
CONSPIRACY THEORY? THE ETHICAL PARADOX OF “BIG IS BAD”

39TH ANNUAL CORPORATE COUNSEL INSTITUTE

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SCHOOL OF LAW
THE CORPORATE COUNSEL SECTION OF THE STATE BAR OF TEXAS

MAY 11, 2017
HOUSTON, TEXAS

FACT BEFORE (CONSPIRACY) THEORY A BAD TIME TO BE BIG?

- **Profiling the “Bigs”**
 - How bad can big really be?
 - Who are the “bad bigs”?
- **Ethics challenges**
- **Making big less bad through ethics and professionalism**

EVOLUTION OF A CONSPIRACY THEORY AN IDLE MIND IS THE DEVIL'S WORKSHOP?

- In moments of **powerlessness and uncertainty**, the brain kicks into analytical overdrive in an attempt to create a coherent and understandable narrative
- Real conspiracies (e.g., Watergate) support belief in other conspiracies
- Belief in one conspiracy is the strongest indicator for belief in other conspiracies
- “**Backfire effect**” – efforts to debunk inaccurate information can leave people more convinced it is true

Maggie Koerth-Baker, *Why Rational People Buy Into Conspiracy Theories*
NY Times Magazine (May 21, 2013)

3

TYPES OF CONSPIRACY THEORIES DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES



- **Benevolent conspiracies**, angelic forces behind scenes
- **Enemy Outside**, devilish figures scheming outside the community
- **Enemy Within**, lurking inside the nation, blend with public
- **Enemy Below**, lower class wanting to overturn social order
- **Enemy Above**, powerful people manipulating system for personal gain

Jesse Walker, *The United States of Paranoia: A Conspiracy Theory*
(2013)

4

THE GRANDDADDY OF THEM ALL? THE REPTILIAN ELITE

- “The Shadow Kingdom” by Robert E. Howard (1929)
- Thousands of years ago, reptilian beings from other planets interbreed with humans, DNA manipulation
- Tall, blood-drinking, shape-shifting reptilian humanoids from the Alpha Draconis star system, now hiding in underground bases, are the force behind a worldwide conspiracy against humanity
- Most world leaders are related to them, including George W. Bush and Queen Elizabeth II



Wikipedia, Reptilians (2016)

5

WHY DOES IT MATTER? CONSPIRACY THEORIES ARE ALL ABOUT ETHICS

- Lies
- Covert acts
- Conflicts of interest
- Lack of transparency
- Abuse of power
- Manipulation
- Cover-up



6

Find the full text of this and thousands of other resources from leading experts in dozens of legal practice areas in the [UT Law CLE eLibrary \(utcle.org/elibrary\)](http://utcle.org/elibrary)

Title search: Conspiracy Theory? The Ethical Paradox of “Big is Bad”

Also available as part of the eCourse
[2017 Corporate Counsel eConference](#)

First appeared as part of the conference materials for the
39th Annual Corporate Counsel Institute session
"Conspiracy Theory? The Ethical Paradox of “Big is Bad”"