online site spurred a long, heated debate about conspiracy theories, with finely detailed arguments and definitions. One can see the challenge in the following attempt to mediate among disputants: "[the previous [poster] provided one definition (or explanation) of 'conspiracy theory'—of course, it isn't the only possible one. It is true both of conspiracy

theories… and many conjectures that turn out to be true, that they are constructed from bits and pieces of evidence. That doesn't mean that CT is indistinguishable from conjecture in general …" This post exemplifies the responsibilized citizen's calculation and cautious measurement of the distance between reasonable skepticism and paranoia. This kind of work is ongoing; a simple search of the phrase "conspiracy theory" in the online community Democratic Underground, for example, returns 696,000 hits; while the significance of this may be difficult to gauge, the site itself has 172,000 members; moreover, conspiracy discourse has become so common that members now routinely joke-worry about posts and comments being moved to the "conspiracy dungeon." The dungeon is slang for removal of posts that violate a key rule on the website—no conspiracy theorizing. The Dungeon was developed after a raft of conspiratorial conjecture over the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami: "Do not quote or link to 'conspiracy theory' websites, except in our September 11 forum, which is the only forum on Democratic Underground where we permit members to debate highly speculative conspiracy theories. A reasonable person should be able to identify a conspiracy theory website without much difficulty." Conspiracy discourses like the ones quoted above both specify that conspiracy theories are "kooky" (in the words of Democratic Underground's administrators), easy to identify in their fringeness, and persuasive and dangerous.

Thus, conspiracy panics are governmentalized to the extent that they embody discourses (news, blogs, conversations, Congressional hearings, political advertisements) and practices (e.g. the U.S. State Department's 2005–2007 webpage on "How to Identify Misinformation," posted during the Bush Administration) that sculpt the field of possibilities for freedom and the well-tempered citizen. A whole host of popular political knowledges about pluralism, democracy, and actual forms of civil society structure the fields of possibility governing citizenship. The existence of a "well-ordered" American civil society and political culture requires the self-regulation or control of suspicion, to take care that it does not go 'too far.'

An example comes from the case of Cynthia McKinney, an American politician, who was drubbed in the press for a statement she made to Congress but reread on Pacifica News one year after 9/11. McKinney said:

> We know there were numerous warnings of the events to come on September 11... Those engaged in unusual stock trades immediately before September 11 knew enough to make millions of dollars from United and American airlines, certain insurance and brokerage firms' stocks. What did the Administration know, and when did it know it about the events of September 11? Who else knew and why did they not warn the innocent people of New York who were needlessly murdered?

She became a conspiracy theorist célèbre in U.S. mainstream news almost immediately afterward; U.S. dailies and NPR covered the story by reporting on reactions to the statements calling her disgusting, loony, and dangerous. The Washington Post, among a host of other newspapers, quoted Carlyle spokesperson (Eilperin 2002) asking: "Did she say these things while standing on a grassy knoll in Roswell, New Mexico?" A prominent fellow democratic politician, Zell Miller, repeatedly called her "loony," describing her as "dangerous and irresponsible." Journalists widely repeated these descriptors, which point to the meanings circulating through the condensed symbol "conspiracy theorist" (McKinney 2005). McKinney's case is one to examine with care; she made no assertions, but she did ask suggestive questions in 2002, when such questions were "unaskable" in the United States; President Bush's spokesman Scott McLellan attacked McKinney, saying "The American people know the facts, and they dismiss such ludicrous, baseless views. The fact that she questions the president's legitimacy shows a partisan mind-set beyond all reason" (Eilperin 2002, A6). That he understood McKinney to be "beyond all reason" illuminates how species of knowledge are marked as senseless. Notice that McKinney made a particular claim (that there were warnings in advance about the attack), and asked two questions about timing and profit. She did not claim that the Bush Administration let it happen, although it can easily be read as within the implied scope of her question. But also within the scope of those questions was one that charged the Bush Administration with incompetence, and pointed to a larger problem with free speech. In her statement, McKinney (2002) asked "Authorities tell us that the world changed on September11. … Elected officials must censor themselves or be censured by the media. Citizens now report behavior of suspicious-looking people to the police. Laws now exist that erode our civil liberties." But not until 2006 would the mainstream press confirm that in fact, the Bush Administration had forewarnings of the imminent possibility of Al Qaeda attack. In 2006 the news broke in major mainstream U.S. papers that the CIA had, prior to 9/11, identified the threat, "consisting of communications, intercepts and other top-secret intelligence showing the increasing likelihood that al-Qaeda would soon attack the United States" (Draper 2006). The CIA had reported these both to Secretary of Defense D. Rumsfeld and to Secretary of State C. Rice, but was ignored (Draper 2006). In 2002, making such claims and asking for independent inquiry was evidence of political distemper; McKinney became paranoid, beyond reason, and "dangerous." Only when "LIHOP" and "MIHOP" ("Let it Happen on Purpose" and "Made it Happen on Purpose"-two widely shared theories about the complicity of the Bush Administration in 9/11) questions and claims in public culture had been securely identified as crazy—in 2006—did problems of information and communication surface in the mainstream press.

This example illustrates that conspiracy panic is about the production and marking of "danger," which Foucault posited not as something outside a

liberal political economy, but something essential to the ongoing production of it; "liberalism nurtures danger, it subjects danger to an economic calculus … it must never fix security, since the striving of securing and the danger of insecurity are complementary aspects of liberal governmentality" (Lemke, p. 46). Instead of an absolute abjuration of that which is dangerous, then, governmentalized political culture has a sphere of reasonability, circum-scribed by the boundaries of the well-tempered citizen; "The apparatuses of security do not draw an absolute borderline between the permitted and the prohibited, but specify an optimal middle within a spectrum of variations" (Lemke, p. 47). The McKinney coverage reveals some of the boundaries con-structed when we hear the phrase "conspiracy theory" or "theorist" invoked. The term works to separate those who think "rationally," reasonable citi-zens/thinkers, from paranoid, irrational, or delusional ones; and in fact this is the stated goal of those concerned with conspiracy discourse—that conspiracy theories muddy the liberal public sphere with "dangerous" theories.

Gary Webb's case provides another striking example of the label in action. Webb, a journalist for the *San Jose Mercury News*, published a three-part story on the link between the CIA, Nicaraguan Contras, and cocaine transportation into California. Webb's *exposé*, highly documented with prima-ry sources, showed that CIA-backed Nicaraguan Contra fighters repeatedly used CIA planes to transport cocaine into the United States. In the next year, Webb's series was repeatedly vilified in the U.S. news as the story of a men-tally unstable conspiracy theorist. Webb had done a large amount of painstak-ing research to substantiate his claims both of drug-running (profits went back to Contras in Nicaragua) and awareness within the CIA that this was happen-ing (Webb 1998). But in his story, through posing questions, he suggested that further links might exist, for which he did not have data. Webb led readers to these questions, but did not pose or answer them himself. Webb was flayed in the press; fired; and issued anonymous death threats because of his founded claims as well as for claims falsely attributed to him. For example, with regard to his meticulously supported claims, the New York Times castigated him as an unreasonable journalist (*New York Times* 1997):

> There was little hard evidence to support these claims. Even so, the se-ries was suggestively titled 'Dark Alliance: The Story Behind the Crack Explosion'… The series was reported by the paper's investigative spe-cialist, Gary Webb, who failed to include available evidence contradict-ing the assertion of C.I.A. complicity.

In another of its 32 condemnatory stories on Webb, the *New York Times* re-ported gossip that the board of the Northern California chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists met and discussed stripping Gary Webb of his 1996 Journalist of the Year award; the article complained that "Mr. Webb's series of news articles, Dark Alliance… continues to echo among journalists,

nine months after the series was published… the series overstated its provocative findings and omitted important details… [a member said] "I think it's clear that a lot of people came out feeling dispirited and troubled, …" You could hear a lot of people saying, "I know if I did something like Gary did, I'd be out the door."

PBS' Front Line reported the story again several years ago with a piece entitled "Cocaine, Conspiracy Theories and the CIA in Central America" (Golden 1996). This story reiterated false claims; "In 1996 the agency was accused of being a crack dealer… Amongst Webb's fundamental problems was his implication that the CIA lit the crack cocaine fuse. It was conspiracy theory: a neat presentation of reality that simply didn't jibe with real life. Webb later agreed in an interview that there is no hard evidence that the CIA as an institution or any of its agent-employees carried out or profited from drug trafficking" (Delavaal 2003). In fact, Webb never accused the CIA of being anything like a "drug dealer." Moreover, the CIA itself had confirmed that drug-running was happening with CIA planes, and with the knowledge of some of the CIA (Schou 2006). His evidence was meticulous, and vindicated later (Schou 2006; Fenster 2008), but he was attacked precisely for not having evidence (see Golden 1996) and for creating conspiracy stories about drug running. The conspiracy panic around Webb worked not by evaluating, or disproving his evidence, but by derision. According to the dominant conspiracy discourse, Webb made preposterous claims (accused CIA of being a drug dealer) and should have been immediately fired "I'd be out the door." Moreover, news stories with titles such as the following attack his character as well as his story; "A Barracuda Tries to Eat the Messenger" (Barris 1996), "The Web Gary Spun" (Shepard 1997) "Arresting Talker" (Flynn 196), "Credibility and America's Fourth Estate" (Tampa Tribune 1996), "An Imaginary Conspiracy" (Lane 1996), "Conspiracism, Who's at Fault for the Distrust?" (Parry and Parry 1997), and "Dirty Hands and Finger of Guilt."

The reception of Webb's *exposé* illuminates the problem of stepping outside the bounds of 'reasonable' skepticism of governmental and corporate agents. Questioning too much, as Gary Webb did in "Dark Alliance," met with widespread public defamatory response, most of it centering on the supposed illogic of arguments and the paranoia or psychosis of the arguer.

Even academics can fall into the trap of making strange claims while trying to cordon off conspiracism from "reasonable" thought. Vincent (2006, 45) , for example, in a provocative essay on conspiracy theory writes; "those who resort to them identify in this way who does what and why they do it, for the strength of paranoiac thought lies in its perfect coherence: it does not leave any space for error, failure or ambiguity. Conspiracy theories give meaning to occurrences, to equivocal or dramatic situations. They are attempts to find a narrative for the contradictions and transformations that are animating the world. This is most certainly a way to make them more intelligible by making it possible to reduce the tension arising out of the pressure exerted by reality."

While this may be true, it is as true of what usually counts as "non-paranoiac thought"—decades of media research document the failure of journalists (let alone nonprofessionals) to allow for ambiguity, failure, or error (Hallin 1986; Reeves and Campbell 1994; Altheide 2002; Gans 2003; Zelizer and Allen 2011; will not begin to scrape the surface of this literature). And this is precisely one of the uses of governmentality to understand conspiracy discourse; it helps us problematize the "unmarked" positions we take for granted as clear, appropriately skeptical, as part of the way that structures of thought are governed. But the next step in developing a theory of conspiracy panics and their political work is to recognize that conspiracy discourse functions not just on a cognitive register, but an affective one as well. It is to this problem that we now turn.

Governing with Feeling: Conspiracy Theory Discourse as Affective Cultural Politics

While the label "conspiracy theorist" ostensibly names a public voice characterized by unreason and inadequate standards of evidence ((Hofstadter 1965; Pipes 1997), it gains its force through emotional resonance rather than purely through a critique of someone's logic, data, or ability to reason. While I remain agnostic on the debate over affect as biological, pre-representational, or innate (causally prior to the cultural or social self—Massumi 2002; Clough 2007; Thrift 2007), I use affect as a synonym for emotion here because of the way that feelings catalyze us, throwing us into motion; they are forms of energy that entrain other feelings/thoughts/judgments. That is, without positing affect as somehow prior to or more essentially human than selfhood or sociality, we can maintain that "the accumulation of affective value shapes the surfaces of bodies and worlds" (Ahmed 2004, 124), configuring meaning and the realm of the permissible, appropriate forms of political action and talk.

The affective register in Webb's case exemplifies the political work of contempt. Few critics examined or double-checked Webb's sources (Schou 2006); instead, mainstream journalists and governmental agencies damned him via psychopathology and scorn. Top U.S. newspapers repeatedly accused Webb of claiming that the CIA set up a crack ring in Los Angeles in order to attack African Americans. In the same stories he was then lambasted for having no evidence to support the claim. Since Webb never made such a charge there is some irony in accusing a journalist of failure to provide evidence for a claim s/he never made. This irony was compounded by Webb's loss of his job, the failure of other major newspapers to hire him, and his eventual suicide. This last has particular relevance since prior to Dark Alliance Webb himself was a contemner of conspiracy;

> If we had met five years ago, you wouldn't have found a more staunch
> defender of the newspaper industry than me ... I was winning awards,

getting raises, lecturing college classes, appearing on TV shows, and judging journalism contests. So how could I possibly agree with people like Noam Chomsky and Ben Bagdikian, who were claiming the system didn't work, that it was steered by powerful special interests and corporations, and existed to protect the power elite?

In Webb's case, the phrase "conspiracy theorist," did more than challenge the soundness of evidence and reasoning through reasoned, evidence-based inquiry. It circulated on an affective register, displaying contempt for his personhood (and stuck to him after repeated firings and frustrated job applications).

The charge "conspiracy theorist" is in fact a form of what symbolic interactionists call "identity spoilage"—talk or action that sullies and tarnishes the self as well as the specific content of the self's action (Husting and Orr 2007). In public discourse, as Webb's case shows, conspiracy theorists are often framed as untrustable and thereby dangerous, both because of their illogic and because of their excess of emotion. As a poster on Democratic Underground put it, "The conspiracy theories are as thick as locusts some days...and just as much of a plague. The attraction of a conspiracy theory is, who can prove it wrong? Which is another way of saying they contribute much heat and little light. Conspiracy theories appeal to emotions, not to facts and evidence"[2]. Underlying much conspiracy panic is a quasi-Cartesian fear of emotional excess overwhelming reason and creating socio-pathological disorder and paranoia; to engage in conspiracy theorizing is to step out of the sphere of reason and logic, and enter the terrain of the emotional and the psychotic. Conspiracy panic discourse is itself a form of emotional and political engagement driven by contempt and laced with anger and fear. The affect running through conspiracy panic performs discursive work, degrading and dismissing both claims and claimants. It polices or manages the boundaries of reasonable political doubt, delineating a relatively uncorrupted democratic sphere in an age of increasing economic inequality and massive concentration of political and cultural power in the hands of corporate, governmental, and increasingly nongovernmental organizations (Sassken 2006).

A trend in the new work on affect and emotion is to think about the relation of both to place, culture, and political life; but only just now is governmentality being linked to emotion (Ohnuma 2008; Campbell 2010; Vrasti forthcoming). Much of this work has either focused on "affect" in general (Chaput 2010), or on specific forms of affect/emotion, such as happiness (Ahmed 2010), shame (Ferguson 2010), anger (Pain 2010) and hatred (Kuntsman 2010). Little work specifically examines contempt, and none of it links contempt with governmentality. Disgust has received far more attention (Nussbaum 2004, 2010; Miller 1997). Both Miller and Nussbaum focus on the destructiveness of disgust, noting that both disgust and contempt are bound up with the maintenance of social hierarchy in a culture. But while Miller pro-

scribes disgust in the public sphere, he recuperates contempt as vital to the persistence of democracy in the face of rigid social hierarchies. In this he agrees with Bell (2005) and Mason (2002), who also attempt to normatively ground contempt as a justified, warranted, and useful emotion that can be used to resist oppression in interpersonal relationships. These scholars roughly agree on the nature of contempt; for all of them, contempt is an intertwining of affective and cognitive elements, roughly synonymous with derision, scorn, and judgment of another's worthlessness.

Bell (2005) has perhaps the most complete definition of contempt as a "negatively and comparatively regarding or attending to someone who has not fully lived up to an interpersonal standard that the person extending contempt thinks is important. This form of regard constitutes a psychological withdrawal from the object of contempt" (p. 84). Contempt means that the very existence of the other is in fact valueless or close thereto.

These scholars share the understanding that contempt is both a fully social and extreme emotion that regulates the boundaries between acceptable and reprehensible, unforgivable actions. Contempt demeans not just one or several qualities about another, but constitutes a judgment *tout court* in which the other, as a whole and in every particular, is a failure (Miller 1997; Mason 2005). Contempt is constructed in and through relations and interaction; we have contempt for humans, and perhaps other animals, but it is an emotion reserved for the animate world. We do not hold in contempt a rock, or a living room. Even as contempt is a judgment of the other it debases the other, and is precisely only useful when it is witnessed interpersonally—we do not hold a rock in contempt because a rock, or other rocks, cannot recognize their devaluation.

In this way, and especially in popular and political culture, contempt is a performative emotion—the expressing of it in public effects the movement of another to a status that is both beneath the contemner's and unworthy of attention or recognition as fully human. Contempt, focused on selves rather than acts, creates an irreparable distance between the contemned and the contemner (Bell 2005); it cuts off the contemned from community. When we perform contempt in public, we **emotionally** push people from the realm of belonging, toleration, and worthiness of interaction. They fall from the state of being recognized by us—of being worthy even of attention or consideration. To earn contempt is to be marked as un-reasonable, as unworthy of rational interaction.

In that way to hold another in contempt is to hold his/her humanness in abeyance, to radically decouple him/her from what Hannah Arendt would call our life in common. Arendt is a good theorist for the emotional politics of conspiracy theory; her conceptualization of agonistic political action is not inhospitable to Foucauldian inflections (Honig 1995; Allen 2002; Braun 2007; Blencowe 2010). Political action and speech for Arendt are bound up with the performance or ongoing creation of the self and the world we have in com-

mon; political action is bound to performance and thereby to emotion. How does contempt work in such a politics?

To answer this question we must recognize how Arendt theorizes political action. She resurrects ancient Greek conceptions of politics, defining political speech and action as that which makes us most fully human. We continuously recreate ourselves through the act of speaking and acting in concert (cooperatively or competitively) with others. For Arendt, much of identity is, as Bonnie Honig would say, constative—given to us through our work and labor, with few parameters for variation, play, or experimentation (Arendt 1958). But as political selves we can continually become what we are not yet—we are less bound to the requirements and ends of work, which determine and focus the "what" of us, our activity, thoughts, and behavior. For Arendt, then, a democratic political space is an agonistic one, where we can come together to argue, fight, agree, act and speak in common with one another. Under those conditions we do not know what we will say or do, or what others will say or do—there is a spontaneity to political action. Through political action (which includes speech) we can create and perform new selves through interaction with others. Unlike Habermasian conceptions of a normatively prescribed public sphere, in which speech should be civil (Honig 2006), Arendt's analysis asserts that very little in the range of speech and action can be proscribed. A rowdy public (Husting 2006) is what Arendt had in mind, where allowing for improvised action and interaction help us create the world and its meanings. Arendt distinguishes between this realm and the administrative, bureaucratic spaces of the state and political management, which is marked by conformity, rule-boundedness, and simple management. In contrast, the sphere of concerted action in public is performative—it is a theatre for the improvised selves which we call into being even as we take action and speak with others.

Making possible this model of democratic political action are two qualities of life in public: natality and plurality. They are *sine qua non* for Arendtian agonistic democracy. Life in public happens through plurality, in which we are seen and heard by others in a context where we can, through action and speech, affect material and symbolic conditions (Arendt 1958, 57). Life in public arises whenever people engage each other through the agonistic confrontation of identities, opinions, and differences. Indeed, for Arendt the only way we can think for ourselves is through encounters with others, which transforms opinion into thought. Arendt argues that thinking requires a form of "interior" plurality, in which we use the dialogic process of thinking from more than one perspective (our own) to examine our beliefs and actions. As Gordon writes (2002, 137),

> Even one's own identity, not only in the sense of what one is, but also who one is, is contingent upon how others interpret one's words and deeds. Arendt goes so far as to suggest that even 'the great forces of in-

timate life—the passions of the heart, the thought of the mind, the delights of the senses—lead an uncertain, shadowy kind of existence unless and until they are transformed, deprivatized and deindividualized, as it were, into a shape to fit them for public appearance.

Notice here that Arendt deliberately allows room in public life for passion, delight, and emotionality in general, and these are tied to becoming human.

For Arendt being seen and heard by others is requisite both to construction of the world in common and to the self interwoven with it. But natality shows us most clearly the damage done when conspiracy discourse catapults selves from the ongoing process of world-making in common. Natality, carrying as it does the resonances of birth and newness, is our capacity to continually re-construct and renegotiate our world in concert with others who are in political contest with us. Through my ability to talk or act in new, ways I create who I am; I participate in what can only be a collective, if profoundly conflictual, process of crafting the world. Arendt writes that

> The human being who has lost his place in a community, his political status in the struggle of his time, and the legal personality which makes his actions and part of his destiny a consistent whole, is left with those qualities which usually can become articulate only in the sphere of private life and must remain unqualified, mere existence in all matters of public concern…mere existence… (Arendt 1951, 301).

To permanently exclude others from this process is to enact a form of violence that in turn forecloses the spaces of democracy. It erodes the condition of plurality, or the inclusion of maximal differences in play in world-making.

We can now spell out the political functions of the label "conspiracy theorist/theorizing" in relation to plurality and natality. Contempt runs through it, and contempt is a radical excision of the so-labeled from the community of interlocutors who, even as they profoundly disagree with one another, must interact, recognize, and speak across difference. Contempt separates the contemned from the ability to be seen and heard; it end-runs around any utterance or action another might make. Once the label "conspiracy theory" sticks to someone, it impugns their intellectual and moral competence and relieves hearers from the need to consider the validity of her or his claims. It robs the contemned of the capacity to re-negotiate our world in concert with others.

Webb's and McKinney's cases show this, but so do banal invocations of contempt via the phrase conspiracy theorist in mainstream news, the political blogosphere, and even in sports news. Democratic Underground, the liberal/democratic online site quoted earlier, is particularly interesting in this regard since conspiracy theorizing is a frequent topic both among posters and among commenters. The phrase, when it shows up in this site, often leads to

lengthy and heated but sophisticated about the nature of conspiracy theories and the label as a form of dismissal. Once the phrase is invoked, it tends to provoke sustained argument between those who claim conspiracy theorists are irrational and emotional, and those who claim that the label is a slur that blurs the distinction between reasonable questions about possible conspiracies and absurd claims. Such discussions tend to produce definitions, clearly labeled axioms, analyses of logical fallacies, and lists of reasonable vs. unreasonable claims.

The nature and detailed reasoning and argumentation in these discussions illuminates an anxiety over the nature of truth and how it can be distinguished from conspiracy theory. As Bratich points out, part of a governmentalized public sphere is continual reaffirmation of boundaries between what is rational and what is not. In one thread, for example, a commenter writes: "When I want to evaluate a theory, 'conspiracy' or otherwise, I look for the emotionalism employed in its service."[3] In another thread, a commenter interjects the following into a debate gone hostile;

> If we can stop arguing [about] the "real" definition (of conspiracy theory) for a second, stop arguing semantics and think more mathematically, let's take two definitions: 1. A more strict definition that includes only theorists who are espousing loony, unsubstantiated, and off-the-wall conspiracy theories 2. A looser definition that lumps careful, substance-oriented, rational theorists together with the loony ones. Definition (1) is a strict subset of definition (2).[4]

Thread titles often reflect the contempt, anger, and defensiveness: "The Troof is Out There;" "Fun with Tin Foil" "Paranoid Shift or By Their Fruits You Shall Know Them," "Soylent Green is People," and "Why You Conspiracy Theorist, You." Ironically, perhaps, some of these, like "Paranoid Shift" or "Why You" were in fact created by posters who embrace the label "conspiracy theorist. But vitriol twines through the interactions on many of these posts. In an argument over 9/11 and the Pentagon's damage, one commenter indicates "I don't know what happened…"[5] In response, another commenter says: "And they were able to jigger up the crime scene in only a few minutes and so well that it fooled hundreds of investigators from other agencies?" and another enjoins: "RIGHT. You are being sophomorically stupid. And juvenile." The affect running through conspiracy theory discourse suggests anything but a well-tempered set of citizens; it is an ill-tempered exchange, with animated emoticons smirking, derisively dancing, and vomiting in responses to others' comments.

This is by no means limited to the Left: since conspiracy theorizing comes from the fringe, Right and Centrist analyses also posit the problem as extremists at the crazy edges of the political spectrum (Bratich calls this "fusion paranoia" among those concerned with conspiracy theories). A case in

point comes from Bill Keller, former New York Times CEO, who has built a reputation for attacking Julian Assange and Wikileaks (Keller was responsible for the Times's failure to cover some of the Wikileaks, and attacked both Wikileaks and Assange repeatedly; Kurtz 2011). Keller's recent *New York Times Magazine* piece on Assange (2011a) seethes with contempt. Keller attacks Wikileaks both directly and indirectly as a "conspiracy theorist," and the epithet is nested in a chain of signifiers through which affect circulates (Ahmed 2004). Assange is "eccentric," "coy about his secret stash," "manipulative and volatile," disheveled, like a bag lady," unwashed," and "arrogant." Descriptors become vivified through contempt, which binds them together, and links them to Assange's selfhood, rather than to discrete acts. Contempt transfers across circuits, from one kind of quality and personhood to another.

It is through such usage that "conspiracy theorist" becomes a condensed assemblage of characteristics, through which contemptuous affect both circulates and intensifies the discourse. In Keller's piece, Assange, who "smells like he hadn't bathed in days," endlessly spins "bombast and dark conspiracy theories," and is childish: "he had a bit of Peter Pan in him. One night, when…walking down the street after dinner, Assange suddenly started skipping ahead of the group… Then, just as suddenly, Assange stopped…" Assange is "paranoid," "imperious," "derelict," "crazy" and "boastful" (Keller 2010a). One might point out that this set of descriptions, rich as it is, comes from one single story. However, its impact is disproportionately high for a single article, written as it was by the former chief executive of the most prestigious daily paper in the United States—the "newspaper of record." Its linkage makes visible a set of emotions and judgments tacit in the phrase "conspiracy theorist." While of course not all of the emotions and descriptions Keller mobilizes are at play in each invocation of "conspiracy theorist," Keller taps a whole range of non-accidental meanings or "sticky associations" (Ahmed 2004)—sticky in that they bind characteristics to one another in a chain of negative signification. Childishness is to homeless scrounger as unclean body is to paranoiac and pompous narcissist is to Wikileaks. The chain of associations is glued together by contempt, which jumps from one association or quality to the others.

Conspiracy panics, then, like "conspiracy theories" (or that which is so labeled) are full of emotionality, and we can do more than simply say that emotions like contempt are tools with by which politics get done. Conspiracy theory discourse both mobilizes and is mobilized by a cultural politics of affect; it proliferates across micro-discourses on and offline, in official and unofficial spaces, governing what we say and how we feel about what we say.

Some of the best evidence for this is the rise of the disclaimer "I'm not a conspiracy theorist but…" which has become a regular feature in popular political culture (Husting and Orr 2006); a Google search for it in 2011 returns about 182,000 hits. As with most disclaimers, this one functions to distance the utterer from a category that can spoil not just the intended claim, but the

personhood of the claimant as well. In Mary Douglas's terms, such categories are dirty, or ritually polluted. Disclaimers like "I'm not a conspiracy theorist, but…" function to inoculate or distance ourselves from that which can spoil our speech/actions, but also our personhood. Once conferred, the identity permanently removes us from the possibility of political speech and action, and forms of human becoming/self-production. Fear of the accusation leads most of us come to govern our own thoughts and speech to ensure we are not so labeled.

When we cannot avoid it, the result is shame, as Keller (2011b) illuminates in a recent anti-conspiracy theory article; "[Mark] Fenster, a law professor and author of 'Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture,' says a sense of conspiracy is 'almost an instinctive response to strange events.' 'I admit I was a little drawn to the D.S.K. [Dominique Strauss-Kahn[6]] plot at first,' Fenster told me. 'Then I heard Nina Totenberg explain the case on NPR, and I was ashamed of myself.'" Fenster exhibits what most of us experience: shame at the possibility of fitting into the category.

The affective politics of conspiracy discourse is such that many of us—good governmentalized subjects—continually manage, reflect on, and monitor ourselves to ensure that we do not come to "fit the label." Bratich (2008, 140) highlights precisely the encouragement of this governmentalized strategy by the State Department in its online site "How to Identify Misinformation; 'it is important to note the state's preferred orientation of detection techniques: of the people by the people. Peer-to-peer suspicion…'[7] quickly identifies the dangerous theorist among us, but it also turns us into self-managers as we evaluate how far our thoughts are from conspiracy theorizing, and as we try to avoid being shamefully stuck with the condensed assemblage of the label. Conspiracy panics fuse not just 'reason and politics in a way that promotes the technology of citizen subjectification' but 'emotion' as well. Both affect *and* 'reason' must become part of the ethos of the self, a work of the self on the self…[panics] are not just about making people reasonable, but making reason [and, we add, contempt] a people's enterprise" (Bratich 2008, 46).

This emotionalized form of governmentality fits with recent work on the emotional construction of neoliberal economic selfhood and behavior. As Vrasti and Illouz elucidate, neoliberal political economy is the outcome of the long 20th century reconfiguration of subjects and lifeworlds by which emotional life is reconstructed through "the metaphors and rationality of economics" (Illouz 2008, quoted in Vasti forthcoming). While conspiracy theory discourse does not directly work on the "entrepreneurial self", we can expect that popular political culture would be recrafted slowly over the same period and through the same technologies, practices, and values that govern that self and its culture. These technologies replace solildarity-based political action based with individualized, tightly managed skepticism that largely evaluates and corrects potential spinoffs into "crackpot" theories.

Conclusion

This paper has shown how conspiracy panics bring into being, sustain, and continually renew neoliberal politics through contestation across a proliferating series of micro-contexts. Contests over conspiracy theories concern the well-tempered reasonability and proper skepticism needed for citizens to govern themselves. Such contests, are part of a host of similar capillary forms of knowledge production about healthy and unhealthy styles of thought and critique. Together they are part of the practices and discourses that govern neoliberal political economies. The circulation of knowledge, argument, and emotion provides the boundaries needed to define an integrated population (an "us"). It also provides potential outsiders and resistance to the well-tempered nature of the managed citizen; it creates boundary contests needed for the continuing process of responsibilized regulation of the self and the public. We regulate ourselves by regulating, judging, and contemning others, and keeping our own thoughts and styles of reason and emotion clear. Thus do endless disputes over reason, falsehood, and conspiracy theory become the networked sites of ongoing performance of a regime of truth and the maintenance of a neoliberal "consensus state" and global politics.

Conclusions often aspire to, at the very least, hints and suggestions of what could be called a call for a different world, or form of scholarship. Here I will do something like both and neither. I suggest one potential avenue for further work on the emotional work of conspiracy panics, and one way of rethinking contempt by combining Arendt and Foucault.

First, I want to suggest that the emotional registers on which conspiracy panics work have not been even close to exhausted in the preceding analysis. Hume is especially useful here in considering the multivalent affect produced by conspiracy theory discourse and expression. One aspect of contempt that modern analyses have overlooked, but which Hume recognized, is its self-reflexivity. Since, as we have established, relationality is *sine qua non* for contempt, we can consider the effects that labeling someone a conspiracy theorist has for the labeler. For Hume, contempt elevates the self in regard to its scorned object; it creates positive self-feeling and evaluation simultaneously with its debasement of the other and all of the other's characteristics. Conspiracy theory sets in motion positive as well as negative feelings; even as contempt cuts the other from the space of community or interaction, it elevates the contemning self, which also does the work of responsibilizing the well-tempered citizen subject, and makes "feelable" his worthiness and the worthiness of the sphere expunged of "loonies." The feeling of superiority, of well-temperedness in contrast to "the loonies" (as in "YOU'RE A BUNCH OF USELESS BLOODY LOONIES!"[8]), moves inward, even as it can produce a host of other emotions including anger, shame, fear in the contemned. Conspiracy theory, then, sets into play cascades of emotionality, working on both the contemner and contemned. Theorizing such cascades of emotionality

with regard to conspiracy theory discourse and related panics may be a productive line of inquiry.

Second, this paper has argued that conspiracy theories work according not just to a dominant logic, but as part of something like a dominant structure of feeling in neoliberalism. I suspect that conspiracy theory is but one node of an increasingly important set of governmentalized emotions; contempt in particular is increasingly important to the current age across and within nation-states, global class formations, regimes of expertise, and political associations.

But I will not assert, although I suspect, that contempt is problematic (if for no other reason than because it is so corrosive to forms of "counterknowledges"—(Bratich 2008). Given the "dynamic interplay between freedom, security & fear that Foucault sees as constitutive for liberalism" (Lemke 2010, 33), I am wary of falling into the trap of what Lemke terms "the normative fixation on specifying criteria for legitimacy and consensus." But Arendt's formulation of political action now stands us in good stead, since it provides some ground for critiquing contempt as a cultural dominant while avoiding the pitfalls of a project that imagines freedom from or outside of power relations. Arendt's notions of natality and plurality allow for space within neoliberalism for responsibilized citizens to resist forms of governmentalized emotionality like "caring," (Vrasti), hate (Kuntzman 2010), and the endless pursuit and measurement of happiness (Ahmed 2009). With natality and plurality it is not that we escape from power relations, or that fields of possible action, thought, and knowledge are not shaped and structured for and with us, but that we have room to act unpredictably, to suspend some of the rules of emotion/rationality operating in governmentalized publics. Arendt, following Plato, argues that "Wherever you go, you will be a *polis*." Our performances in those places where we speak and act with and against others may be the spaces of micro-resistance; spaces where we slip sideways in the webbing of governmentality (while never getting "out"). As Vrasti points out, such forms of resistant reason and emotion can politicize "everyday life through a skeptical attitude towards affective regimes and normalizing injunction" that interpellate us. Refusing the condensed assemblage of "conspiracy theory" contempt and fear may suggest one small way that counterknowledges and counterpublics allow for resistance; they "can serve as a preliminary/preparatory stage for meaningful and effective collective action. To act and live in common we must first explore the subjective complicities that tie us to neoliberal capital and learn to go beyond them" (Vrasti forthcoming).

NOTES

1. While the field is already too wide to give a proper synopsis of it here, good summaries and critiques abound, not least among them papers in this volume (fn with references).
2. Democratic Underground 2004 "Anyone notice that disruptors".
   http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=show_mesg&forum=104&topic_id=2721473&mesg_id=2721473
3. Democratic Underground 2008 "Emotionalism."
   http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=show_mesg&forum=125&topic_id=66024&mesg_id=66243
4. Democratic Underground 2009 Comment in "A Consideration of Anti-Conspiracy Theorists
   "http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=125x249167#249355
5. Democratic Underground. "Conspiracy Theory Question."
   http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=125x84694
6. Dominique Strauss-Kahn was, in 2011, managing director of the Intenrational Montary Fund; he was accused of sexually assaulting a housekeeper who entered his New York hotel
7. (http://www.america.gov/st/pubs-english/2005/July/20050727143122atlahtnevel0.4629833.html)
8. Democractic Underground 2009. Comment in thread "Soylent Green is Made out of People!"

REFERENCES

Ahmed, Sara. (2004a) "Affective Economies." Social Text 79, 22:117–139.
Ahmed, Sara. (2004b) *Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York: Routledge.
Allen, Amy. (2002) "Power, Subject and Agency: Between Arendt and Foucault." *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 10(2):131–149.
Allen, Stuart. (2004) *News Culture* (second edition). Buckingham: Open University Press.
Altheide, David. (2002) *Creating Fear: News and the Construction of Crisis*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
Arendt, Hannah. (1998) *The Human Condition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
Barnett, Clive. (2008) "Political Affects in Public Space: Normative Blind-spots in Non-Representational Ontologies." Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 33(2):186–200.
Basham, Lee. (2001.) "Living with the Conspiracy." *Philosophical Forum* 32(3):265–280.
Bell, Macalester. (2005) "A Woman's Scorn: Toward a Feminist Defense of Contempt as a Moral Emotion." *Hypatia* 20(4): 80–93.
Birmingham, Peg. (2007) "The An-Archic Event of Natality and the "Right to Have Rights." *Social Rese*arch 74(3):763–776.

Blencowe, Claire. (2010) "Foucault's and Arendt's 'Insider View' of Biopolitics: a Critique of Agamben." *History of the Human Sciences* 23(5):113–130.

Braun, Kathrin. (2007) "Biopolitics and Temporality in Arendt and Foucault." *Time & Society* 16:5–23.

Campbell, Elaine. (2010) "The Emotional Life of Governmental Power." *Foucault Studies* 9:35–53. Retrieved June 10, 2011 (http://rauli.cbs.dk/index.php/foucault-studies/article/viewArticle/3057).

Chaput, Catherine. (2010) "Rhetorical Circulation in Late Capitalism Neoliberalism and the Overdetermination of Affective Energy." *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 43(1):1–25.

Clarke, Steve. (2002) "Conspiracy Theories and Conspiracy Theorizing." *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 32(2):131–150.

Cohen, Stanley. (2002) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. New Jersey: Routledge.

Craig Delaval. (2003) "Cocaine, Conspiracy Theories & The CIA in Central America". Retrieved February 11, 2008 (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/drugs/special/cia.html).

Dean, Jodi, Jon W. Anderson and Geert Lovink. (2006) "Introduction: The Postdemocratic Governmentality of Networked Societies." Pp. xv–xxix *Reformatting Politics: Information Technology and Global Civil Society*, edited by Jodi Dean, Jon W. Anderson, and Geert Lovink. New York: Routledge.

Draper, Eric. (2006) "Two Months Before 9/11, an Urgent Warning to Rice." *Washington Post*, October 6. Retrieved June 20, 2011 (http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/30/AR2006093000282.html).

Eilperin, Juliet. (2002) "Democrat Implies September 11 Administration Plot." *New York Times*, March 10, 2002, A16.

Fenster, Mark. (1999) *Conspiracy Theory: Secrecy and Power in American Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesora Press.

Ferguson, Galit. (2010) "The Family on Reality Television: Who's Shaming Whom?" *Television & New Media* 11:87–104.

Foucault, Michel. (2010) *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France (1978–9)*. Translated by Graham Burchell, edited by Michael Senellart. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Golden, Tim. (1996) "Though Evidence is Thin, Tale of CIA and Drugs Has a Life of Its Own." *New York Times*, October 21, 1996.

Gordon, Neve. (2002) "On Visibility and Power: An Arendtian Corrective of Foucault." *Human Studies* 25:125–145.

Hall, Jeffrey. "Aligning Darkness with Conspiracy Theory: The Discursive Effects of African American Interest in Gary Webb's 'Dark Alliance.'" *The Howard Journal of Communications* 17:205–222.

Hallin, Daniel. (1986) "Network News: We Keep America on Top of the World." Pp. in *Watching Television: A Pantheon Guide to Popular Culture*, edited by Todd Gitlin. New York: PantheonBooks.

Honig, Bonnie. (1995) "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity." Pp. in *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt,* edited by Bonnie Honig. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press.

Hofstadter, Richard. (1964) "The Paranoid Style in American Politics." *Harper's Magazine*. Retrieved May 20, 2005

(http://karws.gso.uri.edu/JFK/conspiracy_theory/the_paranoid_mentality/The_pa
ranoid_style.html).

Hofstadter, Richard. (1965) *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Es-
says*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Husting, Ginna. (2006) "Neutralizing Protest: The construction of War, Chaos, and
National Identity Through US Television News on Abortion-Related Protest,
1991." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 3:162–180.

Husting, Ginna and Martin Orr. (200?) "Dangerous Machinery: Conspiracy theorist as
a transpersonal Strategy of Exclusion." *Symbolic Interaction* 30 (20: 127–150).

Illouz, Eva. (2007) *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism*. New York:
Polity Press.

Keller, Bill. (2011a.) "Dealing with Assange and the Wikileaks Secrets." *New York
Times Sunday Magazine*. January 30, p. MM32. Retrieved May 22, 2011
(http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/30/magazine/30Wikileaks-t.html).

Keller, Bill. (2011b) "Let Me Take Off My Tinfoil Hat for a Moment." *New York
Times Sunday Magazine* June 5, 2011 p. MM11. Retrieved May 22, 2011
(http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/05/magazine/a-theory-of-cons).

Kelman, Ari. (2009) "Even Paranoids Have Enemies: Rumors of Levee Sabotage in
New Orleans's Lower 9th Ward." *Journal of Urban History* 35:627.

Kurtz, Howard. (2011) "Bill Keller's Clash with Assange." *The Daily Beast*. Retrieved
May 20, 2011 (http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/01/26/bill-keller-on-
julian-assange-wikileaks-and-new-york-times-e-book.html).

Lemke, Thomas. (2009) *Foucault, Governmentality and Critique*. Paradigm.

Lemke, Thomas. (2010) "Foucault's Hypothesis: From the Critique of the Juridico-
Discursive Concept of Power to an Analytics of Governmnent." *Parrhesia* 31–
43.

Keeley, Brian. (1999) "Of Conspiracy Theories." *Journal of Philosophy* 96 (3):109–
126.

Keeley, Brian. (2003) "Nobody Expects the Spanish Inquisition! More Thoughts on
Conspiracy Theory." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 34 (1):104–110.

Knight, Peter, ed. (2002) *Conspiracy Nation: The Politics of Paranoia in Postwar
America*. NewYork: New York University Press.

Kuntsman, Adi. (2010) "Webs of Hate in Diasporic Cyberspace: The Gaza War in the
Russion-language Blogosphere." *Media, War & Conflic*t 3:299–313.

Mason, Michelle. (2003) "Contempt as a Moral Attitude." *Ethics* 113: 234–272.

McKinney, Cynthia. (2002) "Some Thoughts on our War against Terrorism." Re-
trieved 5/30/2011 (http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/MCK204A.html).

Miller, William Ian. (1997) *The Anatomy of Disgust*. Cambridge: Harvard University
Press.

Miller, William Ian. (1995) "Upward Contempt." *Political Theory* 23 (30:476–499.
The New York Times. May 14, 1997, Wednesday, Late Edition – Final The
Mercury News Comes Clean. Page A 20; Column 1; Editorial Desk) Opinion
Desk.

Nussbaum, Martha C. (2004) *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law*.
Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Nussbaum, Martha C. (2010) *From Disgust to Humanity: Sexual Orientation and
Constitutional Law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ohnuma, Keiko. (2008) "Aloha Spirit and the Cultural Politics of Sentiment as Na-
tional Belonging." *The Contemporary Pacific* 20 (2):365–394.

Pain, Rachel. (2009) "Globalized fear? Towards an Emotional Geopolitic." *Progress in Human Geography* 33: 466–486.

Pidgen, Charles. (1995) "Popper Revisited, or What Is Wrong with Conspiracy Theories." *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 25:3–34.

Pigden, Charles. (2007) "Conspiracy Theories and the Conventional Wisdom." Episteme: *A Journal of Social Epistemology* 4(2): 219–232.

Pipes, Daniel. (1997) *Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where It Comes From*. New York: Free Press.

Reeves, Jimmie, and Richard Campbell. (1994) *Cracked Coverage: Television News, the Anti-Cocaine Crusade, and the Reagan Legacy.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Rudmin, Floyd. (2003) "Conspiracy Theory as Naïve Deconstructive History." Retrieved June 28, 2011 (www.newdemocracyworld.org/old/conspiracy.htm).

Sambataro, Fabio, Savino Dimalta, Annabella Di Giorgio, Paolo Taurisano, Giuseppe Blasi, Tommaso Scarabino, Giuseppe Giannatempo, Marcello Nardini and Alessandro Bertolino. (2006) "Perferential Responses in Amygdala and Insula During Presentation of Facial Contempt and Disgust." *European Journal of Neuroscience* 24:2355–2362.

Schou, Nick. (18 August 2006) "The truth in 'Dark Alliance'." *Los Angeles Times*. http://articles.latimes.com/2006/aug/18/opinion/oe-schou18.

Simmons, William Paul and Sharon Parsons. (2005) "Beliefs in Conspiracy Theories Among African Americans: A Comparison of Elites and Masses." *Social Science Quarterly* 86:582–598.

Vrasti, Wanda. (Forthcoming) "Caring Capitalsm and the Duplicity of Critique." *Theory and Event.*

Webb, Gary. (1998) *Dark Alliance: The CIA, the Contras, and the Crack Cocaine Explosion*. Seven Stories Press.

Zelizer, Barbie and Stuart Allen. (2004) *Journalism after September 11*. New York: Routledge.