CALL FOR PAPERS!

Paul Bertin, Karen Douglas, Matthew Hornsey, and I are editing a special issue on

Engaging with conspiracy theories: Causes and consequences


Please find the call below or here.

Best wishes,

Kai Sassenberg

Special issue on Engaging with conspiracy theories: Causes and consequences

During the Presidency of Donald Trump and the Covid-19 pandemic, conspiracy theories became a core part of societal discourse. Such "theories"-which posit that groups of powerful people are secretly cooperating to pursue malevolent goals-have been rife on social media, and their presence has had significant consequences. For example, believers in the QAnon conspiracy theory stormed the US Capitol building on January 6th 2021, and there is evidence that belief in Covid-19 conspiracy theories has undermined the success of governments' fight against the pandemic. Other conspiracy theories have negative effects on the social fabric more generally. Specifically, they have been used to undermine governments, promote racism, recruit extremists, commit crime, and undercut public health measures.

Given the significant (and growing) societal relevance of conspiracy theories, it is not surprising that research on this topic is booming. This research has generated important insights into why people adopt conspiracy theories instead of more plausible explanations and what the consequences of these beliefs are. However, this boom has mostly been based
on cross-sectional studies. Whilst this research has generated important knowledge on many of the concepts correlated with belief in conspiracy theories, experimental research on the topic is scarce. Key questions, therefore, remain about the antecedents and consequences of conspiracy theories, and experimental methods are better equipped to answer these questions. For example:

- What are the causal antecedents of the belief in conspiracy theories?
- What are the consequences-positive and negative-of being exposed to conspiracy theories?
- Which psychological mechanisms underly the causes and consequences of the effects identified above?
- What are situational factors preventing the negative effects of exposure to, or belief in, conspiracy theories?

**Guest editors:**

Kai Sassenberg, Paul Bertin, Karen Douglas and Matthew Hornsey

**Special issue information:**

This special issue will focus on these key questions, but submissions substantially advancing our understanding of the antecedents and consequences of engagement with conspiracy theories in other ways would certainly be welcome. In line with JESP policy, the articles accepted will mostly use experimental or quasi-experimental methods. However, articles including studies using other research designs will also be considered, given that this field profits, for instance, from considering the rich data available via social media.