



**Discussion:
Media, Polarization, and the 2016 Election?**

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Social media and polarization

- Exposure to social media content does not explain lion share of increase in US polarization:
 - People aged 65+
 - have become equally polarized
 - don't use social media much.


Social media can affect polarization in other ways than direct exposure

- Traditional media content
- Opinion leaders
- Behavior of politicians
- Interaction between media and politicians

Polarization and fake news from a European perspective

- Proportional elections
 - Polarized views visible in support for extreme parties.
- Broadband internet did not increase vote for left- or right-fringe parties in Germany (Falck et al., AER 2014).
- Intention to vote for Marine Le Pen
 - increase with fake news exposure
 - but also with non-fake news on the same topic – immigration (Barrera et al, 2017).

Social media effects ahead

- Giant task to explain lion's share of increase in polarization.
 - Polarization may still of course be affected.
 - Social media still a small part of news consumption. 
- Positive effects through information
 - Low cost -> infobits and pictures posted.
 - Largest effects in authoritarian states, e.g. China
 - Millions of informative posts about corruption, protests, environmental problems, etc. (Qin et al., 2017).

Is all polarization bad?

- Distrust, hatred, inter-party marriage.
- Information polarizes:
 - Completely uniformed voters without political views are not polarized.
 - Having consistent views / supporting political parties consistent with policy views.

What does social media consumption replace and for whom?

- Young : personal contacts?
- Old : traditional media consumption?

Social media use by age

