

Synthèse en 400 mots ± 10%

Rédigez en anglais et en 400 mots ($\pm 10\%$) une synthèse des documents proposés, qui devra obligatoirement comporter un titre.

Indiquez avec précision, à la fin du travail, **le nombre de mots utilisés (titre inclus)**. Vous aurez soin d'en faciliter la vérification en mettant un trait vertical au crayon **tous les 50 mots**.

Vous attacherez la plus grande importance à la clarté, à la précision et à la concision de la rédaction.

N'oubliez pas de **sauter des lignes**.

Concernant la présentation du corpus dans l'introduction, vous n'indiquerez que la source et la date de chaque document. Vous pourrez ensuite, dans le corps de la synthèse, faire référence à ces documents par «doc.1», « doc. 2 », etc.

Ce sujet comporte les 4 documents suivants :

1. Un article de Marianna Spring et Mike Wendling, publié sur le site bbc.com, daté du 3 septembre 2020
2. Un article de Kaitlyn Tiffany, publié sur le site d'information The Verge, daté du 9 octobre 2017
3. Un article de Tara Law, publié dans Time Magazine, daté du 21 septembre 2020.
4. Une image non datée, publiée sur le site bbc.com.

L'ordre dans lequel se présentent les documents est aléatoire.

L'usage de tout système électronique ou informatique est interdit dans cette épreuve.

Document 1 : How Covid-19 myths are merging with the QAnon conspiracy theory

By Marianna Spring and Mike Wendling, BBC Anti-disinformation unit

bbc.com, 3 September 2020

Online and in real-life demonstrations, two viral conspiracy theories are increasingly coming together. At first glance the only thing they appear to have in common is their vast distance from reality. On one hand, QAnon: a convoluted conspiracy theory that contends that President Trump is waging a secret war against Satan-worshipping elite paedophiles. On the other, a swirling mass of pseudoscience claiming that coronavirus does not exist, or is not fatal, or any number of other baseless claims.

These two ideas are now increasingly coming together, in a grand conspiracy mash-up. It was apparent on the streets of London last weekend, where speakers addressing thousands of followers at an anti-mask, anti-lockdown demonstration touched on both themes. Posters promoting QAnon and a range of other conspiracy theories were on display.

On Sunday, President Trump retweeted a message claiming the true number of Covid-19 deaths in the United States was a small fraction of the official numbers. The tweet was later deleted by Twitter under its policy on misinformation. The account that posted it - "Mel Q" - is still live, and is a copious spreader of QAnon ideas.

QAnon's main strand of thought is that President Trump is leading a fight against child trafficking that will end in a day of reckoning with prominent politicians and journalists being arrested and executed.

There has long been overlap between QAnon influencers and pandemic conspiracists, but the weekend protests in London and other cities around the world were the biggest offline demonstration to date of their increasing ties.

"Proponents of Covid conspiracies have found ready-made audiences in the QAnon crowd and vice versa," says Chloe Colliver, senior policy director at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), a think tank focused on extremism. "In the face of the pandemic, conspiracy theories paint a world that is ordered, and controllable," explains Open University psychologist Jovan Byford. "Conspiracy theories flourish when social machinery breaks down and available ways of making sense of the world prove inadequate for what is going on."

While the pandemic has increased the overall potential audience for such ideas, the QAnon and coronavirus strands are also linked by a preoccupation - or obsession - with children and their safety. That explains why we've seen these theories spread in local Facebook groups where more benign discussions cover which cafes are baby-friendly or which local schools make the grade.

"Child abuse is the epitome of sexual and moral depravity and something that is indisputably evil," Jovan Byford says, "so its incorporation into the theory helps take the idea of the conspirators' monstrosity and iniquity to the absolute, unquestionable extreme."

Some of those in Saturday's crowd were presumably drawn by legitimate concerns about mental health, the economy, criticism of government policy or by questions about still-evolving science.

But, overwhelmingly, what attendees heard from the speakers was a steady stream of bad information (about coronavirus death rates), groundless speculation (about child abuse and "mandatory" vaccinations) and baseless assertions (about the pandemic being planned by governments or shadowy forces - or in the words of the conspiracy theorists, a "plandemic").

And conspiratorial thinking wasn't limited to the UK - similar signs could be seen in weekend demonstrations in Boston, Berlin and elsewhere. QAnon and coronavirus conspiracy theories have truly gone international.

Document 2: "IF A SCIENTIFIC CONSPIRACY THEORY IS FUNNY, THAT DOESN'T MEAN IT'S A JOKE"

Why are flat Earth truthers having such a huge year online?

THE VERGE - By Kaitlyn Tiffany, Oct 9, 2017

The Flat Earth Society's site — which posits that the idea of a round Earth is somehow related to the faking of the Moon landing — is remarkably well-designed and professional-looking, eliminating some of the old hallmarks of disinformation on the internet. The ease of creating a website as clean as this one is a problem that has been well-documented by information scientists. As recently as five years ago, high schools were teaching that you could identify a disreputable source by its cheap-looking site, bad design, and messy URL. That no longer holds. [...]

Flat Earthers have received extensive coverage from platforms as diverse and prestigious as *Vice*, *The Atlantic*, *Sports Illustrated*, *The Guardian*, and *Mic*. Obviously none of these outlets indulge flat Earth theory as plausible, or even remotely rational — but they do contribute to its ongoing popularity by feeding the appetite for these stories.

Unsurprisingly, flat Earth conspiracy articles far outperform the average for these pages: *LiveScience*'s "Is Earth Flat? A Guide to the Ultimate Conspiracy Theory" received about 11 times the Facebook engagement (likes, comments, and shares) as the average *LiveScience* post. *CNET*'s "This is what flat-earthers on social

media really believe” was about 16 times as popular as the average post on that page. Last year, *Mic*’s fledgling tech and science vertical The Future is Now posted the same flat Earther explainer, titled “There is a Massive Conspiracy to Hide the Fact That the Earth is Flat,” twice in the same month, for a total of over 1,000 shares, at a time when that page was averaging closer to 30 shares per post. Though I used these Facebook statistics as an approximation for how well flat Earth posts did in comparison to other posts on various news sites, Havlak says the majority of traffic on posts *The Verge* has published about other conspiracy theories — including two posts that I wrote, about the One Direction Babygate theory and the “Ted Cruz is the Zodiac Killer” theory — came from Google. The Top Stories box is crucial, and Google is still most people’s first go-to when their curiosity is piqued.

An admin of the Flat Earth Society site also wrote a personal thank you note to *Yahoo! News* in January, writing, “Every article like this spreads our message to more unaware minds.”

Not everyone who’s reading or sharing these posts can possibly be believers in flat Earth. I asked Joseph Uscinski, a political science professor at the University of Miami who recently co-authored a history of American conspiracy theories, why people who don’t believe in the flat Earth theory would waste their time reading about it. Reading about a conspiracy theory is “not unlike [watching] an M. Night Shyamalan movie in the theater,” he says. These theories “posit alternative realities full of schemes and skullduggery... Did secret agents plant explosives in the Twin Towers to fake a terror attack? Did the Mafia undertake a hit against President Kennedy? Do interdimensional lizards secretly interbreed with humans while running the planet? Even if one is not convinced, there is plenty of entertainment there.”

Also, the feeling of reading about a conspiracy theory is kind of like the sensation of watching *Mr. Robot*, says Mark Fenster, an expert in government transparency at the University of Florida law school and author of *Conspiracy Theories: Secrets and Power in American Culture*. That show, and the thrillers and mystery novels that preceded it, play with the idea that “you have a certain set of understandings and beliefs that you are taught and that you believe are true, but in fact, if you actually look closely at them and understand the truth of the matter, those beliefs are proven to be false. That is — in a fictional universe — extremely enticing and extremely exciting. It can be a source of fun.” [...]

But engaging with that type of humor for long enough could eventually radicalize people. If you can get someone to ironically question systems like NASA and the federal government and the scientific process in general, you can sometimes get them to question those things for real.

Document 3 : COVID-19 Conspiracy Theories Are Spreading Rapidly—and They're a Public Health Risk All Their Own

BY TARA LAW, Time Magazine , SEPTEMBER 21, 2020

Public health crises have spawned conspiracy theories as far back as when the Black Death ravaged Europe in the 1300s, as people desperately try to make sense of the chaotic forces disrupting their lives. While modern science offers a better understanding of how diseases infect people and how to contain them, COVID-19 conspiracy theories are spreading rapidly via social media, unreliable news outlets and from our own political leaders, including U.S. President Donald Trump. The result: many Americans now believe pandemic-related conspiracy theories—and, alarmingly, those same people are less likely to take steps to prevent the virus from spreading.

In a University of Pennsylvania Annenberg Public Policy Center study published Monday in Social Science & Medicine, researchers surveyed a group of 840 U.S. adults—first in late March, and then again in mid-July—to determine how Americans’ beliefs and actions regarding the pandemic changed over time. Overall, they found that COVID-19 conspiracy theories are not only commonplace, they’re gaining traction. Back in March, 28% of people believed a debunked rumor that the Chinese government created the coronavirus as a bioweapon; that number rose to 37% by July. About 24% believed that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention exaggerated the virus’ danger to hurt Trump politically despite a lack of evidence; by July, that figure rose to 32%. And in March, about 15% of respondents said they believed that the pharmaceutical

industry created the virus to boost drug and vaccine sales—another unfounded theory—compared to 17% in July.

Whether or not someone thinks NASA hired Stanley Kubrick to fake the moon landing has little bearing on the world beyond that person. But in the case of a pandemic—which requires people to follow public health guidance in order to keep one another safe—conspiratorial thinking can have disturbing consequences. Indeed, the Annenberg study found that only 62% of people who were most likely to believe the coronavirus conspiracies said they wear a mask every day when they’re around other people away from home, compared to 95% of non-believers. Furthermore, people who believe COVID-19 conspiracy theories were 2.2 times less likely to say they wanted to receive a vaccine in March; by July, they were 3.5 times less likely to want to be vaccinated.

“Belief in pandemic conspiracy theories appears to be an obstacle to minimizing the spread of COVID-19,” said Dan Romer, Annenberg Public Policy Center research director and a study co-author, in a statement.

Where are people picking up COVID-19 conspiracy theories? Believers were more likely to be heavy users of social media and viewers of conservative media like Fox News, the study found. Meanwhile, people who watch other television news channels were more likely to follow public health guidance and to desire vaccination.

While the researchers say they understand how pandemic conspiracy theories are spreading, they say it’s still a challenge to get believers to reconsider once they’re sucked in. Other research suggests that simply correcting false information doesn’t usually work—and can even cause some people to believe conspiracies even more deeply.

“Conspiracy theories are difficult to displace because they provide explanations for events that are not fully understood, such as the current pandemic, play on people’s distrust of government and other powerful actors, and involve accusations that cannot be easily fact-checked,” said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Annenberg Public Policy Center director and study co-author, in a statement.

Document 4



CORRIGE:

Conspiracy theories should not be taken lightly.

Understanding the world in its complexity is at the core¹ of conspiracy theories. The corpus under consideration – a 2017 article from The Verge, a 2020 article from Time, an excerpt from the bbc's website anti-disinformation unit, and a picture from bbc.com – asks if although these theories may be dismissed² as extremely bizarre, their rapid spread may not have quite serious consequences.

Major global crises and disasters often prompt people to turn to narratives that explain their precarious situations. According to BBC bloggers Spring and Wendling, QAnon's theories, in which underground networks of satanist paedophiles threaten the world, offer supporting views to the theory which claims that that covid is a hoax or has been manufactured by evil forces. This is echoed in the picture showing protesters holding signs denouncing both child trafficking and vaccination and mask mandates. Believers in these theories, Time Magazine says, will find comfort in what can help them make sense of the world, while non-believers might find amusement in these outrageous and sometimes well-wrought³ stories, says The Verge.

Consequently, these theories are currently gaining popularity, and all three articles blame social media coverage. The Verge reveals that online publications spreading or merely referring to conspiracy theories get more views, despite the occasional effort by Twitter, for instance, which deleted a fallacious tweet published by Donald Trump. Indeed, even politicians such as the US president – mentioned in Time and by BBC bloggers - fuel conspiracy theories, and so do the demonstrators in the BBC picture who bring their fight against “manipulation” to the streets. And Time underlines that even reliable news outlets and online search engines gain more prominence⁴ if they publish articles on the topic.

Believing in these hoaxes can have disastrous consequences, especially when it comes to public health matters. Time warns that if people believe in conspiracies about the covid crisis or vaccination, they might let their guard down⁵. But countering the actions of conspiracy-theorists is a daunting⁶ task: the Verge reports that conspiracy theory websites, which used to be poorly-designed and easily recognisable as fake, look more professional and credible today. They can even be quite entertaining. Once these theories have made their way into people's mindsets, they are incredibly difficult to dislodge, and believers do not trust the experts who could disprove them.

Finally, the Verge claims that questioning established political or scientific systems, even ironically, could dangerously cast doubt on⁷ these systems. Therefore, whether they are taken seriously or not, conspiracy theories and their consequences should not be overlooked⁸.

425 words

¹ **At the core of** = at the heart of

² **To dismiss a theory / an idea** = rejeter / écarter

³ **Well-wrought /rɔ:t/** = bien fait / bien ficelé

⁴ **'Prominence** = importance

⁵ **To let one's guard /ga:d/ down** = baisser la garde

⁶ **Daunting** = difficile / décourageant

⁷ **To cast doubt /daʊt/ on sth** = mettre qch en doute

⁸ **To overlook sth** = négliger / ignorer