

**The conspiracists are up to something:  
belief in conspiracy theories and attitudes towards political violence**

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## Introduction

Contemporary democracies are living an age of exacerbated political conflict, both inside and outside the institutional channels. On the one hand, party politics seems to be moving towards greater extremism and disagreement in many established systems. American politics is a particularly visible case where partisan polarization has reached concerningly high levels, to the point to threaten effective policy making (Mansbridge and Martin 2013). In Europe, the recent EU Parliament elections have witnessed an impressive surge of votes for extreme right-wing and populist parties across many of the twenty-eight countries of the union. Similar results have replicated at the level of national politics as well, as recent examples in Hungary and Sweden testify. On the other hand, while electoral participation is declining in many industrialized countries, contentious politics is on the rise (Blais and Rubenson 2013; Dalton 2008; Kriesi et al. 2012). As recent examples of political protests turning violent in the US, UK, Italy and Spain (to name a few) show, democratic citizens are relying more on alternative forms of participation, often not peaceful, to make their political statements. What these two phenomena – extremization of party politics, rise of violent protests – have in common, is that they reflect two different but related aspects of political radicalization, namely the emergence of actors pursuing extreme political ideals and the justification of violence as a mean to reach them (Borum 2011).

Certainly, political protest is not terrorism, that is the ultimate focus of much research on radicalization (McCauley and Moskalenko 2008). Reasons to demonstrate are often legitimate, and violent outbursts can be an inevitable consequence when protests are repressed or protesters' claims are systematically ignored. However, the tendency to accept or justify violent political actions is central to both research on violent protest (Jackson et al. 2013) and terrorism (Wilner and Dubouloz 2010). Thus, to study the factors influencing this attitude is an important step in order to understand the political changes occurring in the recent years across many democracies, and arguably inform policy makers in their effort to keep tendencies to radicalization under control.

In this study we argue that the recent diffusion of a multitude of political conspiracy theories is related to this phenomenon. In particular, we propose that the narrative offered by such theories is part of a worldview that sees the official political institutions as deceptive, and points to them as the ultimate scapegoat for societal problems. By constructing a system of mutually-reinforcing beliefs about the (dishonest) nature and the (cynical) aims of the forces that regulate the political reality, conspiracy theories provide a foundation for an *anti-system ideology* that fuels people's animosity towards the

institutions, the procedures and the actors that are central to representative democracies.

While social psychologists have devoted a great amount of energy to studying *why* some people believe in conspiracies (e.g. Abalakina-Paap et al. 1999; Goertzel 1994; Oliver and Wood 2014; Swami et al. 2010, 2011), efforts to understand the political and behavioral implications of such beliefs have been so far limited. However, the few steps done in this direction have led to important findings. In a survey of the on-line material produced by several radical political groups, conspiracy theories have been found to be widely present in the propaganda of violent groups (Bartlett and Miller 2010). In a recent study, Jolley and Douglas (2014) show that exposure to conspiracy theories weakens people's desire to engage in standard forms of political participation. To date, no attempts have been made to assess empirically the link between conspiracy belief and radicalization at the individual level. With this study we aim to fill this gap by conducting the first psychological study connecting validated measures of belief in conspiracies with attitudes towards radical and violent political action.

This paper develops in two parts. In the next section we discuss the state of the art of the literature on belief in conspiracy theories, much of which has been produced in the field of psychology. Then we move to a preliminary analysis of data on conspiracy beliefs and several indicators of endorsement of political violence collected on an on-line sample of US citizens in March 2014. Finally, we draw some initial conclusions and discuss the implications of our findings for future research on the relevance of conspiracy theories for political scientists.

### **Conspiracy belief as an anti-system ideology**

Definitions of conspiracy theories in the literature are multiple and bound to vary according to the focus of specific studies. Here we take up Byford's (2011) conceptualization, and define the conspiracy theory as a *narrative*, or an account of some relevant events characterized by a specific rhetorical style. First, it is based on the assumption that observable facts are the product of deliberate actions of a group of people, regardless how complex their realization may appear. Such a monistic and intrinsically deterministic view assigns immense power and control to an invisible elite whose purposes are the true driving force behind the political events (Clarke 2002; Keeley 1999; Popper 1966). Second, because of the almightiness and secrecy of the actors to which they attribute the cause of all things, conspiracy theories are in fact unfalsifiable. Any piece of evidence disconfirming their claims, or any lack of evidence supporting them, will be interpreted as a sign of the hidden power of the conspirators, and therefore will become integrating part of the narrative (Keeley 1999). Thus, it is in the systematic

exclusion of alternative non-conspirative explanations, even in the face of evidence or greater plausibility, that such theories differ from other types of investigative accounts (Aaronovich 2011).

Believing in conspiracy theories implies endorsing a specific mindset, as it would be to subscribe to a certain ideological belief. Narratives promoted by different theories are typically coherent, and can be used to provide mutually-reinforcing evidence in support to one another (Goertzel 1994). Indeed, one of the best predictors of people's belief in a conspiracy is the fact that they believe in other conspiracies. Empirical studies show that such a belief cuts across different theories, even when the proposed conspiracies are fictitious (Swami et al. 2011) and when they clearly contradict one another (Wood et al. 2012). This suggests that people do not necessarily evaluate single theories on rational grounds, but rather tend to buy the full package (Brotherton et al. 2013). In other words, conspiracy theories collectively form a system of mutually-reinforcing narrations that confirm each other's idea about the processes regulating political events. Such a system can be regarded as a proper *worldview*, as it is based on a set of core assumptions regarding the functioning of political reality that are common to all conspiracy theories.

When it gets to the *content* of this worldview, a recurring theme in conspiracy theories is that the decisional power and control over the mechanisms that regulate the political world are held by elites typically driven by cynical purposes, with the public institutions being more or less consciously colluded with them. Wood et al. argue that this narrative should be called *deceptive officialdom*, that is “the idea that authorities are engaged in motivated deception” (2012, p.XX). This view is somewhat reinforced by studies showing a significant association between conspiracy belief, political cynicism, and negative attitudes towards the authority (Swami et al. 2011)<sup>1</sup>.

Many accounts of conspiracy belief have focused on different aspects than its monological nature, ultimately discarding its similarity to ideology. For instance, early explanations have regarded this belief as a form of collective *paranoia*. According to Hofstadter (1965) one of the central aspects of conspiratorial narratives is the “feeling of persecution” that they entail. Yet, while actual paranoia is a serious clinical condition affecting a few individuals, conspiracy theories imply a collective dimension that differs them from individual delusions (Bale 2007; Byford 2011; Zonis and Joseph 1994). While people suffering from paranoia tend to see hostile plots perpetrated against themselves, conspiracy theory believers typically describe machinations against their own group (Bartlett and Miller 2010;

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<sup>1</sup> Other ideas can contribute to other beliefs. Lewandowsky et al. (2013) provide a more policy-based account, showing that rejection of climate science is related to endorsement of free markets. Oliver and Wood (2014) show that people tend believe in theories where the conspirators are said to belong to an adversary political group.

Sapountzis and Condor 2013). Other scholars have been trying to explain conspiracy belief by looking at individual differences. Factors that have been suggested to play a role include feelings of powerlessness, anomie and low interpersonal trust (Goertzel 1994), uncertainty (Van Prooijen and Jostmann 2013), and authoritarianism (Abalakina-Paap et al. 1999; Grzesiak-Feldman and Irzycka 2009; but see McHoskey 1995). Other traits that are strongly connected to conspiracy belief are the tendency to make causal attributions of phenomena to hidden forces, and the preference for Manichean types of narrative (Oliver and Wood 2014). Consistently, studies found significant correlations between belief in conspiracies and belief in paranormal or supernatural forces (Brotherton et al. 2013; Bruder et al. 2013). Researchers have also focused on the impact of Big Five personality traits on individual differences in conspiracism. Empirical findings suggested a negative correlation between belief in conspiracies and agreeableness (Bruder et al. 2013; Swami et al. 2010, 2011) and a positive association with openness to experience (Swami et al. 2010), although other studies could not replicate the same results, suggesting that the relationship between personality on conspiracy belief is somewhat complex and possibly mediated by neglected factors (Brotherton et al. 2013).

All in all, the most relevant point here, on which scholars seem to agree, is that the structure of conspiracy belief resembles ideology in that many beliefs in particular conspiracies reinforce one another into a general monological narrative. The constraint among a person's views in the framework of an ideological system is given by the logical coherence that a certain type of opinion towards two attitude objects requires (see Converse 1964). As a simple example, if one thinks that wealth should be better redistributed in order to improve life's quality of the disadvantaged, s/he should also think that the state should have a greater regulatory role in administering taxes and providing social services. The connection between these two attitudes does not come from the fact that they are implied or dependent on one another (in fact, redistribution could be achieved in many different ways that relying on the role of the state) but rather that they reflect the same underlying philosophy, i.e. that more equality is the ultimate aim of political power. Similarly, believing in two different conspiracies does not mean that they must imply one another – as the study by Wood et al. (2012) cleverly shows – but rather that the interpretation that they both propose makes sense according to an underlying idea (in this sense, what is called “belief” in conspiracy theories should be rather called “*acceptance*” of conspiracy theories). Such an idea is that official power institutions are secretly colluded with one another, and concur to make the interest not of the citizens, whom they are meant to serve and/or represent, but of some concealed and powerful elites. Thus, conspiracy belief should be regarded as an attitudinal expression

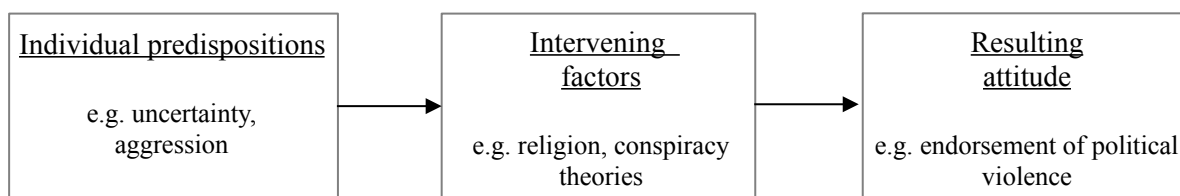
of an anti-system ideology. While social psychologists have devoted great effort in explaining which individual predispositions lead people to embrace this worldview, it is in the interest of political scientists to understand which political behaviors are associated to it.

### **Conspiracy belief in the process of radicalization**

Research on radicalization is typically focused on terrorism (Borum 2011; King and Taylor 2011; McCauley and Moskalenko 2008; Moghaddam 2005; Wilner and Dubouloz 2010). In most of these studies, radicalization is conceptualized as a process, or a pathway, that starts with common citizens and ends with individuals who are willing to take many lives, often including their own, to pursue a political ideal. While terrorism is the final extreme outcome of this process, the acceptance of violence is usually seen as a middle step in the path of individual radicalization. Here we focus exclusively on this step, following Jackson and colleagues' intuition that «[p]eople who think it is morally acceptable to use violence to achieve certain goals may be more likely to engage in the act if the situation arose, less likely to condemn other people's behavior, and less likely to assist legal authorities in the detection and prosecution of violent acts» (Jackson et al. 2013, p.XX). Nevertheless, we adopt the concept of “pathway” borrowed from research on terrorism, and note that the psychological literature on conspiracy theory belief presents several points in common with the literature on radicalization.

We focus on a recent review of theoretical models of radicalization into homegrown terrorism (King and Taylor 2011), and discuss where conspiracy belief is likely to play a role in individuals' pathways towards acceptance of political violence. As a general point we argue that conspiracy theories, like religion or the active recruitment by extremist organizations, are *intervening factors* on the route going from a set of individual predispositions, which stem from a person's life conditions and dispositional traits, to a resulting attitude, which in this case is justification of political violence. For a visual representation of the pathway, see Figure 1. below.

**Figure 1. Proposed Pathway Linking Individual Predispositions to Attitudes**



The starting point of many theoretical models lies in a number of predispositional factors that make some individuals more likely than others to embark on a pathway towards radicalism. Interestingly, many common factors have been identified independently in the contexts of research on radicalization and conspiracy theory belief. Most of them revolve around the presence of an individual crisis. While research on terrorism focuses on relative deprivation, moral outrage and identity-related issues (King and Taylor 2011; Moghaddam 2005; Sageman 2008; Wilner and Dubouloz 2010), research on conspiracy belief emphasizes anomie, aggression, lack of self esteem, lack of control, uncertainty, hostility and feelings of powerlessness as important correlates of conspiracy belief (Abalakina-Paap et al. 1999; Bruder et al. 2013; Goertzel 1994; Swami et al. 2011; Van Prooijen and Jostmann 2013). All in all, two common factors that seem to be central to both streams of research are a heightened sense of personal uncertainty and resentment for one's own conditions.

Given a set of individual predispositions, the second step is to identify the intervening factors. This is where conspiracy theories enter into play. In particular, uncertainty contributes to increase individuals' sensitivity to external sources of meaning (Kinvall 2004; Wilner and Dubouloz 2010). In the case of research on homegrown terrorism, which is typically focused on members of Muslim minorities in Western countries, two important sources are religion and established extremist organizations. In the case of research on conspiracy belief, the emphasis is on the monistic causal explanations offered by many conspiracy theories, which helps people see reality as something understandable and predictable (Van Prooijen and Jostmann 2013). Like religions, conspiracy theories offer simplified and intuitive accounts for events, often presenting them as conflicts over sacred values (Franks et al. 2013). Moreover, like religious faith, conspiracy belief defines the borders of a community (Byford 2011). By granting individuals a source of social self-categorization, the membership to the *group of believers*, both religion and conspiracy theories can provide a sense of perceived external approval to one's feelings and attitudes, therefore and again contributing to uncertainty reduction (Hogg 2000).

Seeking to reduce uncertainty by relying on simplistic narrations or by joining a group of believers is not a sufficient condition for radicalization. Endorsement of violence is rather prompted by the *anti-system worldview* that such narrations promote, and by the *group dynamics* that get established among the believers. As we discussed in the previous section, the worldview promoted by conspiracy theories is the one of a deceptive elite that controls many political institutions and is the single responsible for several major historical and political events. This interpretation resembles the one given by many radical Muslim groups who regard the West as a singular entity on war against Islam (Sageman 2008).

More generally, both extremist narrations and conspiracy theories identify and point at precise enemies. In this way, they both fulfill the function of displacing individuals' resentment and aggression onto out-groups by making them scapegoats (Abalakina-Paap et al. 1999; Goertzel 1994; Moghaddam 2005; Young 1990). Group dynamics play a similar role. Conspiracy believers like to be “in the know”, share precious non-mainstream information with other believers, and by doing so increase their own popularity in the community (Byford 2011). However, when group boundaries are established, they can lead to isolation of the members, attitudinal polarization, and increased despise for the out-groups (McCauley and Moskaleiko 2008). Both these factors may prompt individuals to think that political adversaries are enemies, that standard forms of political competition may be not effective to defeat them, and therefore that violence is a justifiable or even necessary undertaking to bring political justice.

## **Data**

All our theoretical claims are tested using data collected by the Political Behavior Research Group at CEU (PolBeRG), with Amazon's service Mechanical Turk in March, 2014. 694 American citizens of voting age volunteered to participate in the survey that contains several experiments and a multitude of batteries of questions designed to tap into the demographic, psychological, sociological and political characteristics of individuals. Financial incentives were offered as rewards for decisions that the respondents made in some of the experiments, and several attention checks were included throughout the survey (see Oppenheimer et al., 2009), likely contributing to the quality of our data. Some of the scales we use in this study had to be abbreviated to keep the length of the survey within tolerable limits and avoid respondent fatigue. This was done by assigning to each respondent only a subset of all the items considered for the measurement of any given trait. However, as the selection of items assigned to each respondent was random with regard to all considerations relevant for our study, the system missing data can be considered completely random. The effect of the omissions, if any, would be to decrease the reliability of our scales, thus elevating type II errors and attenuating some of our coefficients.

The constructs we discuss were all explicitly measured. Following Brotherton et al. (2013), the subjects were asked to assess the veracity of fifteen conspiratorial statements on topics ranging from government and global organized malevolence to extraterrestrial cover-ups. Despite the diversity of the conspiratorial types under scrutiny, our subjects' responses to the fifteen items are all positively correlated, with coefficients ranging from 0.13 to 0.77, a majority of them in the range of 0.4 –0.6, all



statistically significant. This allows us to treat conspiratorial thinking as an internally consistent construct, without having to partition it into sub-facets.

We used three constructs to grasp people's aggressiveness, propensity to endorse political violence and radical political action. The “Legitimate Radical Political Action” battery contains six items inquiring about the respondents' willingness to accept violence as a justified mean to achieve political ends. In line with Jackson et al. (2013), we also use a four item scale to measure our subjects' principled endorsement of violence as an adequate response to perceived injustice or unfairness. Finally, we measure the subjects' propensity for aggression using a randomized subsample of items from the Buss-Perry Aggression scale, (Buss and Perry 1992) with 14 items out of 29 being assigned to each respondent completely at random.

The same approach was used for the measurement of the other psychological constructs relevant to our study. The respondents were asked to report their level of fear of 11 material and immaterial objects, selected at random out of a list of 22 proposed by Hakeberg et al. (1995). Five sub-scales emerge from the full list of items: fear of illness and death, fear of failure and embarrassment, fear of social situations, fear of physical injuries, and fear of animals or natural phenomena. Five more constructs were pooled together in a battery of 85 items out of which 49 were randomly assigned to each respondent. The “need for cognition” scale (Cacioppo et al., 1996) contributes with 18 items to this long battery, and “right wing authoritarianism” (henceforth RWA) with 19 items proposed by Altemeyer (2007). “Social dominance orientation” (henceforth SDO) reflects people's belief in a just social hierarchy that legitimizes the privileges of some groups over others; SDO is measured with 16 likert items, following Sidanius et al. (2001). Finally, 8 items were used for tapping into the respondents' sense of internal self-efficacy (Chen et al., 2001), or their perception of their personal ability to carry out tasks and bring about desirable outcomes.

The data also allows us to use several demographic and political controls in our models: sex, education, age, race, direction and strength of ideology. Fifty-two percent of the respondents are women, the age of our respondents ranges from 18 to 80, with an average of 35.7 and a median of 32, four year less than the national median. The sample is markedly more educated than a nationally representative one, as 91% of the respondents reported having more than 12 years of formal education. Also, the sample has a noticeable skew towards the liberal side of the ideological spectrum, with 52% of the respondents reporting to be slightly liberal to very liberal, and only 25% slightly to very conservative. Regarding race, 81% of the sample identify as white, 6% as black, 3% as Asian.

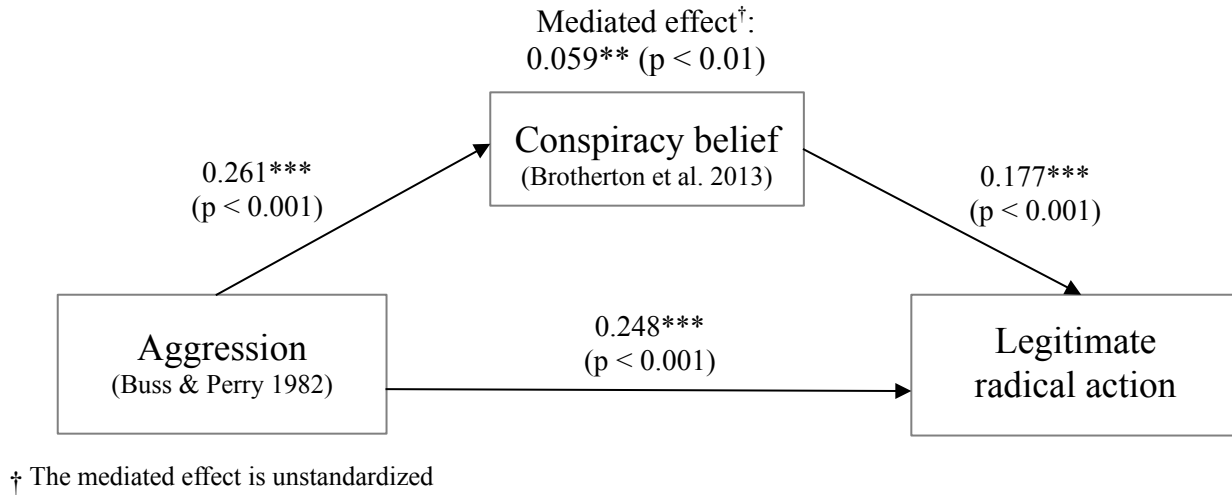
## Models and Results

Due to the complexity and sheer number of relationships that need to be estimated, we use structural equation models for testing all our claims, and include conspiracism as a mediator (Baron and Kenny, 1986) of the effect of aggressiveness on the endorsement of political violence and radicalism. We fit two models, one with belief in conspiracies and radicalism as dependents, and a second one where political violence and belief in conspiracies are specified as dependent variables. The independent variables are the same in all models. Psychological constructs are modeled as latent, whereas demographic variables are manifest, as are the ideology and strength of ideology variables. Aggressiveness, in line with the extant psychometric literature (see Buss and Perry, 1992), is always specified as independent, and only its effect on our other dependents is considered to be contingent upon external factors.

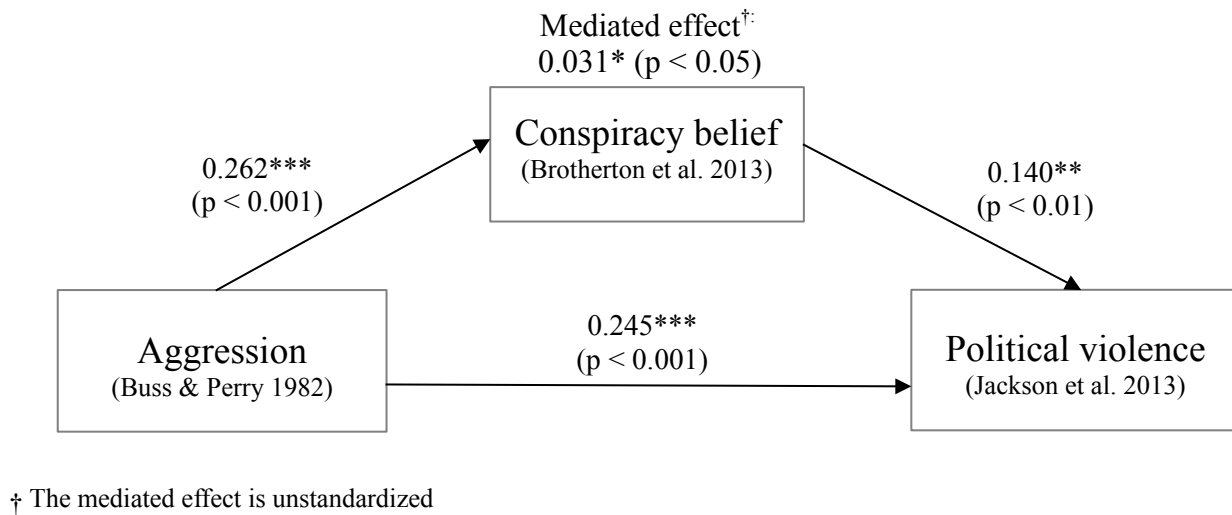
Both our models fit the data well, with a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) of 0.05, and a standardized root mean square of the residual (SRMR) of 0.09. We find that radical action and belief in conspiracy are significantly correlated ( $r=0.177$ ), yet their covariates often diverge: right wing authoritarianism is positively correlated with conspiracism but not with the endorsement of radical action. Respondents with lower levels of internal political efficacy and high scores on the social dominance orientation scale appear significantly more likely to legitimize radical action, but they are not more likely than their peers to believe in conspiracies. Radicalism is an attribute of our more educated, younger and male respondents, with stronger ideological convictions, whereas conspiracism is more strongly associated with lower levels of education and to belonging to a racial minority. All these results are presented in diagram form in the Appendix (Figure 2. expanded, and Figure 3. expanded).

The factors that influence the endorsement of political violence are the same as the ones that predict radicalism, as our second model shows. Belief in conspiracies correlates significantly with political violence ( $r=0.140$ ), in line with our theoretical expectations and consistent with the findings of Model 1, discussed above. Aggression is a significant predictor of radicalism ( $r=0.248$ ), belief in conspiracies ( $r=0.261$ ), and the endorsement of political violence ( $r=0.245$ ). More importantly, we find that belief in conspiracies mediates the effect of aggression on both political violence and the legitimization of political violence. All these effects that are central to the theoretical framework proposed in our paper are summarized in Figures 2 and 3 below.

**Figure 2. Standardized Coefficients Estimated with Model 1**



**Figure 3. Standardized Coefficients Estimated with Model 2**



## Discussion

Our findings agree with most of our theoretical expectations. Belief in conspiracies emerges from our two models as a chiefly anti-system mindset, fueled by higher propensities for aggressiveness, as well as by various forms of social exclusion, and with the potential to effect violent attitudes and behaviors. The respondents most likely to adhere to a conspiracist mindset appear to be those belonging to less privileged societal groups, such as racial minorities and less educated segments of the population. They

are more likely to have an authoritarian orientation, but, unlike the typical endorsers of violence, they do not appear to have exacerbated social dominance orientations. This suggests that conspiracy believers, while having authoritarian, uncompromising views on social matters, are not particularly adamant to legitimize the morality of existing systemic inequities. Conspiracists strive for social order and moral absolutes but not for the ones that the current political mainstream has on offer.

Despite these notable differences between the typical believers in conspiracies and the typical endorsers of violence, they all have in common a higher propensity for aggressiveness, and belief in conspiracy is a significant predictor of political violence and radicalism. We argued previously that belief in conspiracies may constitute an intervening factor in the pathway from aggressiveness to political violence. While this is certainly not the only pathway between the two, our mediation analysis lends credence to the idea that, at least in the case of some individuals, belief in conspiracies can channel aggressiveness towards violent behavior and attitudes. We find that belief in conspiracies strengthens the effect of aggressiveness on the endorsement of political violence and radicalism.

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## **Appendix**

### **Endorsement of violence:**

4 items, 1 (Always wrong) to 5 (Always right).

1. Use violence to protest against things they think are unfair
2. Writing and distributing leaflets that encourage violence.
3. Using violence to protest against effects of globalization.
4. Using violence in the name of religion to protest.

### **Legitimate Radical Political Action:**

6 items, 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree).

1. In extreme circumstances, it is acceptable for someone in your community to physically harm a government official to express political discontent.
2. In extreme circumstances, it is acceptable for someone in your community to protest violently to express political discontent.
3. In extreme circumstances, it is acceptable for someone in your community to destroy property to express political discontent
4. In extreme circumstances, it is acceptable for someone in your community to publicly call for the boycott of an election to express political discontent.
5. In extreme circumstances, it is acceptable for someone in your community to call for violence to express political discontent.
6. In extreme circumstances, it is acceptable for people in your community to arm and isolate themselves to express political discontent

### **Buss-Perry Aggression Scale:**

29 items, 1 (Extremely uncharacteristic of me) to 7 (Extremely characteristic of me).

14 items were assigned at random for each respondent.

1. Once in a while I can't control the urge to strike another person.

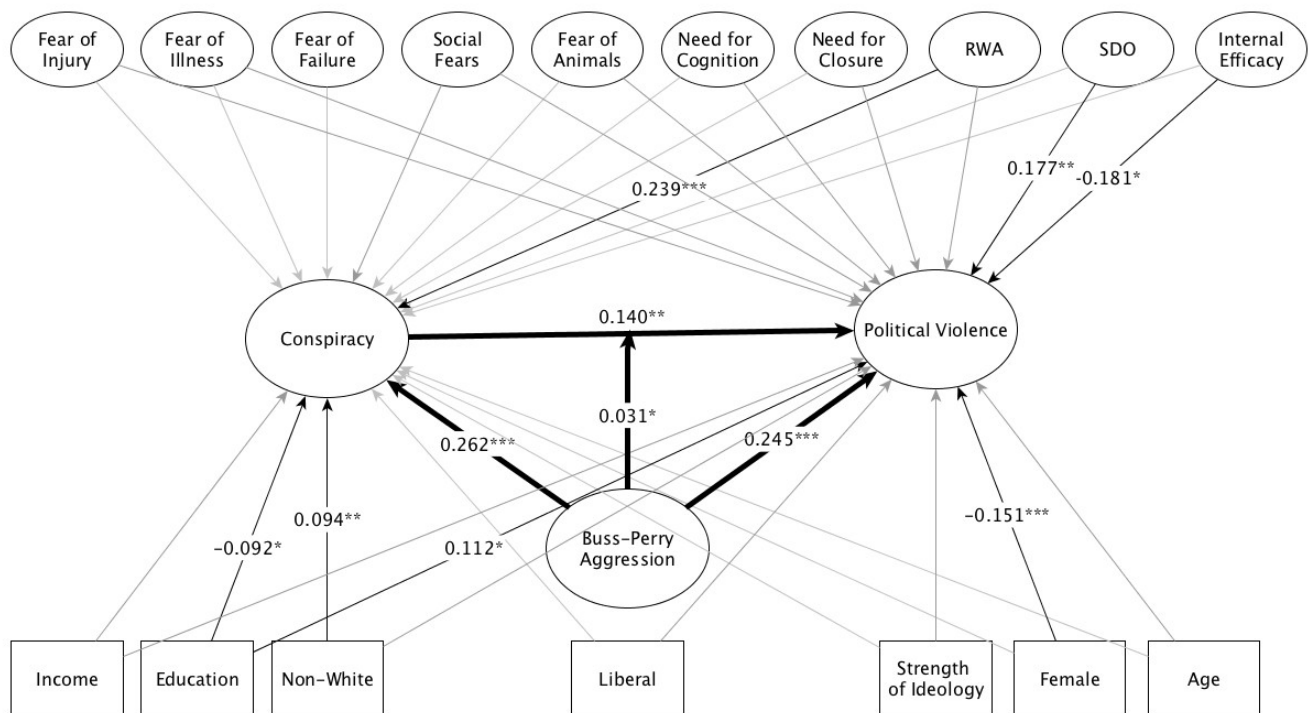
2. Given enough provocation, I may hit another person
3. If somebody hits me, I hit back.
4. I get into fights a little more than the average person.
5. If I have to resort to violence to protect my rights, I will.
6. There are people who pushed me so far that we came to blows.
7. I can think of no good reason for ever hitting a person.
8. I have threatened people I know.
9. I have become so mad that I have broken things.
10. I tell my friends openly when I disagree with them.
11. I often find myself disagreeing with people.
12. When people annoy me, I may tell them what I think of them.
13. I can't help getting into arguments when people disagree with me.
14. My friends say that I'm somewhat argumentative.
15. I flare up quickly but get over it quickly.
16. When frustrated, I let my irritation show.
17. I sometimes feel like a powder keg ready to explode.
18. I am an even-tempered person.
19. Some of my friends think I'm a hothead.
20. Sometimes I fly off the handle for no good reason.
21. I have trouble controlling my temper.
22. I am sometimes eaten up with jealousy.
23. At times I feel I have gotten a raw deal out of life.
24. Other people always seem to get the breaks.
25. I wonder why sometimes I feel so bitter about things.
26. I know that "friends" talk about me behind my back.
27. I am suspicious of overly friendly strangers.
28. I sometimes feel that people are laughing at me behind me back.
29. When people are especially nice, I wonder what they want

**Belief in Conspiracies:**

15 items, 1 (Definitely not true) to 5 (Definitely true).

1. The government is involved in the murder of innocent citizens and/or well-known public figures, and keeps this a secret.
2. The power held by heads of state is second to that of small unknown groups who really control world politics.
3. Secret organisations communicate with extraterrestrials, but keep this fact from the public.
4. The spread of certain viruses and/or diseases is the result of the deliberate, concealed efforts of some organisation.
5. Groups of scientists manipulate, fabricate, or suppress evidence in order to deceive the public.
6. The government permits or perpetrates acts of terrorism on its own soil, disguising its involvement.
7. A small, secret group of people is responsible for making all major world decisions, such as going to war.
8. Evidence of alien contact is being concealed from the public.
9. Technology with mind-control capacities is used on people without their knowledge.
10. New and advanced technology which would harm current industry is being suppressed.
11. The government uses people as patsies to hide its involvement in criminal activity.
12. Certain significant events have been the result of the activity of a small group who secretly manipulate world events.
13. Some UFO sightings and rumors are planned or staged in order to distract the public from real alien contact
14. Experiments involving new drugs or technologies are routinely carried out on the public
15. without their knowledge or consent.
16. A lot of important information is deliberately concealed from the public out of self-interest.

**Model 1 full diagram (Figure 2. expanded)**



**Model 2 full diagram (Figure 3. expanded)**

