

# Conspiracy Beliefs, Bullshit Receptivity, & Social Media Behaviors

Rosalind H. Canare

Faculty: Rhonda Lewis

*Department of Psychology, Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences*

In the wake of the January 6th Insurrection of 2021, a new lens has been focused on conspiracy theories and their potential effects on public safety and civil discourse. From Pizzagate to Stop the Steal, a new body of literature is developing around conspiracy theories and their journey from the shadowy fringes of the internet to the bully pulpit of the Trump presidency. Conspiracy theories are nothing new, and even their promotion by a sitting president is not a unique occurrence, however, following the destruction and loss of life caused by the events of January 6th, a new facet of conspiracy theory has come under scrutiny: their means of dissemination. When statements are made without concern for the truth, those statements are bullshit. With Twitter users posting 350,000 tweets per minute, information can move faster than fact-checkers, which makes social media a breeding ground for bullshit that may be harder to detect by those who believe in conspiracy. The proposed study will incorporate the Generic Conspiracist Beliefs Scale, the Bullshit Receptivity Scale, and a novel Misinformation Detection Task that will have participants identify fake headlines presented as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram posts. It is hypothesized that participants who endorse more conspiratorial beliefs will be more susceptible to bullshit, and therefore have lower levels of accuracy when it comes to identifying false information.