

SECTS, CULTS, AND SUBVERSIVE IDEOLOGIES

DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE OF QANON

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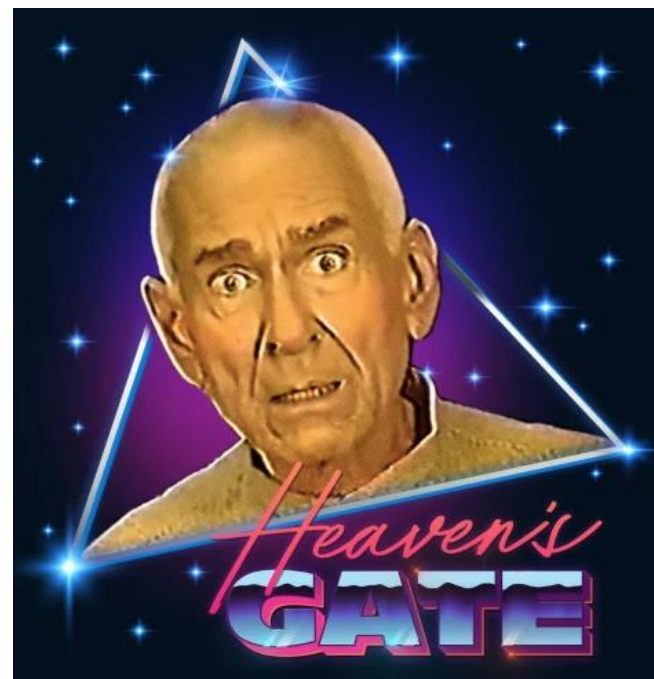
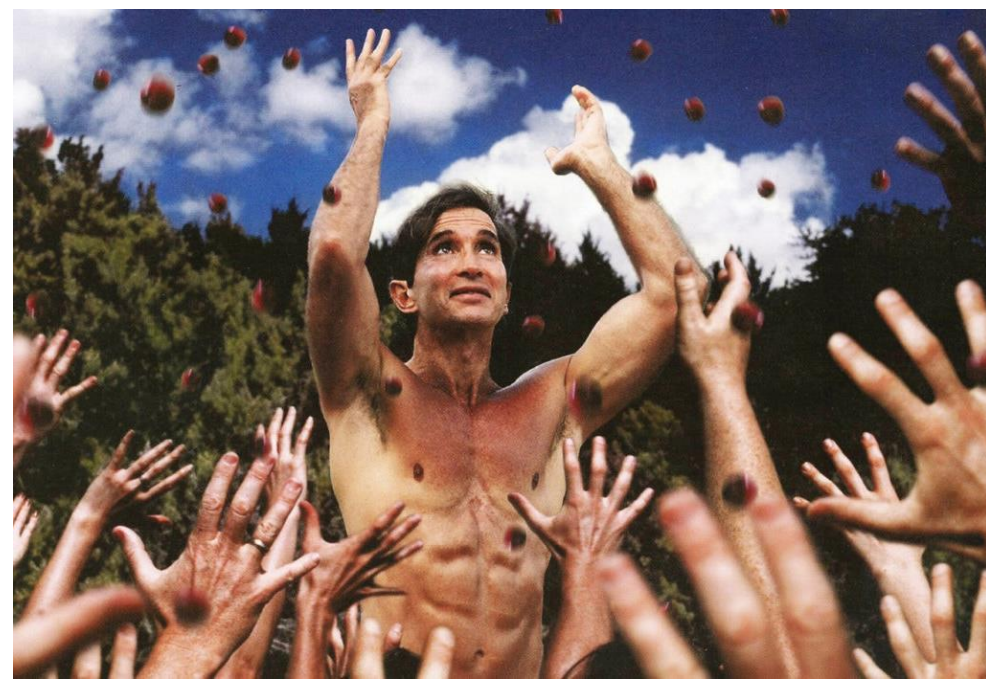
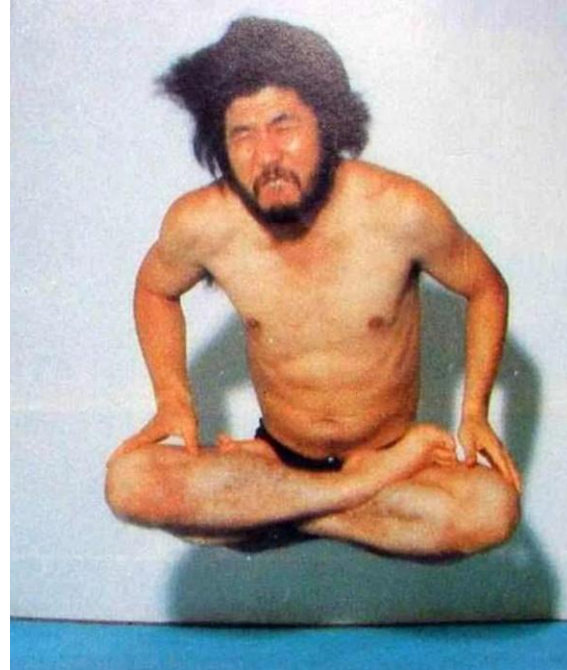
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INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of sects and cults:

- relatively small in size
 - authoritarianism
 - strict rules
 - us versus them
 - closedness and isolation
 - indoctrination, fanaticism
 - belief in unsupported claims
 - radicalism
-
- Threat to their members and possibly also to society and the state (subversive potential).





STRUCTURE

What is QAnon?

Why people believe nonsense?



QANON |

QANON

- Metaconspiracy theory, cult, movement, religion, community...
 - conspiracy x conspiracy theory x conspiracy thinking
- Anonymous founder: **Q** (Paul Furber? Ron Watkins? Insider from military intelligence?)
- Since 2017 Q has been posting puzzles (so-called “drops” or “bread crumbs”) on social media allegedly revealing classified information

6 November 2022

Extortion?

What groups are financing Ukraine?

Threats?

Why are they financing Ukraine?

How do you control a 'leader'?

Why was Hunter in Ukraine?

How do you control a country?

What did 'Pop' threaten to withhold from Ukraine?

Are you ready to take back control?

A billion dollars?

Your vote matters.

Who benefits?

You have all the tools you need.

What did 'Pop' receive in return?

Q

Why is Hunter not in jail?

Think.

Blackmail?

Bribes?

27 November 2022

What is coded in your DNA?

Who put it there?

Why?

Mankind is repressed.

We will be repressed no more.

Information is knowledge.

Knowledge is power.

Information is power.

How do you protect your DNA?

There is a war for your DNA.

Protect your DNA.

Ascension.

Q

24 June 2022

Are you ready to serve your country again?

Remember your oath.

Q

31 October 2020

Are you ready to hold the political elite accountable?

Q

22 October 2020

Are you ready to take back control of this Country?

Q

WHAT DO THEY BELIEVE?

- A synthesis of conspiracy theories about flat Earth, covid, vaccination, aliens, reptilians, 9/11, Jews, death of Kennedy and many others
- Constructing absurd associations: queen Elizabeth as descendant of prophet Mohammed, Angela Merkel as a daughter of Adolf Hitler, etc.
- Core is the conspiracy theory about „**deep state**“ consisting of pedophiles worshipping Satan (mainly Democrats) → **Donald Trump** as hero, savior



SYMBOLS AND METAPHORS

- number 17
- white rabbit
- rabbit hole
- red pill



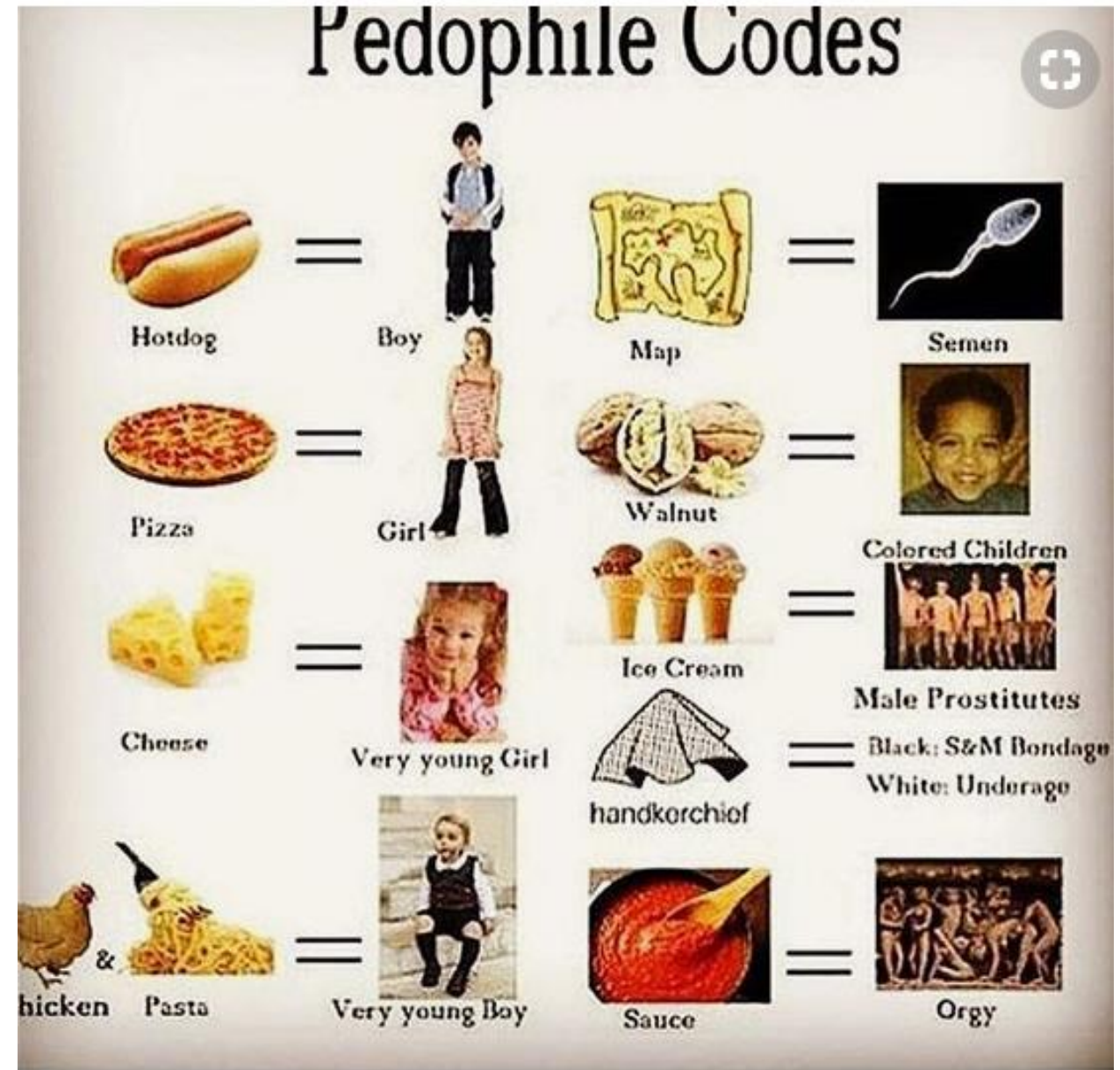


VIOLENT INCIDENTS ASSAULT ON THE CAPITOL, 6.1.2021

QAnon as a potential
terrorist threat according
to FBI

PIZZAGATE

- Predecessor of Qanon
- Conspiracy theory about Democrats allegedly running a child abuse network from their secret HQ in a pizzeria in Washington, D.C.
- It resulted in shooting in the pizzeria



WHO ARE QANON FOLLOWERS?



- Number of followers in the USA: 5% (2019), 10% (2020), 17% (2021)
- **Vulnerable groups:**
 - Republicans (29% Republicans vs 6% Democrats)
 - white women
 - evangelicals (27% white Evangelicals, 63% evangelical Republicans)
 - alternative spiritual and esoteric communities
- QAnon and prominent public figures (including Michael Flynn)
- Decline of followers after failed prophecies (Storm, inauguration of Trump)
- Followers in more than 70 states including Czech Republic



FALSE

TRUE

WHY PEOPLE BELIEVE NONSENSE?



- **Wow moment:**

„Oh my God! Look at all this news that no one else has ever seen before, and I am seeing it!“

→ **red pill moment** → **going down the rabbit hole**

- A small **piece of truth** wrapped in a large amount of nonsense





Psychological needs and desires:

- cognitive need (sense of intellectual superiority)
„I was excited because I was one of the first ones to know this. (...) It increased my ego.“
- desire to stand out from the crowd
- need to have purpose in life and excitement
- need to be part of something

Element of crisis:

- compensation for the loss of control and helplessness
- underestimating coincidence
- need to find a culprit
- demand for clear answers and quick solutions
- comprehensible causes of complex phenomena
- reducing uncertainty
- naming the source of fear and anxiety
- relativizing one's own problems
- a lie is more tempting than an inconvenient truth



Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump



Following

Snowing in Texas and Louisiana, record setting freezing temperatures throughout the country and beyond. Global warming is an expensive hoax!

RETWEETS
428

LIKES
358



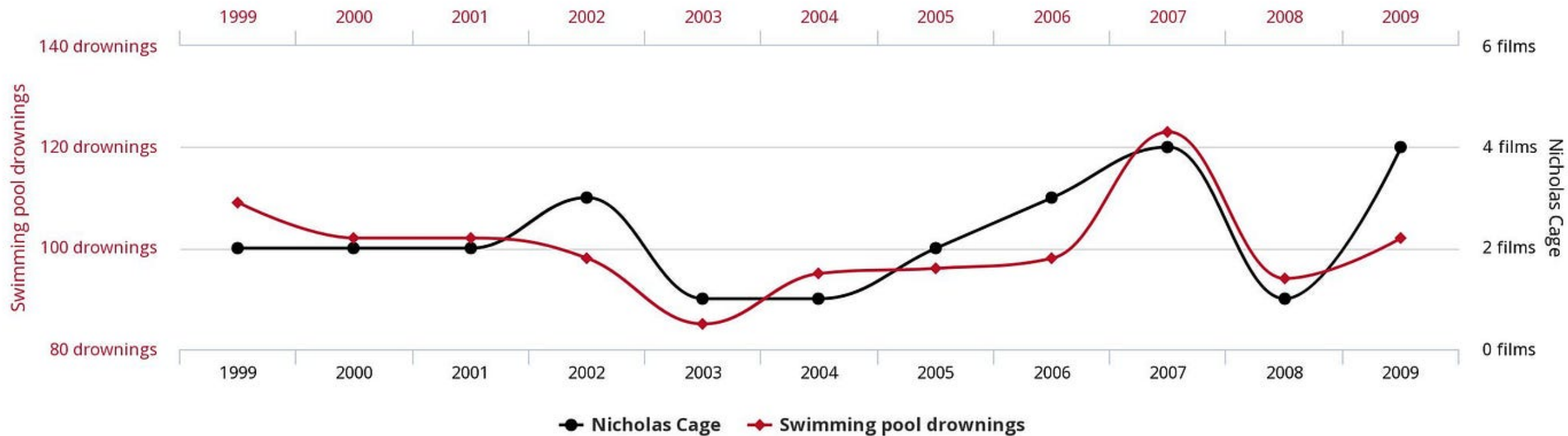
1:27 AM - 29 Jan 2014



Personal features:

- mental problems
- affiliation to groups and their values (religious groups, political parties...)
- insufficient analytical thinking
- insufficient scientific thinking
 - false generalizations
 - correlation versus causation
- cognitive biases: self confirmation bias

Number of people who drowned by falling into a pool correlates with Films Nicolas Cage appeared in



The differences between a conspiracy and non-conspiracy theorist's brains:



A conspiracy theorist's brain:

1. Processes a negative gut reaction



2. Comes up with a theory based on suspicion



3. Comes up with conclusion



4. Discards evidence that doesn't support conclusion



A non-conspiracy theorist's brain:

1. Processes a negative gut reaction



2. Weighs the evidence



3. Realizes coincidences can happen



4. Comes to a conclusion



Weakened trust in the state:

"I was already primed to receive the whole flat-Earth idea, because we had already come to the conclusion that we were being deceived about so many other things. So of course they would lie to us about this."

Lack of transparency and weak information and communication policy of the institutions

QUESTIONS

