

Raw Story: Neuroscientist sounds the alarm on the GOP's 'contagious sociopaths' who live among us

An analysis of the article from Raw Story found at: <https://www.rawstory.com/raw-investigates/sociopaths-live-among-us-and-its-contagious/>

Sociopathy as a form of Cognitive Warfare

Treadstone 71 Analysis is Italicized

Sociopaths, a term often used to describe those living with antisocial personality disorder, operate within their daily lives without a "conscience" and can be characterized as acting without feelings of guilt, remorse, or shame coupled with a tendency to reject the concept of responsibility (S.D. Norrholm, 2017).

Antisocial people intentionally make others angry or upset and use harsh and cruel indifference to manipulate or attack others.

There is no clinically defined difference between a sociopath and a psychopath. However, some have drawn this line at acting with a low moral conscience (sociopath) and no moral conscience (psychopath) or having no regard for someone else's rights or feelings (sociopath) and taking pleasure in robbing another of their rights, freedom, or well-being (psychopath).

My colleagues and I have discussed psychopathy in the previous president elsewhere as an example. Recognizing these nuanced differences exist, I will use the term sociopath and Sociopathy here for brevity's sake.

Understanding Sociopathy and Psychopathy

The text begins by describing Sociopathy, often synonymous with antisocial personality disorder. People with this condition act without guilt, remorse, or shame and reject responsibility. They may intentionally anger others and use manipulation. While there is no clinical difference between Sociopathy and psychopathy, the author highlights distinctions that some make between the two terms, associating Sociopathy with a low moral conscience and psychopathy with no moral conscience or pleasure in harming others.

1. Definition of Sociopathy and Its Characteristics:

- Sociopathy, often identified with antisocial personality disorder, involves a disregard for societal norms and the rights and feelings of others.*
- People with Sociopathy operate without guilt, remorse, or shame, expected in social interactions.*
- They can intentionally cause anger or distress in others and employ manipulation, showing an absence of empathy.*

2. Comparison with Psychopathy:

- While Sociopathy and psychopathy are terms used interchangeably in some contexts, the author notes that they are not clinically distinct.*

- *Some believe that the difference lies in the depth of conscience. Sociopathy is associated with a low moral conscience, meaning sociopaths may know right from wrong but choose to disregard it.*
- *Psychopathy, on the other hand, is often seen as a complete lack of moral conscience or even pleasure in harming others. The person may not recognize or care about societal norms and legal boundaries, going beyond simple disregard to enjoyment in causing harm.*

3. *Importance of Distinction:*

- *Although these distinctions are not clinically recognized, understanding them may provide insight into various levels or manifestations of antisocial behavior.*
- *The categorization can help frame the analysis of specific behaviors, attitudes, and actions within a political context, as seen in the broader text.*

The paragraph, thus, sets the stage for understanding the behaviors and attitudes the author later applies to political figures and movements. Providing definitions and distinctions lets readers grasp the terminology and concepts underpinning the author's argument.

There appear to be at least three forms of this public political/governmental sociopathy present today. The first are those individuals for whom sociopathic tendencies are deep-seated and a core feature of who they are – the former president being a prime example. A second form includes the scores of Republicans and right-wingers who have decided to play the role or act sociopathic for their gain. The sociopaths include hard-line MAGA members such as Marjorie Taylor Greene, Lauren Boebert, Kari Lake, and Matt Gaetz, who decided to infect themselves with contagious Sociopathy.

Application in Political Context

The author then relates these concepts to political figures and movements, specifically in the context of the United States. Three forms of what the author calls "public political/governmental sociopathy" are identified:

1. *Deep-Seated Sociopathy is a core characteristic of some individuals, with the former U.S. President being an example.*
2. *Adopted Sociopathy for Personal Gain includes various right-wing politicians and hard-line supporters who act sociopathically for personal or political gain. Contagious Sociopathy in Passive Enablers consists of those who enable sociopathic behavior through inaction or support. It extends from political leaders to large-scale supporters.*

1. *Deep-Seated Sociopathy as a Core Characteristic:*

- *This form of Sociopathy refers to individuals for whom these tendencies are an inherent part of their personality.*
- *The former U.S. President is cited as a prime example, though the specific behaviors or actions embodying this Sociopathy are not detailed in the provided passage.*
- *The implication is that these sociopathic tendencies are not adopted or learned but intrinsic to the individual's character.*

2. *Adopted Sociopathy for Personal Gain:*

- *This category encompasses those who may not naturally possess sociopathic traits but choose to adopt them for personal or political advantage.*
- *Right-wing politicians and hard-line supporters are mentioned as examples, indicating a willingness to engage in behaviors associated with Sociopathy,*

such as manipulation, lack of empathy, and disregard for societal norms, to achieve their goals.

- *This form of Sociopathy is portrayed as more calculating and strategic, employed to an end rather than an innate trait.*

3. *Contagious Sociopathy in Passive Enablers:*

- *This form represents a group of people who enable or even promote sociopathic behavior in others through their inaction or support.*
- *The reference to "contagious" Sociopathy suggests that these individuals may not themselves exhibit sociopathic tendencies but contribute to its spread and normalization within political and societal spheres.*
- *This category is broad, from political leaders who may implicitly support such behavior to large-scale supporters whose collective inaction or endorsement perpetuates it.*

Overall Implication in Political Context:

The author's categorization of Sociopathy within the political context offers a framework for understanding various levels and manifestations of antisocial behavior among politicians and their supporters. It represents an attempt to diagnose contemporary American politics' moral and ethical landscape, applying psychological concepts to political behavior. By identifying these three forms of Sociopathy, the author critiques specific attitudes and actions, suggesting a systemic issue rather than isolated incidents. The term "sociopathy" in this context may be seen as a strong condemnation, emphasizing what the author views as a lack of empathy, ethics, and social responsibility in political life.

Look at the case of Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who's impressive on-paper resume includes graduation from Yale University (where he served as captain of the baseball team) and Harvard law school (with honors), distinguished service in the United States Navy, including a legal role with Seal Team One and a deployment to Iraq. On paper, he is highly accomplished and embodied what we as Americans tend to hold in high regard until he acquired contagious Sociopathy.

Coincident with his departure from active military service and rise to Congress and the Florida governorship, he included antisocial tendencies in his political and public persona. He believes in unregulated gun ownership (despite brutal killings in his state's schools), he attacks the rights of women with his restrictive abortion laws, suppresses legislation that would support the LGBTQ+ community, and he seeks to diminish the plight of historically maltreated groups (such as African Americans) with his attempts to bury the past.

Case of Ron DeSantis

The passage provides a specific example of Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. Despite an impressive resume, he is accused of adopting antisocial tendencies in his political life, manifested through support for unregulated gun ownership, restrictive abortion laws, and other controversial stances.

1. *Impressive Resume:*

- *The passage begins by acknowledging DeSantis's accomplishments, including graduation from Yale University and Harvard Law School, distinguished military service, and deployment to Iraq.*

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- *DeSantis frames his credentials as symbols of success and qualities often admired in American society.*
- *Adoption of Antisocial Tendencies:*
 - *Despite his notable background, DeSantis embraces antisocial or sociopathic tendencies in his political career.*
 - *The term "antisocial tendencies" ties him to the "Adopted Sociopathy for Personal Gain" category discussed earlier, implying that these behaviors are deliberate and used for political ends.*
- *Manifestations in Policy Decisions:*
 - *These alleged tendencies manifest in his support for controversial policies, which the author highlights as evidence of his sociopathic behavior. These include:*
 1. *Unregulated Gun Ownership: Emphasizing this stance, especially considering tragic events in Florida's schools, paints DeSantis as lacking empathy and disregarding societal safety norms.*
 2. *Restrictive Abortion Laws: This stance is framed as an attack on women's rights, highlighting a potential lack of compassion and understanding of women's autonomy.*
 3. *Suppression of LGBTQ+ Rights and Disregard for Historically Maltreated Groups: These actions are cited as further evidence of DeSantis's alignment with sociopathic behaviors, as they appear to disregard the rights and feelings of marginalized communities.*

Overall Implications in the Case of Ron DeSantis:

The passage offers a critical view of DeSantis, contrasting his impressive professional and educational background with his political actions and stances, which the author views as indicative of antisocial behavior. By applying the framework of Sociopathy to DeSantis's political career, the author seems to suggest a calculated and morally questionable approach to governance. The use of sociopathic terminology in analyzing DeSantis's political behavior underlines what the author perceives as a lack of moral conscience in the face of controversial and divisive issues.

Regenerate

In another high-profile example, the constitutionally designed third arm of our democratic republic, the U.S. Supreme Court, was supposed to serve independently from the other Branches in an apolitical manner. Now its majority is infested with contagious Sociopathy. In just the last year (and weeks), they sociopathically overturned *Roe v. Wade* and severely undercut women's healthcare rights, ruled in favor of discrimination, and ruled against students struggling under the mountain of student debt, all while facing accusations of improper gifts, hypocrisy, and politicization, in other words, with contagious Sociopathy.

The U.S. Supreme Court

Many citizens and politicians criticize the Supreme Court as infested with "contagious sociopathy," with recent rulings that undermine women's rights and favor discrimination—allegations of improper conduct further fuel this characterization.

1. *Description of "Contagious Sociopathy":*

- *The term "contagious sociopathy" is applied to the Supreme Court, framing it as infested with sociopathic behavior that spreads among members and impacts their decisions.*
 - *This portrayal aligns with the earlier concept of "Contagious Sociopathy in Passive Enablers," suggesting that the Court's behavior may not only be isolated to individual justices but is a systemic issue affecting the majority.*
2. *Recent Rulings and Allegations:*
- *The passage explicitly calls on recent rulings that undermine women's rights and favor discrimination. The following decisions represent evidence of the alleged sociopathic tendencies.*
 - *Overturning Roe v. Wade and Undercutting Women's Healthcare Rights: These decisions are framed as a significant attack on women's autonomy and healthcare access, implying a lack of empathy and disregard for established rights and precedents.*
 - *Rulings Favoring Discrimination: The passage does not provide specific details about these rulings, but the characterization suggests decisions that may prioritize certain ideologies or interests over fairness and equality.*
 - *Allegations of Improper Conduct: This includes unspecified accusations of improper gifts, hypocrisy, and politicization. The allegations further fuel the characterization of the Court as behaving sociopathically, hinting at unethical behavior and a lack of accountability.*
3. *Overall Implication of Sociopathy within the Supreme Court:*
- *The passage paints a picture of a Court that has strayed from its constitutionally designed role as an independent, apolitical branch of government.*
 - *By employing the term "contagious sociopathy," the author emphasizes a perceived degradation of moral and ethical standards within the Court, suggesting a collective failure rather than individual lapses in judgment.*
 - *The highlighted rulings and allegations underline this characterization, presenting the Court as compromised and acting in ways that conflict with social empathy, legal norms, and ethical principles.*

In summary, the passage utilizes the concept of "contagious sociopathy" to criticize the U.S. Supreme Court, associating recent rulings and allegations of misconduct with a lack of moral conscience. Specific examples are employed building broader argument about the Court's deviation from its traditional role, painting a picture of systemic ethical decline.

The third group with contagious Sociopathy are the passive enablers of widespread acts of manipulation and cruelty ranging from long-serving, establishment leaders like Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY) to the throngs of people clad in Confederate flags and MAGA idolatry whose inaction and permissiveness serve as a large-scale petri dish by which contagious Sociopathy can flourish. It cannot go without mentioning that the processes of cultism are at play here as well.

Enablers of Sociopathy

The third form of Sociopathy includes those enabling manipulation and cruelty on a wide scale. The enablers include political leaders and groups that the author suggests serve as a breeding ground for "contagious sociopathy."

1. *Definition of the Third Form of Sociopathy:*
 - *The passage introduces the third form of Sociopathy, emphasizing those who enable or promote sociopathic behavior.*
 - *Unlike the first two forms that emphasize deep-seated characteristics or adopted behaviors, this third form emphasizes a more passive but significant role in fostering a particular mindset or conduct within a community or political group.*
2. *The Concept of "Contagious Sociopathy":*
 - *The term "contagious sociopathy" highlights the infectious nature of these behaviors, suggesting that they can spread among individuals and groups.*
 - *The author implies that the enablers create an environment or "breeding ground" that facilitates the spread of these tendencies, affecting not just individuals but entire communities or political movements.*
3. *Examples of Enablers:*
 - *Political Leaders: Individuals like Sen. Mitch McConnell are examples of those who may not necessarily exhibit sociopathic behavior themselves but enable it through their actions or inactions.*
 - *Groups and Supporters: This includes large-scale supporters and groups that endorse or fail to challenge sociopathic behaviors. Their collective behavior and permissiveness are a means by which sociopathic tendencies can proliferate.*
4. *Overall Implication of the Enablers of Sociopathy:*
 - *The passage underscores that Sociopathy is not just a matter of individual pathology or choice but can be a broader social phenomenon enabled by leaders, supporters, and a permissive environment.*
 - *The concept of contagious Sociopathy in this context provides a metaphorical link to how diseases spread, emphasizing these behaviors' pervasive and harmful nature.*
 - *By identifying and critiquing the enablers, the author draws attention to the collective responsibility and seemingly passive actors' role in shaping societal norms and behaviors.*

In summary, the passage about the "Enablers of Sociopathy" elaborates on the third form of public political/governmental Sociopathy. It emphasizes those who indirectly promote or tolerate sociopathic behavior, creating an environment where such conduct can spread and flourish. By highlighting this aspect, the author expands the understanding of Sociopathy beyond individual traits or decisions, illustrating it as a phenomenon with societal roots and implications.

The term I have been using – contagious Sociopathy – is not mutually exclusive from what we have been observing with the perversion of Christian thought to suit sociopathic behaviors and the rise of fascism in the U.S. (Ruth Ben-Ghiat has written extensively on the latter). In addition, and in no way trying to simplify or underestimate the factors underlying American racism, the racist platforms of the far right and GOP have provided a type of currency by which contagious Sociopathy can spread – many have argued that the ascension of Donald Trump allowed closeted racists to become public racists. Racism is a critical feature that includes the antisocial tendencies of demeaning, manipulating, and harming others without remorse.

Contagious Sociopathy and Other Phenomena

The author introduces the term "contagious sociopathy" to describe a phenomenon that includes perversion of religious thought, the rise of fascism in the U.S., and racial platforms that allow for the spread of these antisocial tendencies.

1. *Introduction of "Contagious Sociopathy":*
 - *The author coins the term "contagious sociopathy" to describe a phenomenon that goes beyond individual antisocial behavior.*
 - *It implies an infectious spread of sociopathic tendencies within a community or society, affecting individuals and collective thoughts and behaviors.*
2. *Linking Sociopathy with Religious Perversion:*
 - *The passage suggests that contagious Sociopathy can manifest as a perversion of religious thought.*
 - *Twisting religious principles to suit sociopathic behaviors indicate corruption or manipulation of faith justifying otherwise morally or ethically problematic actions.*
3. *Connection to the Rise of Fascism:*
 - *The author associates contagious Sociopathy with the rise of fascism in the U.S., indicating a concern with authoritarian tendencies and ideologies that suppress individual rights and freedoms.*
 - *This connection highlights how contagious Sociopathy might align with or fuel political movements prioritizing power and control over empathy, justice, or equality.*
4. *Role of Racial Platforms:*
 - *The passage argues that racist platforms and ideologies may serve as a "currency" that facilitates the spread of contagious Sociopathy.*
 - *Racial discrimination and prejudices intertwine with sociopathic tendencies, as both involve disregarding others' rights and well-being.*
 - *The author's mention of the ascension of Donald Trump as a catalyst for public racism implies that political leadership and rhetoric can play a role in normalizing or amplifying these harmful tendencies.*
5. *Overall Implications of Contagious Sociopathy:*
 - *The concept of contagious Sociopathy serves as a framework to explore various societal issues, from religious manipulation to political authoritarianism and racial injustice.*
 - *By linking these seemingly disparate phenomena under contagious Sociopathy, the author emphasizes a common thread of empathy deficit, manipulation, and harm that connects them.*
 - *It portrays a multifaceted problem not confined to individual pathology but deeply embedded in social structures, ideologies, and leadership.*

The passage about "Contagious Sociopathy and Other Phenomena" provides a rich and multifaceted exploration of how sociopathic tendencies might spread and manifest within various aspects of society. It links these tendencies with religious manipulation, political authoritarianism, and racial discrimination, illustrating a complex web of influences and outcomes contributing to the phenomenon's spread and impact.

One cannot talk about contagious Sociopathy without considering righteousness – a term describing the phenomenon by which malicious acts – including harming and killing others – are justified if the bad actor can consider the 'victims' to be an enemy. Victimization is a bedrock of the Trump and MAGA attacks on the Left and any criticizing or opposing them.

Righteousness and Conclusion

Finally, the author addresses the concept of "righteousness," where malicious acts are justified if the victims are considered enemies. This idea aligns with attacks on political opponents. The author concludes by emphasizing the severe concern that contagious sociopathy presents, as it embodies the worst of human behavior according to moral and societal norms.

1. Introduction of the Concept of "Righteousness":

- The author brings in the concept of "righteousness" against victims deemed enemies, describing a phenomenon where malicious acts are seen as justifiable or virtuous.*
- This concept can provide moral cover for reprehensible acts, as it frames them within a context as a necessary or even noble response to a perceived threat or evil.*

2. Connection to Political Attacks:

- The author explicitly links righteousness to political attacks against opponents vilified as enemies, to be defeated at any cost.*
- The connection to political attacks creates an environment where ordinary political discourse and disagreement become impossible, replaced by a combative stance where any means are justified to achieve political ends. Trump and MAGA's attacks on the Left illustrate the manifestation of righteousness in contemporary political struggles.*

3. Implications of Righteousness:

- The author suggests that righteousness can be a particularly insidious form of contagious Sociopathy, as it masks harmful behavior under a veneer of moral or ideological justification.*
- It reflects a broader concern about erasing empathy, compassion, and fairness within political and social interactions.*

4. Conclusion and Final Warning:

- The author concludes by reiterating the seriousness and urgency of the problem of contagious Sociopathy, emphasizing that it represents some of the worst aspects of human behavior.*
- By situating the problem within moral, legal, religious/spiritual, and societal norms, the author underscores the multifaceted nature of the challenge and appeals to a wide range of values and principles.*
- The conclusion serves as a call to action and reflection, urging readers to recognize and address this issue as a fundamental threat to the fabric of society.*

"Righteousness and Conclusion" addresses the troubling notion that malicious acts are righteous or justified if directed at perceived enemies. The concept is tied to political conflicts and warns about the potential erosion of basic human decency and empathy. The author's concluding

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remarks emphasize the severity of contagious Sociopathy and its alignment with the worst human behaviors according to various moral and societal standards, ending the argument with a resounding call for awareness and action.

I have written and said it before, and I will do so again: The contagious spread of Sociopathy has provided us with potential and actual leaders who embody the worst that humanity has to offer according to moral, legal, religious/spiritual, and societal norms and they continue to run on this platform.

Overall Analysis

The passage critically examines what the author perceives as a pervasive and damaging trend in American politics, linking clinical psychological terms with political behaviors and trends. By categorizing these behaviors as contagious Sociopathy, the author argues that certain political leaders and movements are not only embracing but also spreading destructive and immoral practices. Specific examples lace the text, and the author's tone is urgent and cautionary, suggesting a persistent dire situation.

1. Connection Between Clinical Psychology and Politics:

- *The author leverages clinical terms like "sociopathy" to describe political behaviors, bridging psychological concepts with political trends.*
- *The author seeks to frame political actions as strategic or ideological choices and manifestations of underlying antisocial tendencies.*
- *Medical terminology adds a sense of gravity and scientific legitimacy to the author's argument.*

2. Introduction of the Concept of Contagious Sociopathy:

- *By labeling the trend as "contagious sociopathy," the author conveys that these behaviors are not isolated but can spread through influence and example.*
- *The term "contagious" implies a disease-like spread, further emphasizing the urgency and danger of the situation.*
- *This framing (contagious Sociopathy) implicates the primary actors and those who enable or follow them, creating a broader societal problem.*

3. Use of Specific Examples:

- *The text includes various examples, from individual politicians to the Supreme Court, allowing the reader to see tangible manifestations of the phenomena the author describes.*
- *These examples ground the author's argument in real-world situations, adding credibility and immediate relevance.*

4. Urgent and Cautionary Tone:

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- *The author's tone is urgent and cautionary, reflecting a deep concern for the direction and state of American politics.*
- *The urgent tone conveys immediate attention and requires action to address the problem.*

5. *A Dire and Persistent Situation:*

- *The author paints a bleak picture of the current political landscape, suggesting the situation is severe and ongoing.*
- *By framing the issue as a pervasive and damaging trend, the author emphasizes the magnitude of the problem and its potential long-term impact on society.*

The final passage synthesizes the text's central themes, providing a critical examination of what the author sees as a deeply troubling trend in American politics. By connecting clinical psychological terms with political actions, categorizing them as contagious Sociopathy, and providing specific examples, the author crafts an urgent and cautionary argument. The tone and content reflect a warning about a dire situation that continues to persist, with implications for the moral and social fabric of the nation.