

# Negative childhood experiences can lead people to believe in conspiracy theories

February 28 2018

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Belief in [conspiracy theories](#) stems - in part - from negative early childhood experiences with caregivers, new research has shown.

In two studies, Ricky Green and Professor Karen Douglas, of the University of Kent's School of Psychology, found that participants with what is termed 'anxious attachment style' were more likely to believe in conspiracy theories.

An anxious attachment style is formed in [childhood](#) when a caregiver is inconsistently available. Once formed, this attachment style perseveres in adulthood, where it colours many aspects of people's lives such as their friendships and attitudes.

The research found that participants with anxious attachment style not only believed in general notions of conspiracy but also specific established conspiracy theories, such as that Princess Diana was assassinated by the British Secret Service.

Anxious attachment style also explained belief in conspiracy theories whilst taking into account other important factors such as general feelings of mistrust, age, education and religiosity.

The findings add further evidence that attachment not only influences

how a person interacts with others, but also that it influences people's worldviews and [political attitudes](#), say the researchers.

**More information:** Ricky Green et al, Anxious attachment and belief in conspiracy theories, *Personality and Individual Differences* (2018).

[DOI: 10.1016/j.paid.2017.12.023](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2017.12.023)

Provided by University of Kent

Citation: Negative childhood experiences can lead people to believe in conspiracy theories (2018, February 28) retrieved 21 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-02-negative-childhood-people-conspiracy-theories.html>

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