Exploring the Dynamics of Mass Violent Protest in the United States

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Project Summary: There is limited understanding of mass political violence (MVP) in the US, especially the role social network communities play in the radicalization of politically active individuals. We investigate factors linked to the emergence of MVP events in this proposed research, adopting a dual focus on the backgrounds of individuals known to have taken part in an MVP event, and the nature of the online network community in which they are embedded. Specifically, the proposed research will build a database of recent MVP events, analyze the content of Twitter and Parler posts in network communities that include MVP participants, conduct a three-wave survey of politically active individuals who provide access to their online social media handle, and conduct in-depth interviews with individuals who have participated in an MVP event. We will use these data to identify the political, social, emotional, and cognitive processes involved in supporting, joining, and participating in MVP, construct models of the various network community dynamics that lead to the eruption of MVPs, identify patterns in group communications that enhance or diminish violent action, and furnish information on the background, beliefs, networks, and psychological predispositions of individuals who are most likely to instigate violence or follow others in their network who advocate violence.