
Anxiety Amplified: Political Discord

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Objectives

- Review research on *anxiety* ↔ *political discord*
 - Consider *social media and television*
 - Consider *disparities* as causal
 - What to do?
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Bottom Line

- Political polarization causes anxiety, depression, other health harms.
 - Harms *intensified* by social media and TV.
 - Political polarization and resulting discord are *increasing*.
“The ideological distance between the two major political parties has risen substantially since the 1970s.”
 - WHY is political polarization increasing? Income inequality.
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**Income
Inequality**

**Political Discord
Amped by Media**

**Anxiety +
Health Harms**

Bottom Line

- A Vicious Circle

Income inequality = political division =
dominance of political ideologies promoting greater disparity

- Highly divided legislatures suffer from more gridlock
 - Direct correlation between *income* and *likelihood of voting*
(The poorer you are, the greater the hindrances to your voting.)
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ELSEVIER

Social Science & Medicine

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Short communication

Is divisive politics making Americans sick? Associations of perceived partisan polarization with physical and mental health outcomes among adults in the United States

Sameera S. Nayak ^{a, b}, Timothy Fraser ^c, Costas Panagopoulos ^c, Daniel P. Aldrich ^{c, d}, Daniel Kim ^{b, d}  

Political polarization

“Perceived polarization correlates with increased risk for depressive and anxiety disorders...in other words, divisive politics may be making us sick.”

Associations of perceived partisan polarization with physical and mental health outcomes among adults in the United States | *Social Science and Medicine* | May 2021

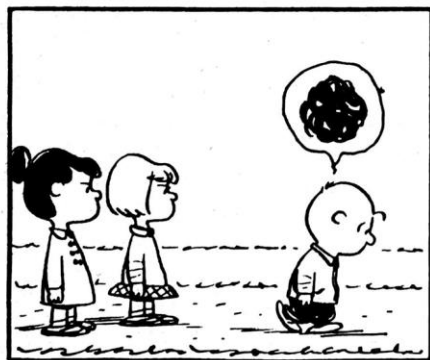
Sameera S. Nayak

Timothy Fraser

Costas Panagopoulos

Daniel P. Aldrich

Daniel Kim





Social Science & Medicine

Volume 277, May 2021, 113898



Exposure to televised political campaign advertisements aired in the United States 2015–2016 election cycle and psychological distress

Jeff Niederdeppe^a  , Rosemary J. Avery^b, Jiawei Liu^a, Sarah E. Gollust^c, Laura Baum^d, Colleen L. Barry^{e, f}, Brendan Welch^b, Emmett Tabor^b, Nathaniel W. Lee^b, Erika Franklin Fowler^d

Televised Ad Campaigns

“A consistent association between *volume of exposure* and *reported diagnosis of anxiety*”

Niederdeppe et al
Social Science & Medicine
March 2021



Social Science & Medicine

Volume 277, May 2021, 113898



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Jeff Niederdeppe^a  , Rosemary J. Avery^b, Jiawei Liu^a, Sarah E. Gollust^c, Laura Baum^d, Colleen L. Barry^{e, f}, Brendan Welch^b, Emmett Tabor^b, Nathaniel W. Lee^b, Erika Franklin Fowler^d

Televised Ad Campaigns

“Uniquely influential”

- Repeated
- Intrusive
- “Unintentional”

Niederdeppe et al
Social Science & Medicine
March 2021



Journal of Anxiety Disorders

Volume 56, May 2018, Pages 35-42



Politically-focused intrusive thoughts and associated ritualistic behaviors in a community sample

Sandra L. Cepeda ^a, Dean McKay ^b, Sophie C. Schneider ^a, Valérie La Buissonnière-Ariza ^a, Jolenthe T.N.E. Egberts ^c, Elizabeth McIngvale ^a, Wayne K. Goodman ^a, Eric A. Storch ^a  

Politically-focused Intrusive Thoughts and associated Ritualistic Behaviors (PITRB)

“A specific type of intrusive thoughts and ritualistic behaviors associated with psychopathology comparable to OCD.”

I scroll
therefore
I am

Severe sociopolitical stressors and preterm births in New York City: 1 September 2015 to 31 August 2017

 Nancy Krieger¹, Mary Huynh²,  Wenhui Li³, Pamela D Waterman¹, Gretchen Van Wye^{2, 4}

Correspondence to Dr Nancy Krieger, Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health, Boston, MA 02115, USA; nkrieger@hsph.harvard.edu

Political ad campaigns

- Emphasizing threats to safety and security
- Attacking the character of members of the opposition
- Claiming that the success of the opponent “would assure a bleak and frightening future”

Cause physiological distress and negative health outcomes

Political Polarization
(Amplified by Social Media +
Televised Political Ad Campaigns)

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Physical Health Harms

Political polarization

Unequal Incomes, Ideology and Gridlock: How Rising Inequality Increases Political Polarization*

John Voorheis[†], Nolan McCarty[‡] and Boris Shor[§]

August 21, 2015

Abstract

Income inequality and political polarization have both increased dramatically in the United States over the last several decades. A small but growing literature has suggested that these two phenomena may be related and mutually reinforcing: income inequality leads to political polarization, and the gridlock induced by polarization reduces the ability of politicians to alleviate rising inequality. Scholars, however, have not credibly identified the causal relationships. Using newly available data on polarization in state legislatures and state-level income inequality, we extend previous analyses to the US state level. Employing a relatively underutilized instrumental variables identification strategy allows us to obtain the first credible causal estimates of the effect of inequality on polarization within states. **We find that income inequality has a large, positive and statistically significant effect on political polarization.** Economic inequality appears to cause state Democratic parties to become more liberal. Inequality, however, moves state legislatures to the right overall. Such findings suggest that the effect of income inequality impacts polarization by replacing moderate Democratic legislators with Republicans.

Political polarization

*Caused or exacerbated
by
income inequality*

Unequal Incomes, Ideology and Gridlock: How Rising Inequality Increases Political Polarization

SSN | August 2015

John Voorheis
Nolan McCarty
Boris Shor

Political polarization *and a*
shift to right wing (anti-
redistributive) ideology

Caused by
Income Inequality

Unequal Incomes, Ideology and Gridlock: How Rising Inequality Increases Political Polarization

SSN | August 2015

John Voorheis
Nolan McCarty
Boris Shor

Vicious Circle:

Income Inequality

Exacerbated by

Political Polarization

Bottom Line

- Discord/polarization = *fueled by* toxic political campaigns and income inequality, causing anxiety, depression, other health harms.
- Discord/polarization: *causes* further income inequality (and further health harms).

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Rx:

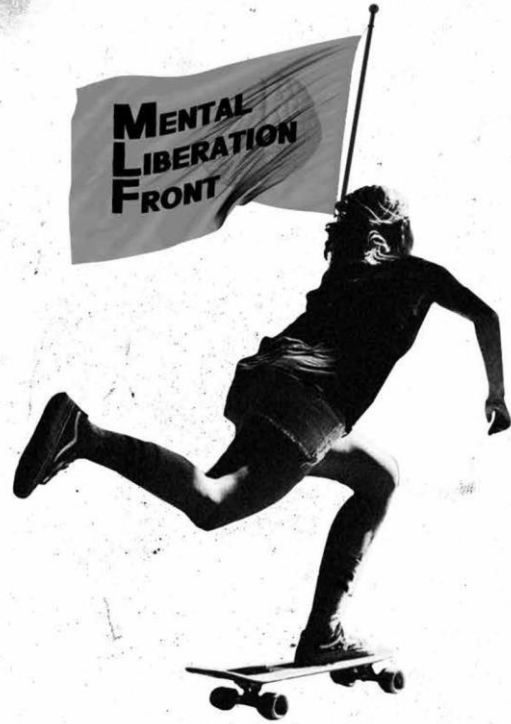
**Stop
PTIRB
;)**

**Get Out
The Vote**

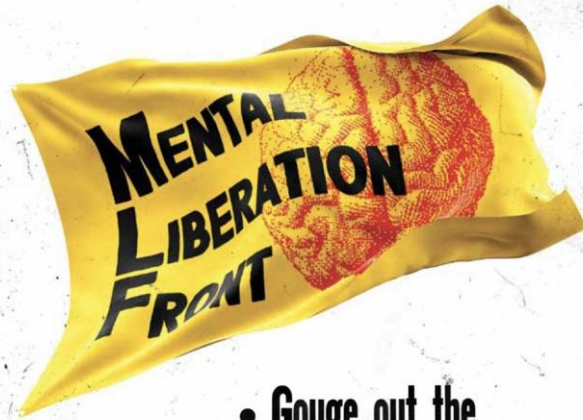
**Redistri
bute
Wealth**

Inequality makes it very hard to have serious conversations because the people who control the resources end up monopolizing the conversations. So we have unbelievably stupid ideas about going to space ...or whatever it might be.

And those ideas consume the resources, the intellectual resources, they take up too much of the landscape so that better conversations can't actually take place.



MONTAGE OVER AN ILLUSTRATION PHOTO



- Gouge out the eyes of surveillance capitalism?
- Launch the Mental Liberation Front?
- Dream the original FREENET dream?



The Third Force



**WE
RESOLVE** to

**GUARANTEE
QUALITY
HEALTHCARE
FOR ALL**



3rd RECONSTRUCTION

*It's Time to Fully Address Poverty
and Low Wages from the Bottom Up!*

RESOLVE TO END POVERTY AT WWW.3RDRECONSTRUCTION.ORG

Poor People's Campaign Moral Budget:

- 1) democracy and equal protection under the law;
- 2) domestic tranquility;
- 3) peace and the common defense;
- 4) life and health;
- 5) the planet;
- 6) our future; and
- 7) an equitable economy

Our nation has abundant resources to meet the demands of the poor, and to address the widespread and systemic injustices we face.

And the current realities of voter suppression, low and inconsistent wages, insecure access to health care and other basic needs, wealth inequality, war, and climate change are far costlier than we have been led to believe!

—
Rx:

**Stop
PTIRB
;)**

**Get Out
The Vote**

**Redistri
bute
Wealth**

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 - Severe sociopolitical stressors and preterm births in New York City: September 2015 to August 2017
BMJ Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health (2018)
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<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2649215>
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