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Authoritarianism and conspiracism around the world

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Abstract

Authoritarian leaders frequently deploy conspiracy narratives to justify power concentration and delegitimize opponents, yet the link between authoritarianism and conspiracism remains underresearched. Integrating data across six studies from multiple international surveys (N=63,403; 20 countries), expert-coded party systems (71 countries; 14 datasets), and longitudinal panel studies, we demonstrate that individuals with stronger authoritarian orientations are consistently more prone to conspiracism across diverse cultures, political contexts, and time. These results remain robust when controlling for populist attitudes and multiple political, psychological, and demographic variables. The link between authoritarianism and conspiracism appears to constitute a durable and generalizable psychological relationship. This may help explain why conspiratorial narratives and authoritarian politics so often co-occur, with important implications for democratic resilience in an era of rising institutional distrust, anti-scientific attitudes, misinformation, and post-truth politics.

Keywords: authoritarianism, conspiracism, political psychology, populist attitudes, relative deprivation, motivated social cognition

Words: 131

Introduction

Authoritarian leaders are rising in many parts of the world, exploiting and accelerating democratic erosion, institutional instability, and civic unrest (Freedom House, 2022; Salajan & Jules, 2024). These leaders frequently invoke conspiracy theories to justify their actions, delegitimize opponents, and mobilize supporters (Nicas, 2022; Castaneda, 2019; Sabbagh, 2022; Fichera & Spencer, 2020). The implications of this resurgence are stark. Even the United States—the world's oldest continuous democracy—has recently experienced pronounced democratic backsliding, driven by an authoritarian leader who repeatedly promoted conspiratorial narratives to undermine electoral legitimacy, institutional constraints, and civil and human rights (Federico et al., 2022). Yet this pattern is not new. Conspiracy theories have long permeated politics and have been repeatedly deployed by authoritarian regimes across a wide range of historical and ideological contexts. The Nazi regime perpetuated the myth of a Jewish conspiracy (Evans, 2020), Mussolini's fascist government exaggerated the threat of a communist conspiracy to consolidate their power (Finchelstein, 2022), and the Russian Communist Party promoted the "Doctors' Plot", a fabricated conspiracy against prominent medical professionals accused of plotting to murder leading government and party officials (Etinger, 2016). These recurring parallels raise the question: Is there a systematic relationship between generalized authoritarianism and conspiracism?

To date, scholarly attention to this question has been limited. Most research on conspiracism and authoritarian predispositions has focused on *right-wing authoritarianism*, documenting a medium positive relationship ($r = .22$, 95% CI = [.17, .26]; Bowes et al., 2023). By contrast, less work has examined conspiracism in relation to authoritarian opposition to democratic norms and institutions. To the best of our knowledge, only one study has directly examined the relationship between conspiracism and authoritarianism, regardless of ideological orientation (Papaioannou et al., 2023). They found a positive association between conspiracy beliefs and rejection of democracy in Greece and experimentally demonstrated a causal link between conspiracy beliefs and support for authoritarian leaders in the USA. However, the scope of their analysis was limited to two countries, leaving open the question as to whether this association generalizes across different cultural, political, and institutional contexts.

There are several theoretical reasons to expect that the association between authoritarianism and conspiracism transcends cultural and political contexts and reflects deeper psychological dynamics.[1] First, from a psychological perspective, conspiracy beliefs may heighten feelings of powerlessness, which in turn can foster a desire for a strong, decisive leader as a compensatory response (Papaioannou et al., 2023). Second, economic inequality may simultaneously increase

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[1] Authoritarianism can be operationalized in multiple ways. In this paper, it was operationalized as a psychological predisposition marked by a heightened need for order and conformity, or as a political orientation distinguished by the rejection of democratic values, norms, and institutions. In this paper, we examine these two types of authoritarianism.

support for authoritarian leaders (Sprong et al., 2019) and susceptibility to conspiracy theories (Zeng et al., 2024; Casara et al., 2022), thereby producing a higher-order association between authoritarianism. Third, the causal direction may also run from authoritarianism to conspiracism. Specifically, individuals with authoritarian political preferences might adopt conspiracy narratives to rationalize political losses or delegitimize opponents (Federico et al., 2018). Building on these theoretical perspectives, we test the hypothesis that conspiracism and both types of authoritarianism are positively associated and that this association holds across a wide range of countries around the world. The aim of the present research is not to adjudicate among competing causal pathways, but rather to establish whether authoritarianism and conspiracism are systematically associated across a wide range of countries worldwide.

To test this hypothesis, we adopt a multi-level approach that integrates evidence across datasets, levels of analysis, and time. We begin by analyzing three large international datasets that include individual-level measures of both constructs across twenty countries—within the European Union, but also encompassing the United States, Canada, Brazil, Lebanon, Morocco, and South Africa. These analyses provide consistent cross-national evidence of an individual-level association between conspiracism and preference for "strong", authoritarian political leaders. We then move from the individual to the societal level, and from authoritarian attitudes towards democracy to authoritarian psychological predispositions, by conducting a meta-analysis of fourteen additional datasets that enable the construction of national-level indices of authoritarianism and conspiracism in 71 countries worldwide. This meta-analytic approach allows us to test whether the association observed at the individual level also generalizes to the national level. Consistent with this pattern, countries with higher average levels of authoritarianism tend to exhibit higher conspiracism.

Finally, we analyze a longitudinal dataset from the United States to explore the temporal dynamics of this relationship, distinguishing differences between individuals from within-person changes over time. This analysis allows us to examine, within the same samples, the relationship between conspiracism and both authoritarian political attitudes and authoritarianism as a psychological predisposition. Results reveal a between-subjects—but not within-subjects—association between conspiracism and *both* authoritarian political attitudes (i.e., rejection of democratic norms) and authoritarian psychological predispositions (i.e., child-rearing values), indicating that this link was stable and may reflect a deeply ingrained psychological disposition, rather than short-term fluctuations. Taken together, these analyses provide the most comprehensive and systematic test to date of the connection between authoritarianism and conspiracism across individuals, societies, and time.

Results

We begin by analyzing a dataset including over 50,000 individual observations collected between February and May 2018 from 13 EU countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden), and the United Kingdom (Krouwel et al., 2019). This dataset contains responses to the Conspiracy Mentality Questionnaire (Bruder et al., 2013), a measure of authoritarian political preferences (agreement with "this country needs a strong leader that can quickly decide on everything"; adapted from Elchardus and Spruyt, 2012), and various other political psychological and socio-demographic measures. Detailed descriptions of these measures can be found in the Methods.

A multilevel mixed-effects linear regression, with random intercepts for countries, reveals a positive association between authoritarianism and conspiracy mentality ($b = 0.148$, $SE = 0.002$, $z = 61.16$, $p < 0.001$). Country-specific linear regressions show that this association is statistically significant in all countries, with coefficients ranging from b = 0.038 ($SE = 0.007$, $t = 5.47$, $p < 0.001$) in Spain, to $b = 0.310$ ($SE = 0.010$, $t = 31.41$, $p < 0.001$) in Sweden. See Figure 1a, green boxes, and Supplementary Information (SI), Table S1, Column (1), for statistical details. These results provide initial evidence that authoritarianism is associated with conspiracism. Moreover, albeit with some heterogeneity, this association is present in all countries.

To assess the robustness of this association, we include controls for several political attitudes available in the dataset. First, we control for measures of people-centrism and anti-elitism, because these two dimensions of populist attitudes (Mudde, 2017) have been conceptually related to authoritarianism (Norris, 2020) and have been found to be associated with conspiracism (Abalakina-Paap et al., 1999; Goertzel, 1994; Christner, 2022; Castanho Silva et al., 2017); therefore, they may explain the association between authoritarianism and conspiracy mentality. However, after including these controls in the mixed-effects model the authoritarianism's coefficient remain highly significant ($b = 0.118$, $SE = 0.002$, $z = 55.18$, $p < 0.001$). See Table S2, Column (2). Moreover, once again, country-specific linear regressions demonstrate that the association between the authoritarianism measure and conspiracy mentality is present in all countries, with coefficients ranging from b = 0.033 ($SE = 0.009$, $t = 3.56$, $p < 0.001$) for Portugal, to $b = 0.190$ ($SE = 0.011$, $t = 17.04$, $p < 0.001$) for Austria. See Figure 1a, red boxes, and SI, Table S1, Column (2). We also control for several political-psychology variables (social dominance, social cohesion, anomie, relative deprivation, multiculturalism, left-right values, attitudes towards immigration, globalization, Manichean outlook) and sociodemographic covariates (gender, age, personal economic situation, employment precarity, economic precarity, internet use). These variables are all associated with authoritarianism, conspiracism, or both in previous research and in this study, potentially explaining their association. Yet, after controlling for these variables, the association between authoritarianism and conspiracy mentality remains significant in all tests (see Table S2, Columns (3) and (4). At the country level, the association remains significant in 11 out of 14 countries (see Table S1, Columns (3) and (4)).

Study 1 has two main limitations: its sample is restricted to EU countries and the United Kingdom, and it relies on a single-item indicator of authoritarianism. Studies 2 and 3 both broaden the geographical coverage by examining data from several non-European contexts, while Study 3 also strengthens measurement validity by including an additional indicator of authoritarianism.

In Study 2, we analyze a dataset from three countries on three different continents: Brazil (June to July 2022), Germany (September 2021), and the United States (August to September 2016), each with over 1,000 observations (Azevedo et al., 2019; Rothmund et al., 2020; Rothmund et al., 2022). This dataset includes a measure of authoritarian political preferences (similar to that in Study 1) and a measure of conspiratorial thinking (related to national elections), and several other political-psychological variables. See Methods for detailed description of the measures. Given that the dependent variable (election-related conspiratorial thinking) is country-specific, we analyze this dataset country-by-country. Linear regressions show that the association between authoritarianism and conspiratorial thinking is consistent across countries, with coefficients ranging from $b = 0.139$ ($SE = 0.019$, $t = 7.27$, $p < 0.001$) in Brazil, to $b = 0.206$ ($SE = 0.025$, $t = 8.42$, $p < 0.001$) in Germany, and to $b = 0.257$ ($SE = 0.018$, $t = 14.41$, $p < 0.001$) in the USA. Adding controls on populist measures, the association remains significant in Brazil ($b = 0.136$, $SE = 0.019$, $t = 7.31$, $p < 0.001$) and the USA ($b = 0.217$, $SE = 0.017$, $t = 12.64$, p < 0.001), but not in Germany ($b = 0.021$, $SE = 0.022$, $t = 0.98$, $p = 0.328$). See Figure 1b. We refer to the SI, Tables S3-S5, for additional robustness checks (Manichaean outlook and socio-demographic variables); results remain qualitatively similar.

In Study 3, we examine an additional dataset (Bordeleau et al., 2023), which includes individual-level observations collected between December 2022 and January 2023 from eight countries (Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Lebanon, Morocco, South Africa, and the United States). This dataset includes two scales measuring conspiracy mentality (Brotherton et al., 2013; Bruder et al., 2013) and a measure of authoritarianism: belief that schools should instill discipline. This item captures support for strict social order and obedience to authority, a central component of authoritarianism (Feldman, 2003). See Methods for detailed description of the measures.

A multilevel mixed-effects linear regression, with random intercepts for countries, reveals a positive association between belief that schools should instill discipline and both measures of conspiracy mentality (Brotherton: $b = 0.121$, $SE = 0.009$, $z = 13.03$, $p < 0.001$, significant in all countries; Bruder: $b = 0.191$, $SE = 0.009$, $z = 21.99$, $p < 0.001$, significant in all countries). See Table S6 and S7 for statistical details. The associations between beliefs that schools should instill discipline and conspiracy mentality are robust to the inclusion of several political and worldview variables (anti-elitism, people-centrism, political orientation, anti-immigration, and religiosity),

psychological attitudes (cognitive reflection, cognitive closure, and self-esteem), and sociodemographic variables (age, gender, education, socioeconomic status, and employment status). See SI, Table S6. Country-level analyses show that these associations remain significant in the majority of cases (see SI, Table S7).
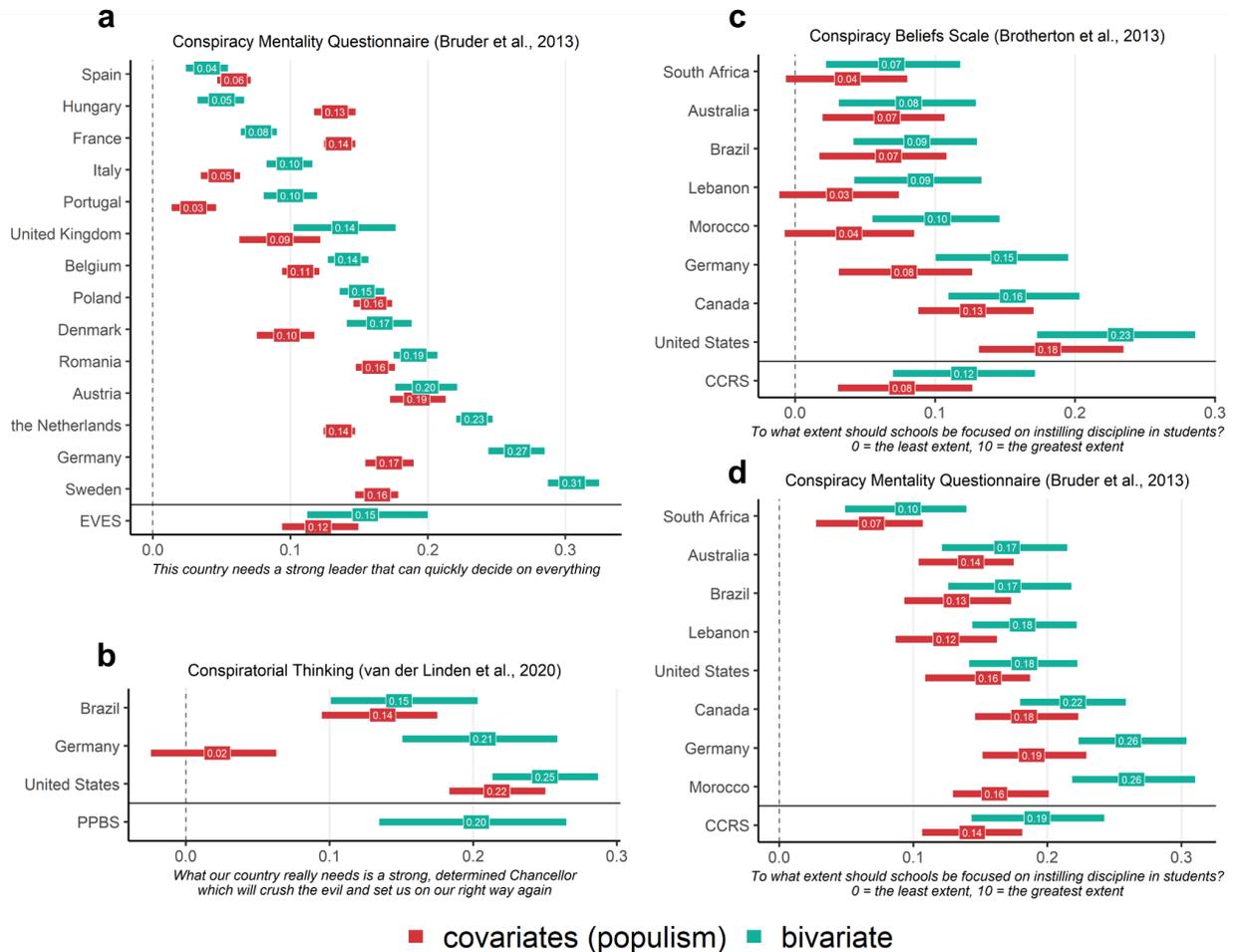
Figure 1. Studies 1-3. Individual-level data. Country-level estimates of the relation between the measure of authoritarianism and the measure of conspiracism in Study 1 (panel a), Study 2 (panel b), and Study 3 (panels c and d). Estimates are bootstrapped from by-country individual regressions, with 95% confidence intervals, and colors indicating whether populist covariates were considered in the estimate (teal for accounted and red for not accounted). In panel b the overall effect including covariates cannot be computed as the specific covariates vary by country. The overall pattern of results remains robust regardless of the specific operationalization of conspiracism and authoritarianism.

The previous studies provide converging evidence that authoritarianism is consistently associated with conspiracism at the individual level across multiple countries. In Study 4, we aim to test whether country-level values of conspiracism are positively associated with country-level values of authoritarianism globally, employing 14 datasets from various sources, including academic studies (Azevedo et al., 2023; Imhoff et al., 2022; Bordeleau et al., 2023; Enea et al., 2023; Hornsey et al., 2018; De Coninck et al., 2021; Oana & Bojar, 2023; Rutjens, 2022; Theocharis et al., 2023; Walter & Drochon, 2022) and institutional polls like YouGov (Ibbetson, 2021), the European Social Survey (Round 10) (European Social Survey, 2023), and World Public Opinion (2008 poll) (World Public Opinion, 2008). These datasets contain or enable the construction of country-level measures of conspiracism across a total of 71 unique countries (see SI, Figure S1 for a visualization of these countries and SI, Table S8, for the list). For each of these countries, we build country-level measures of authoritarianism, anti-elitism, and people-centrism, using the Global Party Survey (GPS; Norris, 2020). The GPS contains evaluations from 1,861 experts who rated 1,043 political parties across 163 countries on multiple ideological dimensions. Experts assessed, among other items, the extent to which each party emphasizes that executive power should not be constrained by checks and balances (authoritarianism), that most politicians are dishonest and corrupt (anti-elitism), and that political decisions should directly reflect the will of "the people" (people-centrism). We weighted these expert ratings by each party's recent electoral performance—measured through votes received and seats won—to generate country-level indicators. For example, consider a country with two parties that have received authoritarianism scores of 0.3 and 0.6, respectively. If these parties received 57% and 43% of the votes, and 61% and 39% of the seats, the country-level authoritarianism score is computed as the average of the vote-weighted and seat-weighted scores: (0.3*0.57+0.6*0.43+0.3*0.61+0.6*0.39)/2. Therefore, these measures incorporate a behavioral component: rather than relying solely on expert assessments of party positions, they weight these assessments by the actual votes and seats obtained by the parties in recent national elections, thereby reflecting the political choices citizens make at the ballot box. See Methods for details about the computation of these values; the code for replicating the computation is available in the OSF page of this article: https://osf.io/65rkj/

Our aim is to test whether country-level values of conspiracism are positively associated with country-level values of authoritarianism. To this end, for each of the 14 datasets we calculate the coefficient of the linear regression predicting conspiracism as a function of authoritarianism, with and without control for people-centrism and anti-elitism, and then conduct a random-effects meta-analysis of these coefficients. The meta-analysis confirms a significant positive association between authoritarianism and conspiracism (overall coefficient = 0.234, 95% CI = [0.145,0.323], $z = 5.133$, $p < 0.001$). See Figure 2a. This association remains significant when controlling for anti-elitism and people-centrism (overall coefficient = 0.127, 95% CI = [0.035,0.219], $z = 2.707$, $p = 0.007$). See Figure 2b.
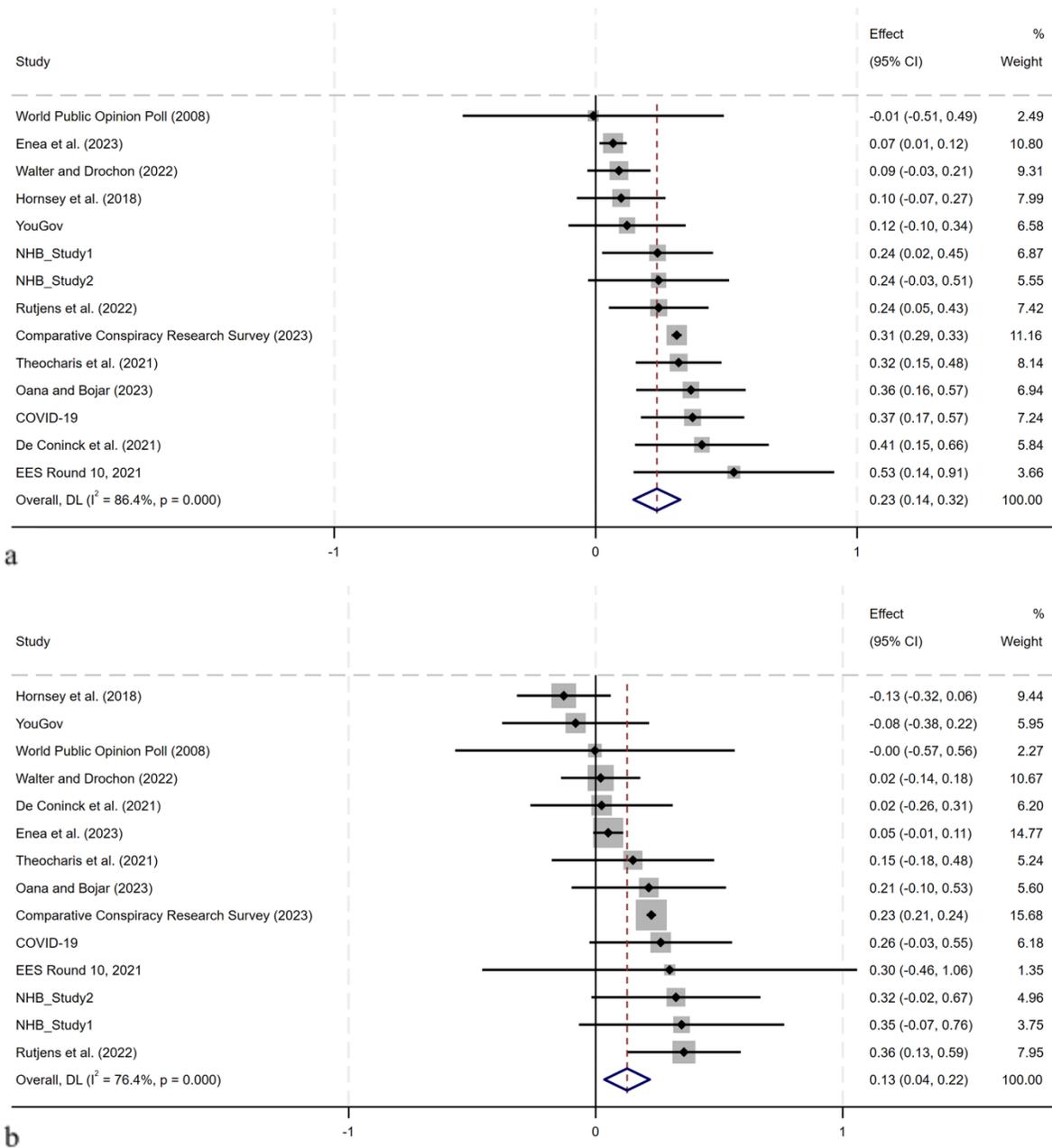
Figure 2. *Study 4. Meta-analysis of country-level relationships between authoritarianism and conspiracism without (panel a) and with (panel b) control on people-centrism and anti-elitism.*

The aim of Study 5 is to better understand the temporal dynamics of the relationship between authoritarianism and conspiracism, by leveraging a longitudinal dataset in the United States (Alva et al., 2025). Participants completed two survey waves surrounding the 2020 U.S. presidential election (Wave 1, late-October 2020: *n* = 1,079; Wave 2, early-November 2020: *n* = 902). Each wave includes a four-item measure of conspirational predispositions (defined as an

underlying predisposition toward seeing events and situations as resulting from a conspiracy; Uscinski et al., 2016) —as well as two distinct measures of authoritarianism capturing different conceptual dimensions. Specifically, we assess anti-democratic attitudes as an indicator of authoritarian political orientations, and authoritarian child-rearing values as an indicator of authoritarian psychological predispositions (Foa & Mounk, 2016; Feldman, 2003). These measures allow us to estimate separate panel models for political and psychological forms of authoritarianism. Detailed descriptions of these measures are provided in the Methods.

In line with Studies 2-3, bivariate correlations at each wave show significant positive correlations between conspiratorial predispositions and both antidemocratic attitudes and authoritarian child-rearing values (see SI Table S9). Moving to the temporal dynamics, we estimate a cross-lagged panel model (Kenny, 1975) accounting for Wave 1 covariances, baseline covariates, and autoregressive stability. Results show that antidemocratic attitudes at Wave 1 predict conspiratorial predispositions at Wave 2 ($b = 0.153$, $SE = 0.032$, $p < .001$), and conversely, conspirational predispositions at Wave 1 predict antidemocratic attitudes at Wave 2 ($b = 0.127$, $SE = 0.020$, $p < .001$). In contrast, while child-rearing values at Wave 1 do predict later conspiratorial predispositions ($b = 0.084$, $SE = 0.033$, $p = .011$), the reverse path, from conspirational predispositions to child-rearing values, is not statistically significant ($b = 0.037$, $SE = 0.30$, $p = .208$). These results are robust to the inclusion of several sociodemographic covariates and political orientation (see SI, Tables S10-S11). Taken together, these patterns suggest a bidirectional relationship between antidemocratic attitudes and conspiratorial predispositions, and a unidirectional link from child-rearing values to later conspiratorial predispositions. Overall, the results are consistent with the hypothesis that authoritarianism can foster, and in some cases be reinforced by, conspiracism.

Figure 3. *Study 5. Longitudinal data in the United States, two waves. Cross-lagged associations between antidemocratic attitudes and conspiratorial mentality (panel a) and between child-rearing values and conspiratorial mentality (panel b).*

One limitation of traditional Cross-Lagged Panel Model analysis is that it cannot disaggregate between-subjects and within-subject effects (Berry & Willoughby, 2017). With only two waves of data, as in Study 5, there are insufficient degrees of freedom to disaggregate these components, each of which (or both) may account for the observed longitudinal associations between authoritarianism and conspiracism. With more waves, it becomes possible to employ a Random Intercept Cross-Lagged Panel Model (RI-CLPM), which disaggregates between-subjects from within-subject effects. While some recent methodological discussions have debated the causal interpretation of the RI-CLPM (Lüdtke & Robitzsch, 2021), here we employ it descriptively to separate stable between-person associations from within-person change. With this in mind, in Study 6 we analyze a longitudinal dataset in which participants

completed six waves surrounding major U.S. election events: before and after the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election, before and after the 2022 U.S. Congressional Midterm Elections, and before and after the 2024 U.S. Presidential Election (Wave 1, late-October 2020, n = 1,127; Wave 2, late-November 2020, n = 769; Wave 3, late-October 2022, n = 506; Wave 4, late-November 2022, n = 453; Wave 5, late-October 2024, n = 360; Wave 6, late-November 2024, n = 330). At each wave, participants completed the same measure of conspirational predispositions as in Study 5. In Waves 1-3, they also completed the same antidemocratic attitudes items; in Waves 4-6, they responded to a revised set of items assessing the same construct. We refer to the Methods for details about the measures.

As in the previous studies, in each wave we observed positive, significant correlations between conspirational predispositions and antidemocratic attitudes (see SI, Table S12). Moving to the temporal analysis, the RI-CLPM reveals a clear pattern: between-subjects relationships between antidemocratic attitudes and conspiratorial predispositions are consistently and significantly positive (Waves 1-3: b = 0.022, SE = 0.002, p < .001; Waves 4-6: b = 0.010, SE = 0.003, p < .001), whereas within-subjects effects are always statistically indistinguishable from zero (Waves 1-3: ps > .10; Waves 4-6: ps > .10). See Figure 4. These results are robust to the inclusion of several sociodemographic covariates and political orientation (see SI, Tables S13-S14).
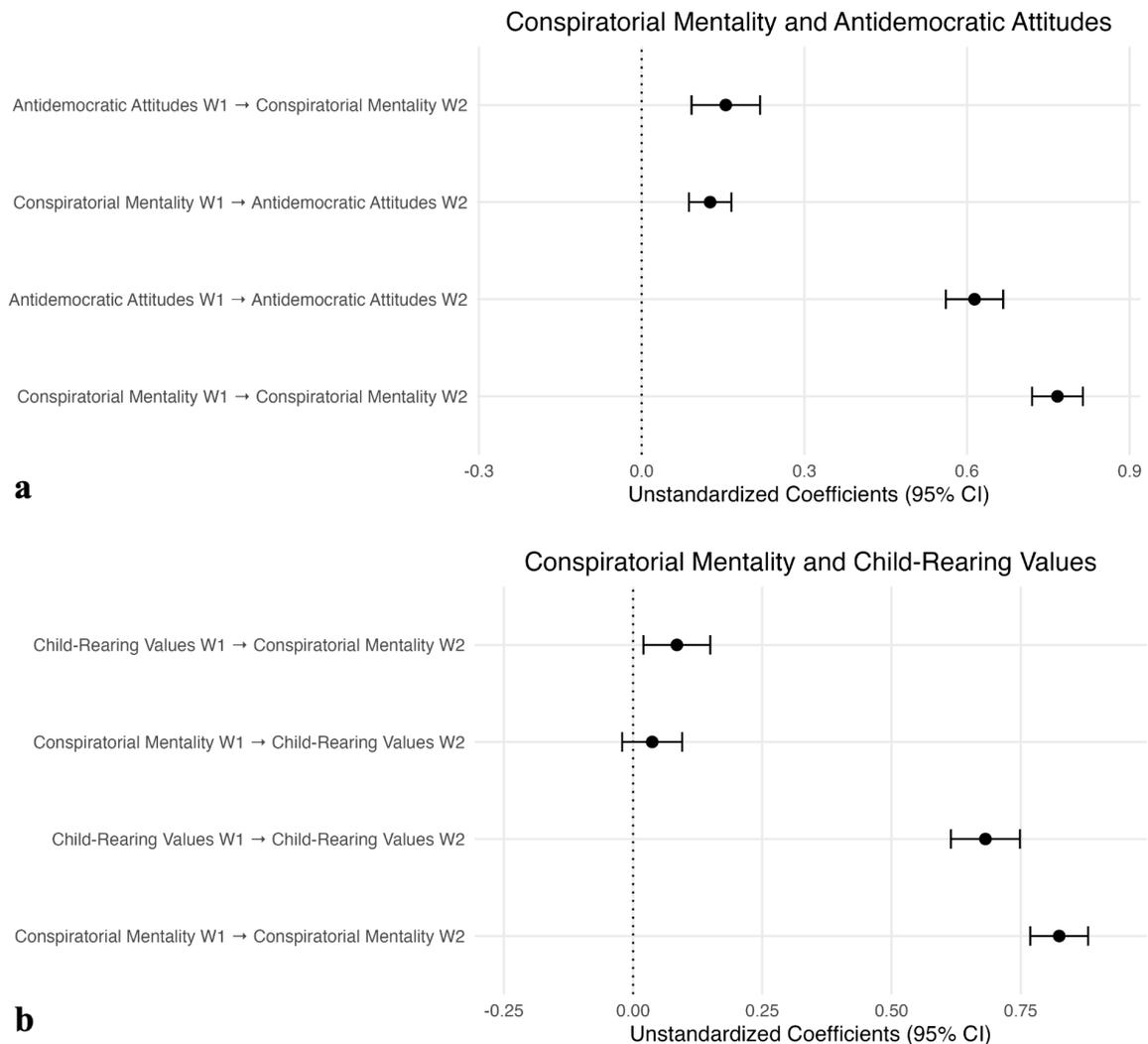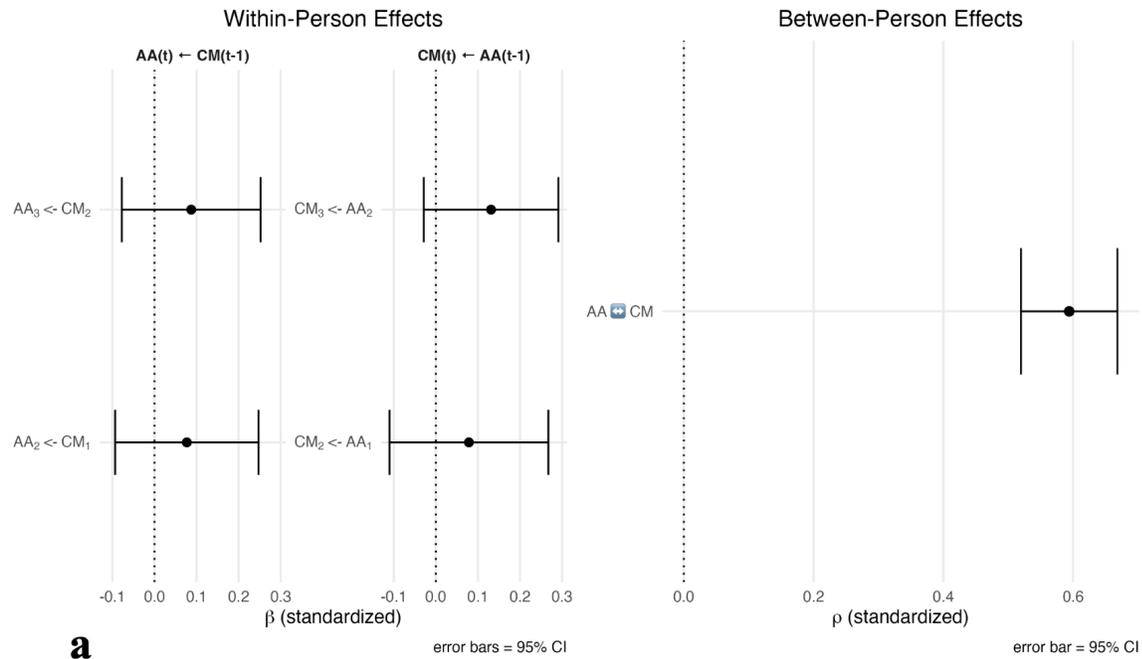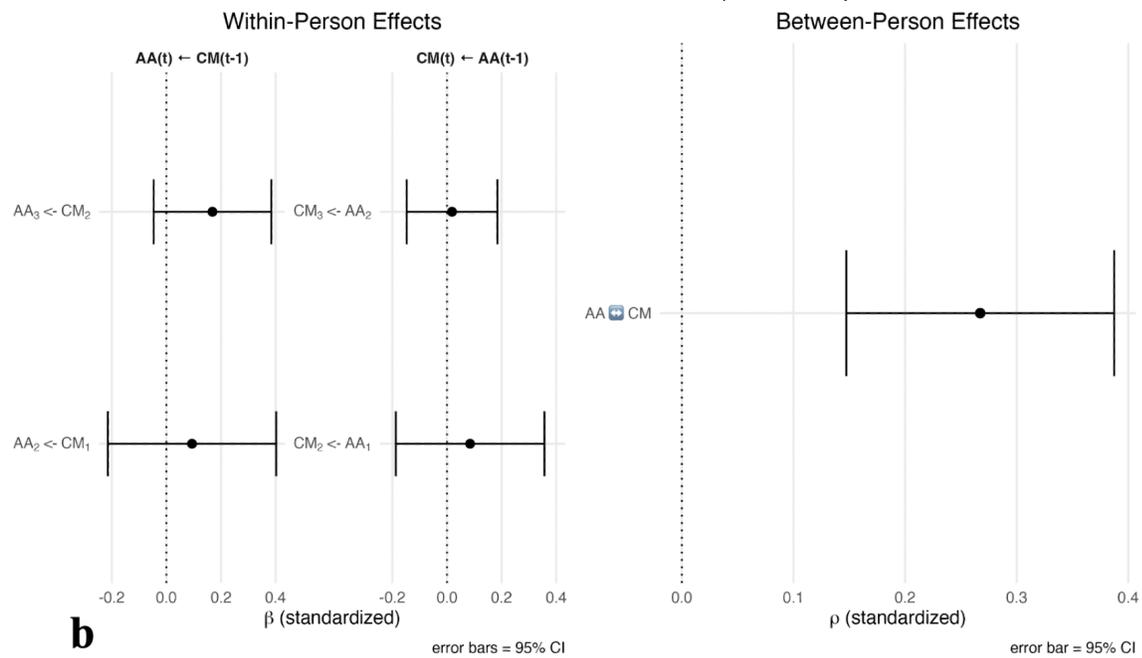
Figure 4. *Study 6. Longitudinal data in the United States, six waves. Random-intercept cross-lagged associations between antidemocratic attitudes and conspiratorial predispositions across Waves 1-3 (panel a) and Waves 4-6 (panel b).*

Discussion

Authoritarianism and conspiracies have become intertwined in recent years. Leaders who challenge democratic norms often promote conspiratorial narratives to justify the need for their ascension to—or maintenance of—political power. History also suggests a kinship between authoritarianism and conspiracism. Yet, scientifically, it remains unclear whether ordinary individuals who are characterized by authoritarian predispositions or who otherwise embrace authoritarian attitudes are also more prone to conspiracism across different societies. Do these elite-level patterns reflect a deeper connection within the public's mindset? We investigated whether people who hold authoritarian attitudes or traits are more prone to conspiracy thinking, not just in one nation but globally. Drawing on surveys from six studies, three individual-level international datasets (N=63,403, 20 countries), fourteen country-level datasets (71 countries), and two longitudinal datasets, we found that individuals favoring strongmen leaders are significantly more likely to believe in hidden conspiracies shaping events. This relationship holds in diverse settings as well as across multiple operationalizations of *authoritarianism*, capturing both dispositional traits (e.g., child-rearing values and the belief that school should instill discipline) and anti-democratic orientations (e.g., support for strong leaders, rejection of democratic norms). Similarly, for *conspiracism*, the link remains consistent across measures of generalized conspiracy mentality and belief in specific theories. Moreover, our research also shows, at the aggregate level, that countries with more authoritarian-leaning populations tend to harbor more conspiracy beliefs. Substantively, this pattern is consistent with a feedback loop at the system level in which conspiracism corrodes trust and civic society, heightening needs for order. As a result, the appetite for punitive or unconstrained governance grows, which in turn can normalize conspiracist rhetoric as a tool of mobilization and repression. Finally, our longitudinal study indicates that these associations reflect stable relationships rather than momentary opinion swings.

Overall, this research program provides the most extensive evidence to date that authoritarianism and conspiracism go hand-in-hand, even when controlling for various cultural, political, and psychological factors. From a political and psychological perspective, this alignment is theoretically consequential: if authoritarianism reflects a motivational preference for normative order, hierarchy, and deference to authority under perceived disorder, conspiracist worldviews may function as its epistemic counterpart. By offering explanatory closure in the face of uncertainty while simultaneously delegitimizing pluralistic institutions, conspiracism helps reconcile demands for strong authority with distrust toward the very institutions designed to constrain it.

These findings suggest a pervasive psychological convergence between authoritarianism and conspiracism worldwide, and a common psychological underpinning of perceived threat and a

craving for order that transcends borders. Furthermore, the consistency of the link across contexts suggests an underlying psychological commonality, potentially rooted in how people cope with perceived threat or powerlessness, aligning with theories that lack of control or uncertainty can drive both a search for strong authority and for explanatory conspiracy narratives. Understanding this nexus is increasingly important as democracies worldwide confront the dual challenges of rising authoritarian sentiment and the spread of conspiratorial misinformation.

While our results reveal a consistent pattern across cultures, we also find significant heterogeneity. This variability suggests that, beyond individual predispositions, also cultural, historical, and institutional factors may shape how authoritarian and conspiracist orientations intersect. Future research should investigate the influence of country-level variables on the association between conspiracism and authoritarianism. Collecting individual data from countries with diverse cultural backgrounds is crucial for this endeavor. Although we were able to gather individual-level data from various countries worldwide, most of these datasets originate from countries in Europe or North America. Expanding individual-level data collection efforts to include diverse countries from around the world will be crucial for a truly global understanding of the relationship between authoritarianism and conspiracism.

In sum, this research documents a relationship between authoritarianism and conspiracism across individuals, countries, and time, indicating an enduring psychological nexus between these two constructs, a connection that appears to transcend political context and national boundaries. In doing so, this work opens new avenues for understanding the psychological foundations of authoritarianism, democratic fragility in the post-truth era of misinformation.

Methods

Study 1

Study 1 uses the European Voter Election Studies (EVES) dataset (Krouwel et al., 2019), which includes 51,605 observations collected between February and May 2018 in Austria (N = 2,353), Belgium (N = 4,136), Denmark (N = 1,704), France (N = 6,738), Germany (N = 3,145), Hungary (N = 3,142), Italy (N = 4,291), Poland (N = 3,673), Portugal (N = 3,054), Romania (N = 4,135), Spain (N = 5,129), Sweden (N = 2,991), The Netherlands (N = 8,026), and the United Kingdom (N = 1,088). This dataset includes the following relevant measures:

- The Conspiracy Mentality Questionnaire, which measures an abstract tendency to believe that secret sinister forces are at play (Bruder et al., 2013). A sample item is: "Many very important things happen in the world, which the public is never informed about". We define a linearly normalized composite score (alpha = 0.845) and use it as a measure of conspiracy mentality.
- A one-item measure of authoritarianism, where participants are asked their agreement with the statement: "This country needs a strong leader that can quickly decide on everything", adapted from Elchardus and Spruyt (2012).

The survey also includes several other political psychology measures that we used as covariates:

- A three-item measure of people-centrism (Castanho Silva et al., 2018). A sample-item is: "Politicians should always listen closely to the problems of the people". These items are not sufficiently intercorrelated to form a reliable scale (alpha = 0.475), therefore we include them as separate covariates.
- A three-item measure of anti-elitism from Castanho Silva et al. (2018), alpha = 0.806. A sample-item is: "The government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves".
- Several other political psychology measures: social dominance (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001; alpha = 0.778), social cohesion (Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016; alpha = 0.708), anomie (Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016; alpha = 0.811), relative deprivation (Elchardus, 2011; alpha = 0.754), multiculturalism (Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016; alpha = 0.736), left-right values (Evans et al., 1996; alpha = 0.732), attitudes towards immigration (Vasilopoulos et al., 2019; alpha = 0.847), globalization/European integration (Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016; alpha = 0.451), Manichean outlook (Castanho Silva et al., 2018; alpha = 0.501).

The survey also includes several individual socio-demographic variables, which are also included as covariates: gender, age, personal economic situation, employment precarity, economic precarity, internet use.

Study 2

Study 2 is based on the datasets of the Psychology of Political Behavior Studies (PPBS; Azevedo, 2026). The data used in this study are taken from surveys conducted in Germany (N = 1,197), Brazil (N = 1,000), and the USA (N = 1,500) (2016 Elections). The datasets include the following variables of interest:
- Conspiratorial thinking, a three-item questionnaire combining items from Lantian (2016) and Van Der Linden et al. (2021). A sample item is: "Media coverage of the [country] elections has been controlled by vested interests behind one side of the debate" ($alpha_{Brazil}$ = 0.63, $alpha_{Germany}$ = 0.85, $alpha_{USA}$ = 0.79).
- A measure of authoritarianism similar: "What our country really needs is a strong, determined Chancellor which will crush the evil and set us on our right way again".

The German and Brazilian panels also include an alternate measure of authoritarianism, which we use as robustness check:

- The German survey included items from the original child-rearing scale (Feldman & Stenner, 1997; alpha = 0.67), whereas the Brazilian survey also added items adapted from the 2012 Americas Barometer developed by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (Center for Global Democracy, 2012; alpha = 0.57).

All panels included populism measures, that we include as covariates:

- A version developed in Castanho Silva et al. (2017) in the Brazilian survey, including the people-centrism (alpha = 0.42), anti-elitism (alpha = 0.55), and Manichean outlook (alpha = 0.10) subscales.
- The U.S. and German panels included the populist attitudes short scale (PASS-6) adapted by Rothmund et al. (2020; $alpha_{Germany}$ = 0.77, $alpha_{USA}$ = 0.76).

All panels also included several sociodemographic variables that we include as covariates: gender, age, education, income, and employment.

Study 3

Study 3 is based on the Comparative Conspiracy Research Survey (CCRS; Bordeleau et al., 2023), a series of surveys conducted in eight countries: Australia (N=1,026), Brazil (N=1,024), Canada (N=999), Germany (N=1,027), Lebanon (N=931), Morocco (N=1,072), South Africa (N=1,016), and the United States of America (N = 1,006). The survey was conducted between December 2022 and January 2023 and includes 8,101 individual responses.

The dataset includes two measures of conspiracism and a measure of authoritarianism:

- The Generic Conspiracy Beliefs scale (Brotherton et al., 2013), which consists of 14 items, such as: "The spread of certain viruses and/or diseases is the result of the deliberate, concealed efforts of some organization" (alpha = 0.938).
- The Conspiracy Mentality Questionnaire (Bruder et al., 2013; alpha = 0.857).
- One item measuring the extent to which participants believe that school should be focused on instilling discipline.

The survey also includes several other political psychology measures that we use as covariates:

- Three items related to people-centrism, such as: "The people, and not politicians, should make our most important policy decisions" (alpha = 0.685).
- One item measuring trust in politicians, which we consider as a proxy for anti-elitism.
- One item measuring political orientation.
- One item measuring interest in politics.
- One item measuring the perceived impact of immigrants in one's own country.
- One item measuring religiosity.

The survey also includes three psychological variables that we include as covariates:

- A three-item Cognitive Reflection Test from Toplak et al. (2011). The number of correct answers was taken as a measure of reflection.
- Fifteen items measuring the need for cognitive closure (Webster and Kruglanski, 1994; alpha = 0.841).
- Ten items measuring self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965; alpha = 0.833).

The survey also includes the following individual socio-demographic variables, which are included as covariates: gender, age, education, and employment status.

Study 4

We constructed country-level measures of (i) authoritarianism, (ii) people-centrism, and (iii) anti-elitism for 134 countries worldwide using data from the Global Party Survey (Norris, 2020). This survey involved 1,861 experts rating 1,043 political parties from 163 countries. The experts assessed party-level emphasis on several areas, including: the extent to which a party believes politicians should follow the will of the people (will of people item), people should decide on important issues (people should decide), most politicians are dishonest and corrupt (anti-elitism), and executive power should not be limited by checks and balances (authoritarianism). To derive

country-level variables from these party scores, we weighted each score by the party's percentage of votes and seats from the most recent national election. This information was available in the Global Party Survey for the majority of countries in the survey, and we conducted manual research on official websites to gather this electoral data for as many countries as possible. After weighting, we aggregated these values for each party within a country to create a country-level measure for each of the four variables. Both weighting methods (based on votes and seats) yielded highly correlated measures (all coeffs > 0.92, all p's < .001). We therefore averaged them and defined four country-level measures which, by abusing notation, we name: "will of people", "people should decide", "anti-elitism", and "authoritarianism". Then we averaged the first two variables, to create a people-centrism variable. The code for creating these variables is available in the OSF page of this project: https://osf.io/65rkj/. Next, we conducted a search for datasets that include the same measure of conspiracism across at least three countries. We identified 14 such datasets. We then merged these datasets with the Global Party Survey. In doing so, we obtained country-level values of conspiracism, authoritarianism, people-centrism, and anti-elitism for a total of 71 countries. These countries are visualized in Figure S1 and listed in the SI, Table 8. Finally, for each dataset, we conducted linear regressions to predict conspiracy beliefs based on authoritarianism. Subsequently, we reran the analyses, this time incorporating controls for people-centrism and anti-elitism. We recorded the regression coefficients and standard errors and performed random effects meta-analyses on these metrics.

Study 5

Subjects were contacted through Amazon's Cloud Research platform and completed two waves of the survey. A total of 1,080 U.S. adults completed the Wave 1 survey between October 23–30, 2020. Of the 1,080 who completed the Wave 1 survey, 903 completed the Wave 2 survey, which was administered between November 13-24, 2020. The final analytic sample, then, was $N = 903$ (Alva et al., 2025).

This dataset includes one measure of conspirational predispositions (defined as an underlying predisposition toward viewing events and circumstances as the product of conspiracy) and two measures of authoritarianism:

- In both waves, subjects were administered Uscinski et al.'s (2016) 4-item generalized measure of conspiratorial predispositions, including this sample item: "Much of our lives are being controlled by plots hatched in secret places". A composite score was obtained by taking the average of responses to the four items (Cronbach's α's, *Wave 1* = .88 *Wave 2* = .89), with higher values indicating higher conspiratorial predispositions.
- In both waves, antidemocratic attitudes were assessed using a composite of 11-items, measured on a 5-point scale. This composite scale included four items designed to evaluate anti-democratic attitudes that were created by Bartels (2020) and an additional

seven items administered by the 2018 Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP, 2019). For example, such items include "Strong leaders sometimes have to bend the rules in order to get things done" and "When the country is facing difficult times, it is justified for the president of the country to close Congress and govern without Congress". Responses were coded such that higher values indicate increased levels of antidemocratic attitudes, (Cronbach's α's, *Wave 1 = .86 Wave 2 = .87*).

- In both waves, the same random subset of participants (n = 551) completed Stenner's (2005) four-item child-rearing values scale. For each item, participants are asked to "indicate which value or qualities are more desirable in children", with options to choose a more or less authoritarian option (Cronbach's α's, *Wave 1 = .76 Wave 2 = .72*)

Covariates, which were assessed at Wave 1, included age, race/ethnicity, income, gender, education, and partisan identification.

We analyze this dataset using a Cross Lagged Panel Model. This methodological strategy is appropriate for two-wave panel data and enables us to estimate cross-lagged effects involving all constructs, while adjusting for demographic and political variables, as robustness checks (Hamaker et al., 2015). The model estimates Wave 1 covariances, correlates error terms at Wave 2, and autoregressive and cross-lagged effects between our variables across Wave 1 and Wave 2. Thus, when estimating a given cross-lagged effect (such as the effect of antidemocratic attitudes on conspiratorial thinking), this model adjusts for the influence of other cross-lagged effects. Cross-lagged parameter estimates also account for the associations among variables at Wave 1, the influence of the adjustment variables at Wave 1, and the stability in each construct over time.

Study 6

Subjects were recruited by Forthright/Bovitz, an online research panel with U.S. national representative sampling capabilities (Alva et al., 2025). Respondents were initially contacted by email and invited to participate between October 23–30, 2020. A total of 1,127 U.S. adults completed the Wave 1 survey. Of the 1,127 citizens who completed the Wave 1 survey, 769 completed Wave 2 (68% of Wave 1 participants; administered between November 12-14, 2020; 506 completed Wave 3 (66% of Wave 2 participants; administered between November 1-7, 2022), 453 completed the Wave 4 survey (90% of Wave 3 participants; administered between November 18-24, 2022), 360 completed the Wave 5 survey (80% of Wave 4 participants; administered between October 28 – November 5, 2024), and 330 completed the Wave 6 survey (92% of Wave 5 participants; administered between November 7-18, 2024).

This dataset includes one measure of conspiratorial predispositions and two measures of authoritarianism:

- In every wave, subjects were administered Uscinski et al.'s (2016) 4-item generalized measure of conspirational predispositions, as in Study 5 (Cronbach's α's, *Wave 1* = .84, *Wave 2* = .86, *Wave 3* = .88, *Wave 4* = .88, *Wave 5* = .91, *Wave 6* = .92)
- In Waves 1-3, subjects were administered the same antidemocratic attitudes items as in Study 5 (Cronbach's α's, *Wave 1* = .85, *Wave 2* = .89, *Wave 3* = .88).
- In Waves 4-6, subjects were administered a revised set of items to measure antidemocratic attitudes, based on (Graham & Svolik, 2020) which were chosen to better capture challenges to democratic principles amid electoral contestation and change in citizenship behaviors. Participants evaluated 9 anti-democratic statements on a 10-point scale, ranging from "*not at all democratic*" to "*completely democratic*". For example, such items include "The president began ruling by executive order after legislators from opposition parties refused to cooperate with his administration" and "The government ignores unfavorable court rulings." Responses were coded such that higher values indicate increased levels of antidemocratic attitudes (Cronbach's α's, *Wave 4* = .84, *Wave 5* = .85, *Wave 6* = .83).

Covariates, which were assessed at Wave 1, include age, race/ethnicity, income, gender, education, and partisan identification.

We used RI-CPLM to analyze data involving each measure of antidemocratic attitudes (separately) and conspiratorial predispositions. Like the CLPM, the RI-CLPM estimates Wave 1 covariances and correlated error terms at each Wave. However, the RI-CLPM differs from the CLPM in that it incorporates stable, between-subjects effects by creating random intercepts for antidemocratic attitudes and conspirational predispositions, separately, across waves. The covariance between random intercepts represents the rank-ordering in bivariate associations among these variables throughout the entire measurement period (the between-subjects effect), while adjusting for other between-subject effects and the effects of demographic and other variables at Wave t-1. Additionally, the RI-CLPM estimates autoregressive and cross-lagged effects between variables across all waves using within-subject deviations from these between-subjects means. Therefore, the autoregressive and cross-lagged effects in RI-CLPM parameters estimate how within-subject variations relative to respondents' *own* scores are related over time. In the RI-CPLM, cross-lagged effects are estimated while adjusting for other cross-lagged effects and accounting for the associations among variables at Wave t-1, adjustment variables at Wave t-1, and within-subject change in each construct over time. Crucially, by separating between- and within-subjects effects, cross-lagged parameters in the RI-CLPM account for rank-order stability, providing a more accurate estimate of within-subject effects. Finally, to handle missing data across the measurement period, we used Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML)**,** which allows subjects with partial data to be included rather than excluded, ensuring maximum information is used when estimating parameters.

Data and code availability

Data and code to replicate the analyses can be found on the OSF page of this article:
https://osf.io/65rkj/

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Supplementary Information

Section S1. Detailed results of Study 1.

Table S1. Detailed results by country. Coefficients and standard errors from linear regressions predicting conspiracy mentality as a function of authoritarianism, estimated separately for each country: (1) baseline model; (2) controlling for people-centrism and anti-elitism; (3) controlling for people-centrism, anti-elitism, and additional political-psychology variables; and (4) controlling for people-centrism, anti-elitism, political-psychology variables, and sociodemographic variables. Significance levels: *: $p < 0.05$, **: $p < 0.01$, ***: $p < 0.001$.

Country	Association between authoritarianism and conspiracism			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Austria	0.202*** (0.012)	0.190*** (0.011)	0.053*** (0.014)	0.053** (0.020)
Belgium	0.142*** (0.008)	0.100*** (0.007)	0.054*** (0.009)	0.070*** (0.014)
Denmark	0.166*** (0.014)	0.067*** (0.011)	0.009 (0.014)	0.004 (0.020)
France	0.075*** (0.007)	0.144*** (0.006)	0.069*** (0.007)	0.074*** (0.011)
Germany	0.269*** (0.012)	0.130*** (0.009)	0.057*** (0.011)	0.042** (0.016)
Hungary	0.048*** (0.008)	0.105*** (0.008)	0.047*** (0.009)	0.028 (0.016)
Italy	0.096*** (0.008)	0.047*** (0.007)	0.014 (0.008)	0.016 (0.013)
Poland	0.153*** (0.008)	0.157*** (0.008)	0.069*** (0.009)	0.075*** (0.013)
Portugal	0.102*** (0.009)	0.033*** (0.009)	0.013 (0.011)	0.044** (0.016)
Romania	0.192*** (0.008)	0.152*** (0.009)	0.050*** (0.010)	0.038** (0.014)
Spain	0.038*** (0.007)	0.061*** (0.006)	0.043*** (0.007)	0.027** (0.010)
Sweden	0.310*** (0.010)	0.127*** (0.009)	0.065*** (0.010)	0.050** (0.015)
The Netherlands	0.234*** (0.007)	0.122*** (0.006)	0.069*** (0.007)	0.074*** (0.011)

Table S2. Robustness to the inclusion of covariates. Multilevel mixed-effects linear regressions with participants nested within countries, predicting conspiracy mentality as a function of: (1) authoritarianism; (2) authoritarianism and populist attitudes; (3) authoritarianism, populist attitudes, and additional political-psychology variables; and (4) authoritarianism, populist attitudes, political-psychology variables, and demographic controls. The table reports coefficients and, in brackets, standard errors. Significance levels: *: p < 0.05, **: p < 0.01, ***: p < 0.001.

	Conspiracy Mentality			
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**
Authoritarianism	0.148*** (0.002)	0.118*** (0.002)	0.057*** (0.002)	0.059*** (0.004)
People-centrism 1		0.059*** (0.005)	0.042*** (0.004)	0.038*** (0.007)
People-centrism 2		0.028*** (0.003)	0.031*** (0.003)	0.038*** (0.004)
People-centrism 3		0.098*** (0.003)	0.056*** (0.003)	0.054*** (0.005)
Anti-elitism		0.329*** (0.003)	0.238*** (0.004)	0.237*** (0.005)
Social dominance			0.018*** (0.005)	0.031*** (0.007)
Social cohesion			0.061*** (0.004)	0.063*** (0.006)
Anomie			0.045*** (0.003)	0.047*** (0.006)
Relative deprivation			0.124*** (0.005)	0.119*** (0.007)
Multiculturalism			0.022*** (0.006)	0.024** (0.009)
Right-values			0.106*** (0.005)	0.118*** (0.008)
Against immigration			0.091*** (0.003)	0.087*** (0.006)
Against globalization 1			0.014*** (0.003)	0.017*** (0.005)
Against globalization 2			0.002 (0.003)	0.003 (0.005)
Against globalization 3			0.005	-0.004

			(0.003)	(0.004)
Manichean outlook 1			0.006 (0.003)	0.002 (0.005)
Manichean outlook 2			0.002 (0.003)	-0.004 (0.005)
Manichean outlook 3			0.022*** (0.003)	0.018*** (0.005)
Sex (1=F)				0.015*** (0.002)
Year of birth				-0.000*** (0.000)
Personal economic situation				-0.013* (0.006)
Employment precarity				-0.003 (0.005)
Economic precarity				0.013** (0.004)
Internet use				0.004 (0.004)
Constant	0.537*** (0.153)	0.198*** (0.010)	0.068*** (0.012)	0.070*** (0.016)
Observations	52,517	51,950	51,244	22,159

Section S2. Detailed results of Study 2.

Table S3. Results from Brazil. Linear regressions predicting conspiratorial thinking as a function of authoritarianism (i) or authoritarian child-rearing values (ii). Models (iii) and (iv) additionally control for people-centrism and anti-elitism, while models (v) and (vi) further control for Manichean outlook and several sociodemographic variables. For categorical variables, reference categories are as follows: Age: 18-24 years old; Education: never attended school; Income: Up to R$ 606.00 (Half minimum wage); Employment status: Salaried employee with a formal contract. The table reports coefficients and, in brackets, standard errors. Significance levels: *: p < 0.05, **: p < 0.01, ***: p < 0.001.

	Conspiratorial Thinking					
	(i)	**(ii)**	**(iii)**	**(iv)**	**(v)**	**(vi)**
Authoritarianism	0.138*** (0.022)		0.136*** (0.002)		0.121*** (0.019)	
Authoritarian child-rearing values		0.085*** (0.018)		0.106*** (0.018)		0.091*** (0.019)
People-centrism			0.190*** (0.038)	0.212*** (0.038)	0.157*** (0.039)	0.174*** (0.039)
Anti-elitism			0.120*** (0.033)	0.138*** (0.34)	0.134*** (0.034)	0.148*** (0.034)
Manichean outlook					0.093* (0.036)	0.095*** (0.036)
Sex (1=Female, 2=Male)					0.003 (0.014)	0.000 (0.014)
25-34 years old					0.048* (0.022)	0.052* (0.022)
35-44 years old					0.063** (0.023)	0.066** (0.023)
45-54 years old					0.065** (0.023)	0.067** (0.023)
55-64 years old					0.085** (0.026)	0.086** (0.026)
65+ years old					0.098** (0.030)	0.099** (0.031)
Incomplete primary education					0.396* (0.197)	0.0408* (0.198)
Complete primary education					0.393* (0.194)	0.441* (0.023)

Incomplete secondary education					0.431* (0.187)	0.458* (0.188)
Complete secondary education					0.427* (0.186)	0.461* (0.188)
Incomplete university education					0.440* (0.186)	0.475* (0.188)
Complete university education					0.411* (0.186)	0.448* (0.188)
R$ 606.00-1,212.00					-0.005 (0.026)	0.000 (0.026)
R$ 1,212.00-R$ 2,424.00					0.005 (0.020)	0.009 (0.021)
R$ 2,424.00-R$ 3,636.00					0.018 (0.021)	0.020 (0.021)
R$ 3,636.00-R$ 6,060.00					0.041 (0.028)	0.043 (0.028)
R$ 6,060.00-R$ 12,120.00					-0.005 (0.031)	-0.004 (0.031)
R$ 12,120.00-R$ 24,240.00					0.009 (0.036)	0.016 (0.036)
More than R$ 24,240.00					0.050 (0.061)	0.048 (0.062)
No income					0.045 (0.061)	0.035 (0.062)
Salaried employee without a formal contract					0.036 (0.031)	0.038 (0.032)
Self-employed / own-account worker					-0.005 (0.017)	0.000 (0.017)
Freelance professional					0.006 (0.036)	0.016 (0.036)
Employer / Business owner					0.030 (0.034)	0.046 (0.034)
Apprentice or intern					0.073 (0.055)	0.081 (0.056)
Unemployed (looking for work)					-0.001 (0.028)	0.009 (0.028)
Unemployed (not looking for work)					-0.048 (0.131)	-0.014 (0.132)
Student					0.017	0.039

	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	(vi)
					(0.036)	(0.037)
Retired					0.019 (0.026)	0.026 (0.027)
Homemaker					0.004 (0.036)	0.006 (0.036)
Pensioner					0.072 (0.067)	0.071 (0.068)
Other					0.042 (0.042)	0.032 (0.043)
Constant	0.553*** (0.017)	0.599*** (0.013)	0.324*** (0.034)	0.326*** (0.035)	-0.193 (0.187)	-0.230 (0.189)
Observations	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000

Table S4. Results from Germany. Linear regressions predicting conspiratorial thinking as a function of authoritarianism (i) or authoritarian child-rearing values (ii). Models (iii) and (iv) additionally control for populism, while models (v) and (vi) further control for several sociodemographic variables. For categorical variables, the reference categories are as follows: Sex: male; Education: still in high school education; employment status: full time employment The table reports coefficients and, in brackets, standard errors. Significance levels: *: $p < 0.05$, **: $p < 0.01$, ***: $p < 0.001$.

	Conspiratorial Thinking					
	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	(vi)
Authoritarianism	0.206*** (0.024)		0.021 (0.022)		0.016 (0.022)	
Authoritarian child-rearing values		0.140** (0.046)		-0.047 (0.038)		-0.043 (0.035)
Populism			0.038*** (0.004)	0.850*** (0.034)	0.840*** (0.037)	0.855*** (0.035)
Sex = 2 (Female)					0.025 (0.014)	0.025 (0.014)
Sex = 3 (Diverse)					0.117 (0.128)	0.113 (0.128)
Age					-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
Without high school certificate					-0.175 (0.143)	-0.174 (0.143)

Basic school qualification					-0.172 (0.123)	-0.176 (0.123)
Polytechnic secondary school					-0.171 (0.125)	-0.174 (0.125)
Secondary school					-0.168 (0.122)	-0.173 (0.122)
Advanced technical college					-0.158 (0.123)	-0.165 (0.123)
University entrance qualification					-0.158 (0.123)	-0.166 (0.122)
Part time employment					0.015 (0.022)	0.013 (0.022)
Unemployed/ looking for work					-0.018 (0.027)	-0.021 (0.027)
Student					-0.049 (0.034)	-0.050 (0.034)
Retired					0.010 (0.020)	0.009 (0.020)
Pupil					-0.161* (0.071)	-0.170* (0.070)
Other					-0.015 (0.025)	-0.018 (0.025)
Constant	0.371*** (0.016)	0.417*** (0.024)	-0.047*** (0.022)	-0.025*** (0.026)	0.128 (0.127)	0.187 (0.129)
Observations	1,195	1,196	1,195	1,196	1,195	1,196

Table S5. Results from the United States. Linear regressions predicting conspiratorial thinking as a function of authoritarianism (i). Model (ii) controls for populism, while model (iii) further controls for several sociodemographic variables. For categorical variables, reference categories are as follows: Age: 18–24; Education: less than high school; Income: less than $15,000; Employment – student. The table reports coefficients and, in brackets, standard errors. Significance levels: *: p < 0.05, **: p < 0.01, ***: p < 0.001.

	Conspiratorial Thinking		
	(i)	**(ii)**	**(iii)**
Authoritarianism	0.257*** (0.018)	0.217*** (0.017)	0.195*** (0.017)

Populism		0.449*** (0.034)	0.467*** (0.035)
Sex (1=F, 2=M)			-0.015 (0.012)
25-34 years old			-0.061** (0.022)
35-44 years old			-0.063** (0.023)
45-54 years old			-0.098*** (0.023)
55-64 years old			-0.106*** (0.025)
65+ years old			-0.078** (0.028)
High school			-0.007 (0.031)
Some college			-0.010 (0.032)
Bachelor			-0.052 (0.033)
Graduate			-0.058 (0.035)
Sex (1=Female, 2=Male)			-0.015 (0.012)
$15,000-$24,999			0.011 (0.023)
$25,000-$34,999			-0.001 (0.023)
$35,000-$49,999			–0.017 (0.022)
$50,000-$74,999			-0.002 (0.022)
$75,000-$99,999			-0.029 (0.024)
$100,000-$149,999			-0.026 (0.026)
$150,000+			-0.049 (0.029)
Employed			0.045 (0.028)

Unemployed			0.019 (0.031)
Caregiver			0.060 (0.047)
Retired			0.023 (0.035)
Parent			0.048 (0.035)
Disabled			0.040 (0.035)
Constant	0.481*** (0.018)	0.180*** (0.025)	0.253*** (0.043)
Observations	1,500	1,500	1,500

Section S3. Detailed results of Study 3.

Table S6. Multilevel linear regressions with participants nested within countries, predicting conspiracy beliefs/mentality as a function of the belief that schools should instill discipline. For education, the reference category is "no formal education"; for socioeconomic status, the reference category is "lower class"; for employment status, the reference category is "working for pay, full time". Significance levels: *: $p < 0.05$, **: $p < 0.01$, ***: $p < 0.001$.

	Conspiracism measure							
	Brotherton et al.	Bruder et al.	Brotherton et al.	Bruder et al.	Brotherton et al.	Bruder et al.	Brotherton et al.	Bruder et al.
School should instil discipline	0.121*** (0.009)	0.191*** (0.009)	0.082*** (0.009)	0.145*** (0.008)	0.058*** (0.011)	0.106*** (0.010)	0.074*** (0.011)	0.114*** (0.010)
People-centrism			0.059*** (0.003)	0.074*** (0.003)	0.061*** (0.003)	0.061*** (0.003)	0.061*** (0.003)	0.059*** (0.003)
Anti-elitism			0.029** (0.009)	0.128*** (0.008)	0.050*** (0.012)	0.166*** (0.010)	0.070*** (0.012)	0.172*** (0.011)
Right-wing ideology					0.012*** (0.001)	0.008*** (0.001)	0.015*** (0.001)	0.009*** (0.001)
Interest in politics					-0.003*** (0.001)	0.003*** (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	0.004*** (0.001)
Religiosity					0.032*** (0.006)	0.017** (0.006)	0.030*** (0.007)	0.017** (0.006)
Anti-immigration					0.006*** (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.007*** (0.001)	0.002 (0.001)
Cognitive reflection					-0.005 (0.003)	0.002 (0.002)	-0.011*** (0.003)	0.000 (0.002)
Need for closure					0.019*** (0.005)	0.037*** (0.004)	0.022*** (0.005)	0.038*** (0.005)
Self-esteem					-0.081*** (0.005)	-0.010* (0.004)	-0.051*** (0.005)	-0.001 (0.004)
Age							-0.003*** (0.000)	-0.001*** (0.000)
Gender (1=M)							0.000 (0.006)	-0.019*** (0.005)
Elementary education							-0.034 (0.033)	0.043 (0.030)

Secondary education							-0.031 (0.033)	0.048 (0.030)
College/University education							-0.045 (0.033)	0.043 (0.030)
Postgraduate education							-0.050 (0.033)	0.050 (0.030)
Middle class							-0.017* (0.007)	-0.013* (0.006)
Upper class							0.013 (0.015)	-0.060*** (0.014)
Working for pay part-time							-0.012 (0.009)	-0.006 (0.008)
Retired							-0.056*** (0.011)	-0.033*** (0.010)
Unemployed/looking for work							-0.015 (0.011)	-0.004 (0.010)
Student (not working)							-0.032* (0.014)	0.007 (0.013)
Constant	0.397*** (0.023)	0.512*** (0.017)	0.180*** (0.023)	0.180*** (0.015)	0.169 (0.030)	0.042 (0.022)	0.254*** (0.042)	0.026 (0.037)
Observations	8,038	8,049	7,943	7,952	5,498	5,501	5,181	5,183

Table S7. Detailed results by country. Coefficients and standard errors from linear regressions predicting conspiracy beliefs/mentality as a function of the belief that schools should instill discipline, estimated separately for each country: (i) baseline model; (ii) controlling for people-centrism and anti-elitism; (iii) controlling for people-centrism, anti-elitism, and all other political-psychology variables; and (iv) controlling for people-centrism, anti-elitism, political-psychology variables, and sociodemographic variables. Significance levels: *: $p < 0.05$, **: $p < 0.01$, ***: $p < 0.001$.

	Conspiracism measure							
	Brotherton et al.	Bruder et al.	Brotherton et al.	Bruder et al.	Brotherton et al.	Bruder et al.	Brotherton et al.	Bruder et al.
	(i)	(i)	(ii)	(ii)	(iii)	(iii)	(iv)	(iv)
Canada	0.165*** (0.031)	0.217*** (0.025)	0.143*** (0.032)	0.204*** (0.024)	0.080* (0.035)	0.144*** (0.028)	0.121*** (0.034)	0.164*** (0.029)
United States	0.274*** (0.027)	0.168*** (0.024)	0.218*** (0.029)	0.124*** (0.025)	0.129*** (0.033)	0.067* (0.029)	0.173*** (0.032)	0.087** (0.029)

Germany	0.151*** (0.028)	0.277*** (0.028)	0.082** (0.027)	0.183*** (0.024)	0.014 (0.030)	0.115*** (0.030)	0.028 (0.030)	0.134*** (0.031)
Australia	0.060* (0.030)	0.136*** (0.023)	0.028 (0.030)	0.105*** (0.022)	0.003 (0.034)	0.067** (0.026)	0.050 (0.034)	0.063* (0.027)
South Africa	0.056* (0.026)	0.069** (0.022)	0.022 (0.026)	0.044* (0.022)	0.014 (0.028)	0.028 (0.024)	0.026 (0.029)	0.036 (0.025)
Morocco	0.095*** (0.023)	0.288*** (0.026)	0.025 (0.023)	0.204*** (0.026)	0.026 (0.034)	0.181*** (0.037)	0.027 (0.037)	0.180*** (0.040)
Lebanon	0.080*** (0.020)	0.187*** (0.024)	0.039 (0.020)	0.134*** (0.023)	-0.022 (0.031)	0.070* (0.033)	0.005 (0.034)	0.098** (0.034)
Brazil	0.076** (0.023)	0.186*** (0.023)	0.055* (0.024)	0.144*** (0.022)	0.061* (0.031)	0.121*** (0.027)	0.069* (0.033)	0.119*** (0.030)

Section S4. Supplementary Information for Study 4.

Figure S1. Countries included in the meta-analysis (N = 71).

Table S8. Countries included in the meta-analysis and the corresponding dataset(s) in which they appear. The datasets are numbered in alphabetic order: D1 = CCRS, D2 = COVID-19, D3 = De Coninck et al., 2021; D4 = EES Round 10; D5 = Enea et al., 2023; D6 = Hornsey et al. (2018); D7 = NHB_Study1; D8 = NHB_Study2; D9 = Oana and Bojar, 2023; D10 = Rutjens et al. (2022); D11 = Theocharis et al. (2021); D12 = YouGov; D13 = Walter and Drochon (2022); D14 = World Public Opinion Poll (2008).

	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D8	D9	D10	D11	D12	D13	D14
Argentina		x			x	x								
Australia	x	x			x	x				x		x		
Austria		x						x	x		x			
Bangladesh		x												
Belgium		x	x				x	x		x	x			
Bolivia		x												
Bosnia and Herzegovina							x							
Brazil	x	x			x	x	x			x		x		

Country	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Bulgaria		x		x										
Canada	x	x	x		x	x				x		x		
Chile		x				x								
Colombia		x												
Congo		x												
Croatia		x		x	x		x							
Cuba		x												
Czech Republic				x			x							
Denmark		x						x			x	x		
Dominican Republic		x												
Ecuador		x												
Estonia				x										
Finland		x		x					x					
France		x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Germany	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Ghana		x												
Greece		x			x		x		x		x	x		
Hungary		x			x		x	x	x		x	x	x	
Iceland				x			x							
India		x				x								
Iraq		x												
Ireland		x				x			x					
Israel		x					x			x	x			
Italy		x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Japan		x				x						x		
Latvia		x							x					
Lebanon	x													
Lithuania				x										
Malaysia					x									

Mexico	x				x				x		x		x
Morocco	x	x							x				
Nepal	x												
Netherlands	x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x			
New Zealand	x	x			x								
Nicaragua	x												
Nigeria											x		x
North Macedonia	x		x		x								
Norway	x		x		x					x			
Pakistan	x												
Panama	x												
Peru	x												
Philippines	x	x			x								
Poland	x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Portugal			x		x	x	x	x	x			x	
Romania	x			x		x	x	x	x	x			
Russia	x			x									x
Serbia	x				x								
Singapore	x				x								
Slovakia	x		x										
Slovenia	x		x										
South Africa				x	x						x		
South Korea	x				x								x
Spain	x			x	x	x	x	x		x	x		
Sweden	x				x		x	x	x	x	x	x	
Switzerland	x												
Taiwan	x												x
Tunisia									x				
Turkey	x			x	x				x		x		x

Ukraine		x			x									x
United Kingdom							x	x	x	x	x	x		x
Uruguay		x												
USA	x	x	x		x	x				x		x	x	
Venezuela										x				

Section S5. Detailed results of Study 5.

Table S9. Mean, SD, Cronbach's alpha, and correlations for Study 5. Significance levels: *: $p < 0.05$, **: $p < 0.01$, ***: $p < 0.001$.

Variables	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Wave 1 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.48	0.28	0.88	--					
2. Wave 2 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.43	0.29	0.89	.80**	--				
3. Wave 1 Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.42	0.25	0.86	.21**	.25**	--			
4. Wave 2 Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.42	0.24	0.87	.20**	.24**	.70**	--		
5. Wave 1 Child-Rearing Values	0.3	0.21	0.76	.51**	.48**	.26**	.29**	--	
6. Wave 2 Child-Rearing Values	0.27	0.21	0.72	.48**	.57**	.26**	.29**	.70**	--

Table S10. Cross-Lagged Model estimating the relationship between conspiratorial mentality and antidemocratic attitudes across two waves in Study 5. For clarity, the error terms and control variables are not presented. Control variables are omitted for Model 1 but for Model 2 includes age, gender, education, income, race, and partisan ID. Significance levels: *: p < 0.05, **: p < 0.01, ***: p < 0.001.

	Model 1	Model 2
	β (SE)	β (SE)
W2 Conspiratorial Mentality		
W1 Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.110*** (0.023)	0.105*** (0.024)
W1 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.742*** (0.018)	0.757*** (0.018)
W2 Antidemocratic Attitudes		
W1 Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.613*** (0.023)	0.607*** (0.025)

W1 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.172*** (0.027)	0.185***(0.028)
W1 Covariance		
Conspiratorial Mentality, Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.504*** (0.025)	0.436*** (0.029)
W2 Correlated Change		
Conspiratorial Mentality, Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.322*** (0.030)	0.297*** (0.032)
R2 W2 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.644	0.666
R2 W2 Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.512	0.518

Table S11. Cross Lagged-Model estimating the relationship between conspiratorial mentality and child rearing values across two waves in Study 5. For clarity, the error terms and control variables are not presented. Control variables are omitted for Model 1 but for Model 2 includes age, gender, education, income, race, and partisan ID. Significance levels: *: $p < 0.05$, **: $p < 0.01$, ***: $p < 0.001$.

	Model 1	Model 2
	β (SE)	β (SE)
W2 Conspiratorial Mentality		
W1 Child-Rearing Values	0.071* (0.028)	0.065* (0.028)
W1 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.803*** (0.018)	0.815*** (0.017)
W2 Antidemocratic Attitudes		
W1 Child-Rearing Values	0.695*** (0.026)	0.687*** (0.027)
W1 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.044 (0.035)	0.058 (0.036)
W1 Covariance		
Conspiratorial Mentality, Child-Rearing Values	0.235*** (0.045)	0.157*** (0.049)
W2 Correlated Change		
Conspiratorial Mentality, Child-Rearing Values	0.154** (0.046)	0.151** (0.049)
R2 W2 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.677	0.694
R2 W2 Child-Rearing Values	0.499	0.494

Section S6. Detailed results of Study 6.

Table S12. Mean, SD, Cronbach's alpha, and correlations for Study 6. Significance levels: *: $p < 0.05$, **: $p < 0.01$, ***: $p < 0.001$.

Variables	*M*	*SD*	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Wave 1 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.52	0.25	0.84	--											
2. Wave 2 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.5	0.27	0.86	.70**	--										
3. Wave 3 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.51	0.27	0.88	.68**	.70**	--									
4. Wave 4 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.49	0.27	0.88	.64**	.66**	.80**	--								
5. Wave 5 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.5	0.29	0.91	.70**	.67**	.75**	.73**	--							
6. Wave 6 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.49	0.29	0.92	.68**	.69**	.75**	.75**	.83**	--						
7. Wave 1 Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.34	0.21	0.85	.43**	.44**	.43**	.43**	.47**	.39**	--					
8. Wave 2 Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.32	0.23	0.89	.42**	.48**	.44**	.43**	.46**	.41**	.70**	--				
9. Wave 3 Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.3	0.22	0.88	.39**	.44**	.49**	.45**	.44**	.38**	.68**	.69**	--			
10. Wave 4 Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.26	0.21	0.84	.19**	.16**	.28**	.20**	.19**	.19**	.44**	.37**	.49**	--		
11. Wave 5 Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.26	0.21	0.85	.15**	.14**	.23**	.20**	.18**	.16**	.43**	.36**	.38**	.56**	--	
12. Wave 6 Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.24	0.21	0.86	.20**	.14**	.21**	.15**	.20**	.17**	.41**	.37**	.44**	.61**	.55**	--

Table S13. Random Intercept Cross-Lagged Panel Model Estimating Relationship Between Conspiratorial Mentality and Antidemocratic Attitudes Across Waves 1-3 in Study 6. Significance levels: *: $p < 0.05$, **: $p < 0.01$, ***: $p < 0.001$.

	Model 1	Model 2
	β (SE)	β (SE)
W3 Conspiratorial Mentality		
W2 Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.131 (0.088)	-0.007 (0.089)
W2 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.134 (0.082)	0.126 (0.102)
W3 Antidemocratic Attitudes		
W2 Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.153 (0.089)	0.048 (0.099)
W2 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.087 (0.084)	0.031 (0.096)
W2 Conspiratorial Mentality		
W1 Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.079 (0.096)	0.004 (0.099)
W1 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.059 (0.38)	0.087 (0.118)
W2 Antidemocratic Attitudes		
W1 Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.178 (0.092)	0.006 (0.111)
W1 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.077 (0.087)	-0.070 (0.100)
Between-Subject covariance		
Conspiratorial Mentality, Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.594 (0.038)	0.590*** (0.045)
W1 Covariance		
Conspiratorial Mentality, Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.073 (0.100)	0.125 (0.0)
W3 Correlated Change		
Conspiratorial Mentality, Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.264*** (0.064)	0.196* (0.074)
W2 Correlated Change		

Conspiratorial Mentality, Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.256*** (0.075)	0.079 (0.109)

Table S14. Random Intercept Cross-Lagged Panel Model Estimating Relationship Between Conspiratorial Mentality and Antidemocratic Attitudes Across Waves 4-6 in Study 6. Significance levels: *: p < 0.05, **: p < 0.01, ***: p < 0.001.

	Model 1	Model 2
	β (SE)	β (SE)
W6 Conspiratorial Mentality		
W5 Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.019 (0.085)	0.026 (0.086)
W5 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.429*** (0.101)	0.441*** (0.106)
W6 Antidemocratic Attitudes		
W5 Antidemocratic Attitudes	-0.120 (0.116)	-0.139 (0.132)
W5 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.169 (0.110)	0.080 (0.120)
W5 Conspiratorial Mentality		
W4 Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.085 (0.139)	-0.008 (0.150)
W4 Conspiratorial Mentality	-0.098 (0.255)	-0.116 (0.319)
W5 Antidemocratic Attitudes		
W4 Antidemocratic Attitudes	-0.104 (0.118)	0.053 (0.113)
W4 Conspiratorial Mentality	0.094 (0.157)	0.040 (0.164)
Between-Subject covariance		
Conspiratorial Mentality, Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.267*** (0.061)	0.252*** (0.071)
W4 Covariance		
Conspiratorial Mentality, Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.062 (0.136)	0.127 (0.143)

W6 Correlated Change		
Conspiratorial Mentality, Antidemocratic Attitudes	-0.053 (0.084)	-0.007 (0.092)
W5 Correlated Change		
Conspiratorial Mentality, Antidemocratic Attitudes	0.043 (0.159)	-0.068 (0.162)