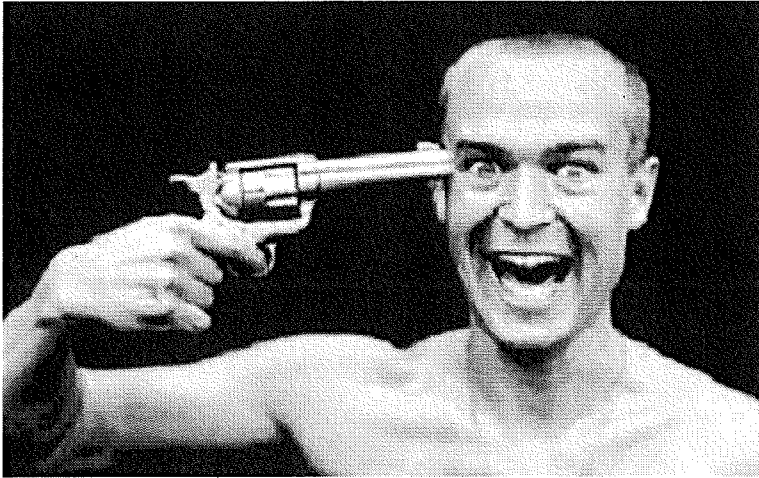


4 weeks ago

Hate Speech Makes you Ill



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Biological markers reveal hate speech raises stress and anxiety levels

UCLA STUDY FOCUSES ON EFFECTS OF CONSERVATIVE TALK RADIO

Moderator's Note: Since 2008, we have been reporting on and discussing the political movements associated with the Tea Party and extreme right-wing hate groups active in Arizona and other states. We have characterized these groups as part of the “ecology of fear” and voiced concern over the strong correlation between hate speech, nativist (anti-immigrant) ideology, and direct acts of violence against immigrants and persons viewed as sympathetic to or allied with the immigrant community. In the past, we reported on the projective paranoid and schizoid mind [<http://mexmigration.blogspot.com/2010/06/arizona-challenging-state-of-exception.html>] of the right-wing telluric partisans and offered some background on the historical studies suggesting that these extremists fit the mold of the authoritarian personality. All this suggests that hate speech and hate crimes are associated with direct and structural forms of violence; this is not positive news for public health or more harmonious race-ethnic relations.

Now, we have further evidence of the psychological dynamics and actual biophysical effects associated with listening to hate speech as exemplified by right-wing radio talk shows, which are the sources of inspiration [sic] for many of the hate groups and racist individuals active in Arizona and other states experiencing the wave of anti-immigrant hysteria.

Of particular interest to us is the fact that the findings show “a statistically significant correlation between changes in clinical anxiety and the production of salivary cortisol in listeners who were exposed to hate speech content on commercial talk radio.” In other words, listening to right-wing radio is bad for your health; it is stressful and the build-up of stress-related cortisol is a serious risk factor in numerous diseases from cardiovascular illness to obesity and a host of inflammatory-related ailments. In short: Listening to hate speech is dangerous for your health, and obviously to the well being of those around you who are marked as different and thus potential targets of hate speech-inspired violence.

Of course, none of us are calling for restrictions on conservative radio programming; we do fully expect that with the passage of time the audience for such banal hate-filled programs will simply taper-off as the mostly white, male, and middle-aged audience is superseded by a more enlightened and diverse demographic. The days of hate speech filling talk radio airwaves are numbered and this study gives us some of the evidence of why it will dissipate as an unhealthy choice and indulgence.

So, a word to racists: Suck it up. While you can. You are just hastening the day you get sick and thankfully die off from your own self-inflicted mental and physical degradation.

SUMMARY OF UCLA STUDY OF CONSERVATIVE TALK RADIO

by Rebecca Epstein

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A team of UCLA researchers has been able to quantify increased stress and anxiety levels in a group of listeners exposed to hate speech on conservative talk radio. The report, *Using Biological Markers to Measure Stress in Listeners of Commercial Talk Radio*, established that a methodology employing biological markers can help determine the physiological and psychological effects of hate speech.

In the pilot study, released by the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC),

researchers examined saliva samples to evaluate changes associated with volunteer listeners' exposure to a broadcasted segment selected from a commercial talk radio program previously analyzed in a CSRC's study [Quantifying Hate Speech on Commercial Talk Radio: A Pilot Study]. The segment was selected because it was particularly dense in indexical terms targeting vulnerable groups. Salivary cortisol, testosterone, and a selected set of Th1 and Th2 cytokines were analyzed and correlated against clinical anxiety parameters obtained from the same subjects before and after the experimental intervention.

The findings show a statistically significant correlation between changes in clinical anxiety and the production of salivary cortisol in listeners who were exposed to hate speech content on commercial talk radio. The study reveals no significant correlations between the other biomarkers studied.

“One of the more surprising findings,” says CSRC Director Chon Noriega, a co-author of the study, “is that the correlation between listener's anxiety and the production of cortisol does not appear to be specific to a subject's race/ethnicity, nativity, or ideological alignment with talk radio programs. In other words, the potential health impact seems to be a general effect on all listeners.”

The report recommends further research that increases the sample size and adds a control group in order to determine the correlation between hate speech and the biomarkers studied.

Using Biological Markers to Measure Stress in Listeners of Commercial Talk Radio is the third and final study in a series led by the CSRC investigating hate speech—speech that expresses prejudice against ethnic, racial, religious, and/or sexual minorities—in politically conservative talk radio programs. The first study, Quantifying Hate Speech on Commercial Talk Radio: A Pilot Study, used qualitative content analysis to examine hate speech in commercial broadcasting that targets vulnerable groups. The second study, Social Networks for Hate Speech: Commercial Talk Radio and New Media, analyzed the social networks that form around the hosts of radio talk shows. All studies and related press coverage to date are available at: <http://www.chicano.ucla.edu/research/HateSpeech.asp> [<http://www.chicano.ucla.edu/research/HateSpeech.asp>]

This pilot study is supported in part by the National Hispanic Media Coalition through a


grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. The study represents a strategic partnership between the UCLA Chicano Study Research Center, the National Hispanic Media Coalition, and the Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center.

The UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center was established in 1969 and is part of the Institute of American Cultures. Current research areas also include archival preservation, arts and culture, economic security, education, and public health.

UCLA is California's largest university, with an enrollment of nearly 38,000 undergraduate and graduate students. The UCLA College of Letters and Science and the university's 11 professional schools feature renowned faculty and offer more than 337 degree programs and majors. UCLA is a national and international leader in the breadth and quality of its academic, research, health care, cultural, continuing education, and athletic programs. Six alumni and five faculty have been awarded the Nobel Prize.

Posted 4 weeks ago by Devon G. Peña

Labels: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, hate speech, public health, hate crimes, ecology of fear

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