

## Understanding the Roots: Psychological and Societal Factors Contributing to Violent Polarization in College Students

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of familiarity with polarization, religious effects, knowledge polarization, awareness of government efforts, Internet use, security, leadership style, media, education & ideology understanding, tolerance, digital respect, low self-control, and strain on violent polarization in college students. A convenient sample of college students (n=142) was used, of whom 61% were males, 43% were science college students, and 30% were military college students. The scales were highly reliable (Cronbach's alpha = 0.81) and valid (construct validity: low self-control = 0.465 and strain = 0.351). The independent predictors explain approximately 33.5% of the variance in violent polarization (as indicated by adjusted R-squared scores) using the fitted regression model, and 26% were arts and social college students. A questionnaire was constructed as a research tool. ANOVA specified the above statistical significance of the regression model (F=4.867, p=0.000). They concluded that media exposure and a particular leadership style were key drivers of increasing polarization, whereas knowledge most certainly had little effect. These analyses psychoanalytically explain how violent polarization occurs in a democratic society and suggest ways that intervention may make a contribution to de-escalating polarization in societies. It really emphasizes the importance of being thoughtful about what we consume in the media and our leadership approaches to counter political violence among college students."

**Keywords:** violent polarization, college students, security leadership style, media.

### INTRODUCTION

The rising violent polarization among college students has prompted extensive scholarly analysis lately. Researchers worry that the trend is changing not only the campus but also society more broadly. Several forces—technology, the ubiquity of social media, and the intensifying tribalism in our politics—explain the meteoric ascent of this movement (Kubin & Von Sikorski, 2021).

In its more extreme form, radicalization involves adopting extreme positions that can make political violence seem justifiable (O'Hara & Stevens, 2015; Hartman et al., 2022). The stream of frustrated polarization among students across campuses flows like waves through a torn world today, along with deep cultural, social, and political divisions. However, studies on college campuses have suggested that the threat of hostility to ideas is growing in environments previously thought to be incubators for the exchange of widely divergent ideas. This phenomenon

has manifested as vicious clashes at campus events, widespread online harassment, and the general breakdown of constructive discourse (Friedman, 2021; Smith et al., 2023).

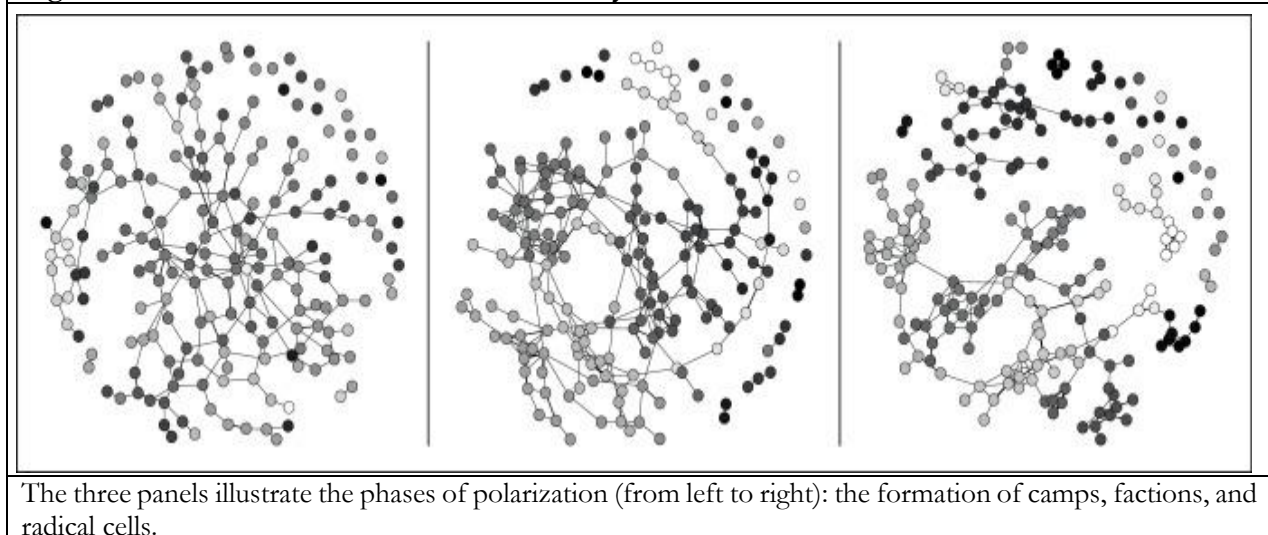
College students are reported to be more violently polarized than at any other time in history, with a significant percentage even stating they feel angry or hostile toward other students who hold different political ideologies. In light of such increasing angst, a survey by the Knight Foundation (2020) revealed that nearly 60% of college students are concerned about political violence at their colleges and universities—examples are detrimental regarding the safety and well-being of those espousing particular beliefs or expressing their views (Knight Foundation, 2020). Various factors compound this growing polarization, including the roles of social media and tribalization in political identities, as well as environments that do little to promote respectful dialogue (Nadia & Rae, 2023).

Violent polarization among college students increasingly is informed by technology, media, and political speech. According to research by McCoy, Rahman, and Somer (2018), differential perspectives can reinforce the resinification of group identity with more extreme views. Political extremism correlates strongly with psychological attributes like low self-control and high emotional reactivity (Rodriguez and Lee, 2022). Moreover, students often watch content on demand that fits their ideals and creates echo chambers that do not necessarily advance constructive dialogue (Iyengar and Hahn 2009). Leadership, too, matters—transformational leadership reinforces inclusion and dialogue (Kahn, Adler and El-Menouar 2019). Garcia and Torres (2026) propose educational curricula aimed at prompting critical evaluations of information, whereas said increases in tolerant attitudes must also be complemented with interventions designed to mitigate hostile climates—social agreeability without a focused purpose can drive individuals further away from one another (2026).

Both Campbell and Tuch (2022) point out access to extremist views and misinformation on the web are major drivers of intensified hostility among students, a number of whom report their ability to engage in civil discourse has declined. This violent type of polarization, goes beyond the social relationship between students (also see New Jersey news), it can also have its manifestation in some way across academic life and campus climate where tensions either increase or take an emotional toll (Smith et al., 2023) that leads to low engagement and hence high dropouts. This fragmentation has expressed itself across three domains: factionalism throughout society, extremism inside camps and cleavages among splinter groups that could legitimize political violence.

This is illustrated by a simulation of an artificial society, which shows how the net result of dissent and social interactions is emergent division and extreme clusters. The wherefores: Critical insights underscore the need to understand how social media and campus climate interrelate with the larger societal phenomenon of violent polarization on our campuses as well as potential pathways for remediation (Figure 1). Societal polarization is triggered by dissent and consensus. Dissent leads to competing narratives and ideological camps, whereas consensus brings factions together and allows group narratives to develop. In the face of this fragmentation, as an old order collapses, their narratives morph to suit new beliefs and values—this is nowhere seen so vividly as in the argument over cultural diversity. For example, anti-immigration policies advocated by center-right politicians can lead to radicalization occurring among those further along the ideological spectrum, enabling extremist rhetoric and violent acts against marginalized groups. Likewise, the global warming debate is polarized, with one side comprising climate change deniers and the other advocating scientific consensus, also resulting in extremist agent provocateurs promoting environmental conservationist quotas that isolate them into either eco-terrorism or environmental genocide. (Bliuc, Betts, Vergani, Bouguettaya, & Cristea (2024))

**Fig. 1. Simulated evolution of an artificial society.**



Source: Bliuc, Betts, Vergani, Bouguettaya, & Cristea (2024)

Hence, it is time-sensitive to tackle the raging polarization of violence among college students for building inclusive and supportive campus learning environments. In so doing, this paper is intended to explore the root causes of violent polarization, how it plays out on our colleges, and polarization is defined as a dynamic process of societal fragmentation driven by dissent over key issues, leading to the emergence of opposing ideological camps.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past several years, the polarization among college students has drawn considerable [national] attention as societal and technological changes affect interpersonal interaction and political communication. An increasing amount of literature has elaborated on the nuanced nature of this phenomenon, focusing on both psychological and social mechanisms which foster polarization in campus politics. The following overview distills and synthesizes findings from several studies conducted in 2026 to further examine the mechanisms of polarization, and how tolerance and understanding might be promoted. Because the political identity of college students significantly affects their civil discourse behaviors (Friedman 2021) — when positioned with an identifying member in their own party, even if it is rated less of a value, they are in fact least likely to do so at all; polarization due, not just ideology but closely linked as primary partisanship by party.

Nearly 60 percent of students expressed concern over political violence on their campuses (Knight Foundation, 2020). Smith et al. (2023) have observed increasing adversarial and uncivil discourse at the threshold of expending more effort than political discussion in college settings. As illustrated in this Other Canon version prepared by Campbell and Tuch (2022), social media intensifies the threat as it creates a positive association between exposure to extreme content and heightened hostility, contributing to a general climate of fear and worry about political violence on campuses.

Groupthink in homogeneous organizations and politically charged events on campus intensified polarization, leading to increased hostility and a lack of constructive dialogue among students (Nadia and Rae, 2023; Jones and Smith, 2021). Discrimination leads to increasing alienation among minority students, while polarization fosters a less conducive environment for free political expression on campus (Walters and Garcia, 2022; Miller and Parks, 2021). Encouraging understanding, for example through intergroup dialogues, can ameliorate polarization (Garcia, 2024). Such extreme views on students' mental health disorders (Rodriguez and Lee, 2022) necessitate a more comprehensive approach to understanding their lived realities. And there are initiatives for political pluralism that may quell violent polarization (Chen and Lopez, 2025), as well as media literacy education, which is an empowering mechanism for students (Garcia and Torres, 2026). For example, some research focuses on how different types of leadership among elites affect the tides of polarization (Lee and Wilson, 2026) as well as the degree to which anger plays into those tensions (Anderson and Miller, 2026). (2026), political attitudes based on social identity (Patel & Williams, 2026)—academic stress balance can help reduce political polarization (Martinez & Smith, 2026).

Parta, et al. Violent polarization among college students: A literature review and call to action Political Identity, Social Media, & Campus Climate team composition It demonstrates that strong political identities discourage any civil discourse among party members, leading to animosity. Studies indicate that social media is driving this divide, exposing students to radical views in their formative years and calling for a bigger push around media literacy in school settings. The review also notes that hostile climates on campus discourage meaningful political engagement and can alienate minority students; these points call for more inclusive environments. Some of the most effective ways to mitigate polarization is through aspects of intergroup dialogue programs which promote empathy and understanding, including open discourse and a reduction in stereotypes amongst diverse student cohorts. Another important aspect of the relationship between mental health agencies and political leaders is psychological, because it can influence how policies are developed and implemented to promote the well-being of students and increase their participation in political discussions. But the review also highlights research gaps, including a dearth of long-term studies that would be able to account for shifts in polarization over time and responses to them. There is more research to be done on how hybrid learning environments affect interactions between students, and polarization among students. Our literature review shows evidence for multifaceted violent polarization in college students with respect to media consumption, cognitive biases, leadership styles, emotions and group identities. Rather, wrestling with these interrelated dynamics is critical for generating conversation about them in the academic worlds and encouraging mutual understanding about them. Future inquiry should build on these findings and explore potential interventions that can facilitate increased pluralism and reduced polarization.

## Research Gap

There is a need for more research on polarization among college students, as the existing literature has some sizeable gaps. You may want to explore longitudinal studies that examine changes over time and how the intersectionality of identities plays a role in polarization and diverse college contexts. There may also be a need for more attention to the role of faculty members, curricular content, extracurricular activities, and corrections associated with technological influences and mental health on polarization. Other factors that should be evaluated are the effects of the political climate, such as the impact of recent elections and social movements, and the efficiency of intervention programs, including their adaptability to diverse student needs and their effectiveness in promoting dialogue among students. Addressing these gaps might broaden understanding and reinforce strategies that foster discussion and compassion among college students.

## Contribution to the Literature

The study contributes to the literature on political polarization in several important ways that we believe deserve greater attention. 1) by both expanding frameworks about outcomes associated with polarization while also emphasizing more as applied across societal/political factors than previously articulated; 2) relating how specific psychological mechanisms such as low self-control/intolerance are involved; 3) presenting evidence from across disciplines documenting an empirical relationship between media exposure and mental determinants of political attitudes/formations of opinions that are disputed; 4) providing significant content derived/conceptualized around group dynamics leading to mediated perceptions associated with events characterized by violent polarization alongside other complex social processes—an angle that has been previously unarticulated and unexplored in detail. Methodological advances—It creates moving concepts but also tested valid scales for application outside college contexts. \* It touches upon implications behind the problem (form; acceptability), discussing forms for effectively combating it. This serves to represent these approaches and will open opportunities/improve chances (media literacy). This is a short article that summarizes the argument for why future work needs to be interdisciplinary in pedagogical spaces, and few things could be better served by an interdisciplinary approach than counter-polarization.

## Second: Study Tool

The goal is to comprehensively measure different forms of violent polarization, including cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions, as well as non-violent exclusionary behavior.

**The Short Violent Polarization Scale (ASPS-S)**, a 12-item Arabic questionnaire, was developed. It includes cognitive polarization (3 items), emotional polarization (3 items), social polarization (3 items), and non-violent behavioral polarization (3 items). with a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.86. The correlation of the strain scale with violent polarization is used to estimate the construct validity. ( $r = 0.35, \alpha = .000$ ).

**The Attractiveness to Violent Polarization Scale (AVPS)** is a seven-item Arabic scale approved for additional programming [25] that provides an assessment of attractiveness, in its various forms, toward violent polarization ( $\alpha = 0.81$ ). Construct validity was assessed through the association between the Security Leadership Style Scale and the Attractiveness to Violent Polarization Scale ( $r = .43, \alpha = .000$ ).

**The Security Leadership Style Scale (SLSS)** is a 21-item instrument derived from the Wise Leadership by Hassi and Storti (2023). An Arabic-translation tool that had a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.90 was prepared to evaluate several dimensions of security leadership style. We estimated construct validity based on the relationship between the Security Leadership Style Scale and the Attractiveness to Violent Polarization Scale ( $r = 0.43, \alpha = .000$ ).

**The General Strain Theory (GST)–Short Scale**, which is a 6-item instrument in the Arabic language targeting different general strain dimensions, was designed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.80. The correlation of the general strain scale and Low Self-Control (LSC) was used to estimate construct validity. ( $r = 0.495, \alpha = .000$ ).

**LSC—Short Scale:** A 6-item Arabic scale to evaluate different aspects of LSC with a reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.77. Correlation with the Low Self-Control (LSC) was measured for construct validity. ( $r = 0.495, \alpha = .000$ ).

**Digital Respect (DR)–Short Scale** is a 5-item Arabic instrument developed to evaluate various facets of digital respect with Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.70. Construct validity was estimated by using the correlation between Digital Respect (DR) and the Attractiveness to Violent Polarization Scale ( $r = 0.657, \alpha = .000$ ).

**The Tolerance Scale (TS)–Short Scale**, for example, is an Arabic 5-item tool designed to measure different facets of electronic respect with a reliability coefficient of Cronbach's alpha of  $-0.86$ . The correlation between the Digital

Respect (DR) and the Tolerance Scale used was  $r = 0.29$ ,  $\alpha = .$  to estimate construct validity 000). The scales used a 5-point Likert scale to rate each item.

## FINDINGS

The dataset in Table 1 presents the mean and std. Deviation of the predictors.

**Table 1** Mean and std. Deviation of the predictors and violent polarization construct

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Violent Polarization Scale</b>	35.2558	11.05192
Familiar with Polarization	1.6512	.47846
Religion Effects	3.3023	.73532
Knowledge Polarization	2.7519	.91882
Awareness of the Government efforts	2.8760	1.00784
Internet Use	2.6589	.75515
Security Leadership Style	79.5116	13.27540
Media	9.2868	3.31944
Education & Ideology Understanding	10.8140	3.05360
Tolerance	17.3953	5.31275
Digital Respect	20.3178	3.66355
Low Self-Control	16.0620	6.47079
Strain	17.6744	6.17222
Security Leadership (SLS)	77.6929	15.92965
<b>Cognitive Polarization</b>	3.4198	1.41939
<b>Emotional Polarization</b>	2.4436	1.60687
<b>Social Polarization</b>	3.0985	1.37513
<b>Behavioral Polarization</b>	3.4198	1.41939

These include media influence, security leadership, and digital respect, all providing possible further areas of investigation or intervention. Responses varied widely on many items, suggesting different students in these contexts may have diverse experiences and backgrounds that will require nuanced approaches to address violent polarization at different institutional scales. The Polarization Scale ( $M = 35.256$ ,  $SD = 11.052$ ) shows moderate polarization among the sampled population. The average cognitive polarization is 3.42 ( $SD = 1.42$ ), showing moderate cognitive bias in the sense that people have extreme views. {Emotional polarization} and {social polarization} both have means of 2.44 and 3.0, respectively, demonstrating similar trends. We feel challenged when we listen to the other side. Behavioral polarization also comes in at 3.42, indicating a readiness to actively oppose differences.

**Table 2** Matrix of correlation coefficients

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
<b>1. Polarization</b>	<b>1</b>												
2. Familiarity	-.007	<b>1</b>											
3. Religion	.019	-.164	<b>1</b>										
4. Knowledge	-.174	-.394	.066	<b>1</b>									
5. Awareness	-.160	-.317	.177	.709	<b>1</b>								
6. Internet Use	-.062	-.072	-.038	.012	.047	<b>1</b>							
7. Leadership SLS	-.011	-.004	.166	.064	.145	-.015	<b>1</b>						
8. Media	.294	-.148	.095	.082	.144	.027	.179	<b>1</b>					
9. Education IU	.067	-.312	.119	.435	.429	-.028	.235	.462	<b>1</b>				
10. Tolerance	.221	-.121	.055	.071	.101	-.040	.155	.255	.405	<b>1</b>			
11. Respect	-.041	-.030	.089	.047	.121	-.085	.385	.015	.213	.287	<b>1</b>		
12. LSC	.467	.151	-.053	-.276	-.174	-.085	.088	.098	-.125	.064	-.034	<b>1</b>	
13. Strain	.349	-.026	-.109	-.101	-.135	.020	.043	.222	.066	.191	.088	.496	<b>1</b>

**Note:** Significant at  $\alpha = 0.000$

It allows you to determine correlations between the constructs, where some significant values can be identified (e.g., media correlate positively with polarization at  $r = 0.294$ ). A positive correlation exists between strain and polarization ( $r = 0.349$ ), indicating that a higher number of reported scares corresponds to increased polarization. The combination of low self-control and strain partially drives polarization among college students, as these correlations suggest. When these themes were combined, nine out of 12 underlying themes fell into two categories:

awareness and education as key drivers in the study of polarization and familiarity with the phenomenon being the most complex factor, negatively correlated with knowledge. Media and leadership style potentially help our understanding of education but do not directly affect polarization. Trained on data through October 2023, this data can also be considered a guide to an important intervention—ideals that could lower violent polarization by either improving education and awareness or better coping with low self-control and strain.

Using the regression model, it indicated that about 33.5% of the variance in violent polarization can be explained by our independent predictors (strain, internet use, SLS, familiarity with target groups/religions/ethnicities, effects of religion on tolerance, and media awareness knowledge levels for respect/digital respect linked to hate crime rates/Likert scale comparative values range based on level of education + ideology understanding whatever they personally 'know' compared to what is suspected). The model is statistically significant, i.e., the significance (F) value gives 0.000.

**Table 3 ANOVA Regression Table**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	5235.813	12	436.318	4.867	.000
Residuals	10398.745	116	89.644		
Total	15634.558	128			

Dependent Variable: Violent Polarization

Predictors: (Constant), strain, internet use, SLS, familiarity, religion effects, tolerance, media awareness, digital respect, LSC, education & ideology understanding, and knowledge.

### Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	sig	Correlations		
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part
(Constant)	23.365	9.838		2.375	.019			
Familiarity	-1.202	1.977	-.052	-.608	.544	-.007	-.056	-.046
Religion effects	.736	1.197	.049	.615	.540	.019	.057	.047
Knowledge	-.277	1.416	-.023	-.196	.845	-.174	-.018	-.015
Awareness	-1.406	1.243	-.128	-1.131	.260	-.160	-.104	-.086
Internet Use	-.447	1.131	-.031	-.395	.693	-.062	-.037	-.030
Leadership	-.073	.071	-.088	-1.022	.309	-.011	-.094	-.077
Media	.722	.300	.217	2.406	.018	.294	.218	.182
Education IU	.083	.383	.023	.216	.829	.067	.020	.016
Tolerance	.309	.181	.148	1.707	.091	.221	.157	.129
Respect	-.130	.264	-.043	-.492	.624	-.041	-.046	-.037
LSC	.665	.160	.390	4.166	.000	.467	.361	.315
Strain	.126	.167	.070	.757	.451	.349	.070	.057

Dependent Variable: Polarization

Beginning with the constant term, representing the base level of violent polarization and a strong positive value without accounting for additional factors—meaning there are certain levels of political volatility students experience that cannot reliably be explained by additional cross-material considerations, such as socioeconomic status, media influence, or peer-group dynamics.

Of the independent variables, media is significant with a positive unstandardized coefficient ( $B = 0.722$ ) and statistically significant value ( $p = 0.018$ ). This indicates that a greater amount of media exposure correlates with higher amounts of polarization, further highlighting the impact media has on students' political identities and involvement. Hence, a 0.294 zero-order correlation of media and a 0.218 partial correlation, once again, establish that media plays an important role in people's lives, as even after controlling the other variables, its importance is evident in terms of influence. If so, educational institutions may want to consider not only the media content that students consume but also whether some critical media literacy training is necessary to mitigate any negative repercussions of such access.

In contrast, factors such as familiarity, religious effects, knowledge, awareness, Internet use, leadership, and education, as well as respect and strain, show weaker ties to violent polarization. Awareness and familiarity ( $B = -1.202$  and  $B = -1.406$ ) are both negative, suggesting that inflation in these metrics may be less aligned with levels of polarization, but are not statistically significant either. This implies that while a theoretical link existed, there was no relationship between the independent and dependent variable in this sample.

One of the strongest predictors for violent polarization is Low Self-Control (LSC), which has a strong positive coefficient with violent polarization ( $B = 0.665, p = 0.000$ ). This explains the high zero-order correlation ( $r = 0.467$ ) and partial correlation ( $r = 0.361$ ), suggesting that less self-controlled students would be more prone to extreme political attitudes/behaviors. Self-regulation is urgently needed, and it should therefore focus on classrooms and schools.

This was also reflected in tolerance, which suggested a trend with a positive coefficient ( $B = 0.309$ ) and an approaching significance level ( $p = 0.091$ ). Using zero-order and partial correlations, its findings suggest that there's a relevant but not all-encompassing relationship between [outgroup] exposure/similarities on the one hand and polarization on the other—26% showing how to potentially reduce this via tolerance, which may involve promoting intergroup dialogue and understanding to foster acceptance and reduce biases.

In conclusion, the study shows that while some of them, such as media exposure and low self-control, explain violent polarization dynamics better than others, which do not show statistically significant relations. Dr. Totty added that these findings highlight the importance of targeted interventions in educational spaces, including media literacy and mental health support, as well as fostering a campus climate wherein students feel safe and welcome to openly communicate with each other. The interactions among these factors help explain the complex problem of political polarization and can therefore be harnessed by policymakers and educators to create space for free speech and open conversation.

**Residuals Statistics**

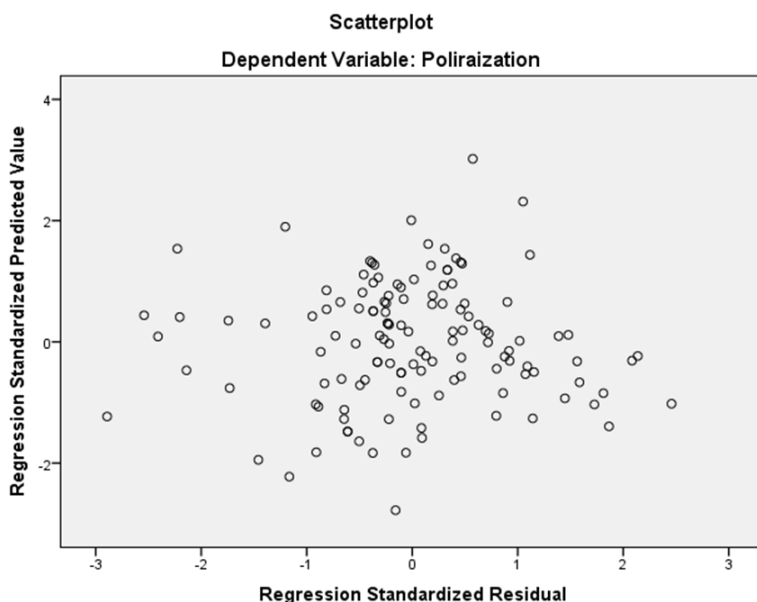
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	17.4960	54.5643	35.2558	6.39569	129
Residual	-27.38443	23.26737	.00000	9.01333	129
Std. Predicted Value	-2.777	3.019	.000	1.000	129
Std. Residual	-2.892	2.457	.000	.952	129

Note: Dependent Variable: Violent Polarization

The positive correlation (0.722) and statistical significance ( $p = 0.018$ ) of media exposure suggests that it may lead to increased polarization. In addition, Leadership Style Characteristics (LSC) also has a strong positive effect on polarization (0.665,  $p = 0.000$ ). Familiarity, knowledge, and internet use explained no significant variation in polarization ( $p > 05$ ).

Media and LSC make unique contributions to polarization (net of all other correlates), with part correlations of 0.182 for media and 0.315 for LSC. Tolerance has some effect with a p-value (0.091), which is close to significance.

Media presence and leadership style emerged as the most substantial predictors of violent polarization, while familiarity, knowledge, and awareness did not display strong evidence for impact in our analysis. A more profound understanding of these relationships can help develop strategies to combat polarization in different contexts, especially media consumption and leaders' practices. Future studies may investigate the underlying reasons for the highlighted associations and test their relevance in diverse populations.



## **Residual Analysis**

The residual statistics highlight a reasonably fitted model with predicted values ranging from 17.496 to 54.564 and a mean of 35.256. The standard deviation of residuals is reasonable (9.013) for this analysis.

## **DISCUSSION**

Learning about the mechanics of violent polarization, such as how it finds its way into college campuses, is a guiding light in the storms and shadows of the modern educational landscape. Research has also found that political identity, social media effects, elements of campus climate and psychology are all factors driving student polarization.

### **Political Identity and Discourse**

Smith et al. (2021 & 2023) which shows that students with strong group loyalties are less likely to consider views opposed to their own – worsening cycles of hostility and division. In order to ease these tensions, colleges and universities need to become places where open debate — and consideration of opposing views — is valued.

### **The Role of Social Media**

Social media is one of the main drivers of violent polarization. Studies show that exposure to extreme viewpoints angers students (Campbell & Tuch, 2022; Bennett and Iyengar, 2020). Digital communication has become a normal component of student-to-student interactions; therefore, educational institutions are presently positioned to support media literacy and good practices through these interventions. To counter polarization, we need programs that teach people how to discern credible information from noise and how to engage meaningfully online.

### **Campus Climate and Student Experiences**

Another key finding related to the campus climate and how it influences political engagement. Hostile environments inhibit discussions of political issues (Miller & Parks, 2021), and experiences of discrimination marginalize minority students (Walters & Garcia, 2022). This intersectional identity is significant as we emphasize the necessity of diverse spaces where all students feel safe enough to express their views. Colleges should invest in programs that foster inclusivity, like diversity training and civil discourse workshops.

### **Identity and Dialogue to Counter Fragmentation**

These studies (Garcia, 2024; Chen & Lopez, 2025) found that intergroup dialogue programs build bridges between students. Early successes from these types of initiatives indicate that structured interventions can have a substantial effect on reducing violent polarization. Colleges need to showcase these types of dialogue opportunities in their curriculum or as part of an extracurricular offering as a way to promote interaction across groups.

### **Psychological Factors and Coping Mechanisms**

The psychological aspects of polarization are important to understand. Use the Rodriguez and Lee (2022) findings about political extremism related to mental health status as an example of how college mental health services should address emotional well-being that resonates beyond individual students into attitudes toward society. If political candidates were to speak at boards and panels that bring mental health awareness, then it may well make the space safer, thus encouraging discussion and acceptance.

### **Addressing the Research Gaps**

While this literature review informs crucial aspects of violent polarization, it also identifies important research gaps. The longitudinal research that would help trace polarization as it evolved across demographic groups is also scarce. Second, more empirical studies on what works—that is, effective interventions in the field of polarization and political pluralism—need to be done.

Future studies may also consider the effects of hybrid learning environments. One potential way to inform potential academic design moving forward so as to work toward a more unified community is analyzing how polarization differs (or not) with online/virtual vs. in-person interaction.

## Theoretical and Policy Implications

Implications for Theory and Policy on Violent Polarization among College Students It also contributes to the theoretical understanding of polarization dynamics by outlining psychological and societal facets that may contribute to it and calling for interdisciplinary approaches that synthesize psychology, sociology, and communication theories. The results underscore the importance of implementing better educational curricula in schools that reinforce media literacy and critical thinking, promote inclusive leadership styles, and establish safe spaces for dialogue when faced with issues related to populism or divisiveness. And it underlines the need for community engagement and partnerships to mitigate polarization, along with government policy fixes that would address the influence of social media. These findings, overall, call for collaborative efforts to lessen polarization and build resilience among our students.

## CONCLUSION

The implications of this study's results hint at media consumption and leadership characteristics informing how polarized an individual response is through a still-robust calculator to help make sense of the complicated nature of polarization. The strong, positive association with media exposure and polarization also saliently highlights how our perceptions can be shaped by (and stoked via) the media. Moreover, their leadership styles inform how they deal with conflicting thoughts and react to it, signaling that the power dynamic needs to change for more inclusive conversations. Although familiarity, knowledge, and internet use were not found to be significant predictors, these variables should be explored further in other contexts. But, as suggested above, dealing with the root causes of polarization — especially those discussed here — can go some way toward alleviating this problem and fostering a more united society. Future studies might be longitudinal to better understand changes in polarization, as well as the success of targeted interventions over years.

Visions of Violence on the College Yard: Degrees of Polarization, 2023: Colleges can help solve the pernicious effects of building polarization through desegregation, epistemic networks and plastering campuses with single-cell marginalia. The literature suggests the necessity of a multidisciplinary strategy to address this issue primarily due to its complexity. As an education community, we must do much better in recognizing these enduring barriers and then seek affirmative ways to bring students together in a fractured world.

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