Galvanizing Events: The U.S. Election
Conspiracy Theories and Violent Extremism
Presenter: Bettina Rottweiler, Ph.D. (University College of London)

State of the Science: Americans' Acceptance of Politically Motivated Violence
Presenter: Chris Bader, Ph.D. (Chapman University)

Tolerance for Violence toward Public Servants
Presenter: Pete Simi, Ph.D. (Chapman University)
Conspiracy Theories and Violent Extremism

Bettina Rottweiler and Paul Gill (University College London)
Examining the Relationship between Conspiracy Theories and Violent Extremism

Purpose

1) Assess the prevalence of conspiracy theories within the US and examine their relevance to violent extremism
2) Measure how conspiracy beliefs and violent intentions evolve over the course of the 2024 presidential election

Project Methods

- 6-wave longitudinal survey data collection

Anticipated Impact

- Gain unique insights into the developmental trajectories over the course of the election year
- Identify key risk and protective factors for prevention and intervention programs

This material is based on work supported by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security under Grant Award Number, 20STTPC00001-04. The views and conclusions included here are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as necessarily representing the official policies, either expressed or implied, of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
1. Prevalence – Conspiracy Beliefs and Intentions to Engage in Election Violence in the US

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1. Prevalence – Conspiracy Beliefs in the US

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election-related Conspiracy Beliefs</th>
<th>% Agree/ Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A secret group of powerful people manipulates political elections in this country to serve their own interests</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voter Fraud Beliefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Republican Party will try to commit voter fraud in the 2024 presidential election</td>
<td>39.6% (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Democratic Party will try to commit voter fraud in the 2024 presidential election</td>
<td>46.2% (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Replacement Theory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a deliberate plot to replace white people with immigrants, Muslims, and other people of color in their home countries</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Semitic Conspiracy Beliefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Holocaust is a hoax that was largely made up to serve Jewish interests and to secure the State of Israel</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### 1. Prevalence – Election Legitimacy and Violence in the US

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Legitimacy</th>
<th>% Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If your preferred presidential candidate ends up losing the 2024 Presidential Election, will you accept the election result as legitimate?</td>
<td>64.2% (D) 59.8% (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for Election-related Violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence can be justified if the opposing political party or other powerful actors manipulate political events (e.g. elections) for their own advantage</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentions to Engage in Election Violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be willing to engage in violence if I thought the opposing political party or other powerful actors rig the 2024 presidential election</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentions to Engage in Election Violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be willing to engage in extreme measures, even using violence if necessary, if Donald Trump loses the 2024 presidential election</td>
<td>2.9% (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentions to Engage in Election Violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be willing to engage in extreme measures, even using violence if necessary, if Joe Biden loses the 2024 presidential election</td>
<td>2.3% (D)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2. Content and Context Matter – Not all Conspiracy Theories are Equal
3. Relevance – Conspiracy Beliefs can Have Dangerous Consequences

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3. Relevance – Election Conspiracy Beliefs and Violent Intentions

A secret group of powerful people manipulates political elections in this country to serve their own interest

![Graph showing comparison between No CT Beliefs and CT Beliefs for Violent Extremist Intentions (5.5%) and Election Violence Intentions (5.6%)]

No CT Beliefs
CT Beliefs

Violent Extremist Intentions (5.5%)
Election Violence Intentions (5.6%)

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3. Relevance – Anti-Semitic Conspiracy Beliefs and Violent Intentions

Jewish elites have deliberately caused wars and significant crises in Western countries for their own ends.

![Bar chart showing Violent Extremist Intentions and Election Violence Intentions with CT Beliefs and No CT Beliefs categories.](chart.png)

- Violent Extremist Intentions: 3.9% (No CT Beliefs), 18.8% (CT Beliefs)
- Election Violence Intentions: 3.5% (No CT Beliefs), 21.1% (CT Beliefs)

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3. Relevance – Great Replacement Beliefs and Violent Intentions

There is a deliberate plot to replace white people with immigrants, Muslims, and other people of color in their home countries.
4. Vulnerability – Risk Factors for Conspiracy Thinking and Violent Extremist Intentions

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5. Conditions and Context Matter – When does Conspiracy Thinking Become Relevant to Extremist Risk?
6. Trajectories – How do Conspiracy Beliefs and Violent Intentions Develop over Time?

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6. Trajectories – How do Conspiracy Beliefs and Violent Intentions develop over time?

- Assess developmental trajectories over the course of the election year
- Do we see an increase or decrease in certain conspiracy beliefs?
- How do individuals’ violent intentions develop?
- Identify key risk and protective factors for prevention and intervention programs
- What “causes” these changes?
- Which factors are most strongly associated with the changes in conspiracy beliefs and/or violent extremist intentions?

Practical implications
- How can these findings be used for risk assessment and P/CVE efforts?

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Thank you

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