

## ABSTRACT

ZHU, XIANGHE. Daily Anticipatory Stress and Coping Across Adulthood During the 2018 U.S. Midterm Election. (Under the direction of Dr. Shevaun D. Neupert).

Elections have been associated with stress responses. Whereas previous research on election distress has focused on reacting to events that already happened, individuals may experience stress due to forecasting future stressors and respond to these forecasts by engaging in anticipatory coping processes. In addition, the levels of stress response associated with elections seem to vary for adults of different ages. The goal of the current study was to examine the within-person associations between daily stressors forecasting and negative affect in the context of an election, the effects of different anticipatory coping strategies, and age differences in these processes. As part of the 2018 U.S. Midterm ESCAPED (Election Stress Coping and Prevention Every Day) study (Smith & Neupert, 2021), 140 adults aged 19-86 ( $Mean = 35$ ,  $SD = 11.53$ ) in the U.S. were recruited for a 29-day daily diary study. Sixty-five (46%) of them self-identified as men, 73.7% had received four-year college education or higher; 77% self-identified as White and 16% self-identified as Black; 40% identified with the Democratic Party, 32% identified with the Republican Party, and 28% identified with a third party or did not identify with any political party. The participants provided a total of 1056 daily reports on days spanning October 15th – November 13th, with the midterm election day being November 6th, 2018. Results indicated that daily forecasts of election stressor contributed to daily negative affect experienced throughout the study days controlling for exposure, and that stagnantly dwelling on forecasted election stressors may exacerbate rather than reduce distress. No age differences were found with anticipatory stress response (i.e., forecasts-negative affect association) and the effects of anticipatory coping strategies, although the anticipatory stress response appeared to be more pronounced in individuals with a more conservative political ideology. Whether the null age

differences are reflective of meaningful age invariance remains to be examined in future research. However, understanding the experiences of distress due to expecting future stressors and how individuals are responding to this anticipatory stress may have unique implications for managing election stress in adulthood.

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Daily Anticipatory Stress and Coping Across Adulthood During the 2018 U.S. Midterm Election

by  
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## **BIOGRAPHY**

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## INTRODUCTION

Elections are important sociopolitical events, but they have also been linked to different levels of stress (e.g., Hoyt et al., 2018). Available evidence suggests that elections seem to influence adults of different ages differently (Weismel-Manor et al., 2011). Specifically, greater levels of election-related distress have been observed in younger adults compared to their older counterparts (Pitcho-Prelorentzos et al., 2018). These studies have a temporal focus on behavior *after* exposure to an election or specific stressors related to an election and found elevations in negative affect, mental health issues, and cortisol levels (Roche & Jacobson, 2019; Stanton et al., 2010). Another source of stress response is the anticipation of imminent stressors (Neupert et al., 2019), but anticipatory stress and its age-related differences has been underexamined in the context of elections. In addition, just as reactive coping may modify stress responses after exposure to events, anticipatory coping for forecasted stressors before they happen may function to modulate responses (Feldman & Hayes, 2005; Neupert et al., 2016). However, how adults of different ages anticipatorily cope with forecasted election stress and the effects of such anticipatory coping are largely unknown. Because stress and coping are processes that unfold within individuals, a within-person approach and a micro longitudinal study design are ideal for capturing these dynamics. The present study seeks to examine election-related anticipatory stress and coping within an adult lifespan sample in the context of the 2018 U.S. midterm election. Age-differences in these processes are also examined.

### **Stressor forecasting and anticipatory stress responses**

#### *The context of elections*

The ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) suggests that individuals are embedded in nested ecological systems that influence development, of which the macrosystem

refers to the sociocultural and political systems in which people live. In line with this conceptual framework, elections and other sociopolitical events have been shown to have influences on individuals' biopsychosocial adaptation and well-being. For example, adults (ages 18-90) perceive exposure to and participation in politics to have detrimental effects on interpersonal relationships, emotional well-being, and physical health (Smith et al., 2019). Increases in daily negative affect, mental health issues, and sleep problems were found in college students following the 2016 U.S. presidential election (Rocke & Jacobson, 2019). Concrete election-related experiences such as voting and hearing the results are associated with elevations in cortisol levels (Weismel-Manor et al., 2011; Stanton et al., 2010). In addition to these more direct influences, elections also appear to exert their influences by modulating how people function within more proximal systems formulated in Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological model such as the microsystem (e.g., family) embedded in the macrosystem. For example, the 2016 U.S. presidential election was associated with U.S. adults' increased emotional reactivity to routine stressors in their daily life such as home and work stressors (Neupert et al., 2019).

Whereas responses *after* event exposure are the focus of most previous studies on election stress, distress may also arise in the temporal space *before* a stressor occurs. *Stressor forecasting* is the anticipation that a stressor is likely to occur in a defined future period of time (Neubauer et al., 2018). For example, individuals may expect to see an election-related campaign advertisement that makes them feel unpleasant or have an argument with others who hold opposite political views within the next hour or day. Stressor forecasting can result in consequences for functioning and well-being defined as *anticipatory stress responses* (Scott et al., 2019). According to a conceptual framework proposed by Neupert and colleagues (2019), anticipatory stress responses associated with stressor forecasting can be similar to stress

responses associated with stressor occurrence or exposure. For example, anticipating stressful events that are certain or likely to happen has been associated with elevations in negative affect (Neubauer et al., 2018; Neupert & Bellinger, 2019; Scott et al., 2019) and cortisol levels (Lacey et al., 2000).

Anticipatory stress processes associated with sociopolitical events were widely implicated in previous research, although they were either not directly assessed or not studied under such terms. For example, a national survey showed that 69 percent of U.S. adolescents and adults identified concerns about the future of the nation as a significant source of stress (American Psychological Association, 2018). Scheibe and colleagues (2011) examined forecasted affective response in adults (ages 20-80) to the 2008 U.S. presidential election and found that those forecasts were generally consistent with actual responses measured following the election. During the 2016 U.S. presidential election, distress arising from anticipating what is likely to happen in the future was evident in adolescents and young adults who were asked to provide emotional responses to the election (e.g., “I’m worried that [xenophobia] will continue to escalate after the election”; “I am scared honestly, I don’t know what is going to happen”; DeJonckheere et al., 2018, p. 2). Another study about the same election also suggested that adults (ages 18-30) do not only react to what has already happened but also have anticipations about future stressors (e.g., “... this election will affect laws not only for my health rights but also create even more tension for minorities in everyday life.”; Tashjian & Galvan, 2018, p. 2889). Altogether, these studies suggest that the anticipation of election-related stressors is a non-negligible source of distress and that such distress may permeate daily life. Investigating the forecasting of election stressors will thus help elucidate its impact on daily well-being over and above stressor exposure.

### *Age-related differences*

The question of age differences in the levels of stress response is a complex and highly debated one. The Strength and Vulnerability Integration model (SAVI; Charles, 2010) suggests that age-related strengths mainly manifest as avoiding or limiting exposure to stressors to maintain emotional well-being, but for stressors that are impossible or difficult to avoid, older age is associated with greater stress responses due to age-related decreases in physiological flexibility. However, it is not clear based on this framework at the *anticipation* phase (i.e., even before a decision or action of avoidance is made) what prediction about age differences might be made. Empirical evidence with respect to age differences in anticipatory stress has also been mixed. For example, previous forecasting of domain-general stressors (i.e., anything the participants perceive as stressful) was associated with greater current negative affect (i.e., indicating anticipatory stress response), but *no* age differences were found for this anticipatory stress response (Scott et al., 2019). Forecasting home stressors was associated with increased negative affect the next day, yet such forecasting appeared to be more helpful for young adults than for older adults in buffering emotional reactivity when a home stressor occurs (Neupert & Bellingtier, 2019).

In the context of sociopolitical events, age differences in the levels of psychological distress have been observed. For example, in Smith and colleagues' (2019) study mentioned above, younger age was associated with greater perceived costs of political participation on interpersonal, affective, and physical well-being. In a sample of Israeli voters (age range = 20-84), younger age was associated with higher levels of negative affect on a national election day (Waismel-Manor et al., 2011). Similarly, greater psychological distress (Pitcho-Prelorentzos et al., 2018) and elevations in interpersonal tension (McCarthy et al., 2019) associated with the

2016 U.S. presidential election were found in younger U.S. adults compared to their older counterparts. Around the time of that same election, there were also increases in cardiovascular disease hospitalization, but the size of the increases was similar across age (age range 18-75+; Mefford et al. 2020). Together, although some studies did not examine or find age-related differences in certain outcomes, existent evidence on psychosocial adjustment outcomes generally indicates greater election distress in *younger* compared with older individuals. Possible explanations for such a general pattern have been provided. For example, younger adults' tendency to support candidates who did not prevail may result in more negative mood and interpersonal strain, and some of them may have actively experienced only one presidential administration and thus felt more disturbed by an election relative to their older counterparts who had experienced more sociopolitical changes (McCarthy & Saks, 2019; Harvard Institute of Politics, 2019; Khazan, 2017). These suggest that other between-person differences factors, such as political inclination and global or baseline election stress and anxiety, are important to consider when making age-related inferences.

Due to the mixed evidence, I consider two alternative ways of predicting age differences in anticipatory election stress. On the one hand, the generally lower election distress in older individuals associated with experience may result in a higher threshold for perceiving an election-related event as stressful, and therefore when they do forecast an upcoming stressor it may be more salient and impactful. On the other hand, although the stressors older individuals forecast may be more severe, they may still have been more desensitized to election distress due to repeated exposure in the past, whereas younger individuals with relatively less experience with elections may be more sensitive and reactive to stressor exposure or forecasts. In particular, because stressor forecasting can function similarly to exposure in terms of impact (Neupert et al.,

2019), younger individuals who tend to experience greater election stress in response to exposure may also experience greater anticipatory stress in response to forecasted stressors.

### *Negative affect as the outcome*

Negative affect (NA) is an important indicator of mental health and well-being in the context of elections (e.g., Rocke & Jacobson, 2019) and a common outcome variable of interest for both reactive (e.g., Almeida, 2005) and anticipatory stress responses (e.g., Scott et al., 2019). Following this convention, the emotional aspect of anticipatory stress responses, operationalized as the within-person association between stressor forecasting and NA (Scott et al., 2019), is the focus of the present study.

### **Anticipatory coping strategies and their effects**

If age or age-related experience and baseline distress level are considered distal correlates of anticipatory election stress, how people prepare for anticipated stressors may have more direct influences on affect or may modulate anticipatory stress. Coping that is used to prepare for the consequence of future, imminent stressors is defined as *anticipatory coping*, in contrast to reactive coping that results from and targets stressors that already occurred (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). Four specific forms of mental behavior in the anticipatory coping process have been identified (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1997; Feldman & Hayes, 2005). Specifically, *outcome fantasy* involves responding to a predicted stressor by daydreaming or fantasizing desired outcomes. *Stagnant deliberation* involves dwelling on the upcoming stressful event or problem without finding any solutions. *Problem analysis* involves thinking about the causes and meaning of the forecasted stressor, and *plan rehearsal* involves thinking about the steps needed to solve the problem anticipated to occur. From a between-person perspective (i.e., comparing people cross-sectionally), problem analysis and plan rehearsal were considered more adaptive because they

are associated with moving towards solutions and ameliorating stress responses, whereas outcome fantasy and stagnant deliberation were considered maladaptive as they may maintain or exacerbate negative mood (Feldman & Hayes, 2005). However, to examine the effects of coping processes, a *within-person, contextually embedded*, approach involving repeated assessments within the same individuals is needed (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985).

Previous studies examining anticipatory coping from a within-person perspective suggest that the effects of the anticipatory coping strategies are context- and domain-specific (Neupert & Bellingtier, 2019; Neupert et al., 2016). For example, stagnant deliberation was found to be protective against cognitive reactivity (operationalized as the association between stressor exposure and the number of memory failures) to interpersonal stressors in older adults' daily life (Neupert et al., 2016). This contrasts with previous findings about the adaptiveness of the strategies based on a between-person design (Feldman & Hayes, 2005) and highlights the dynamic and contextual aspect of anticipatory coping. Because the study only included older adults, it also suggests that possible age-related differences should be considered when evaluating the effects of these strategies. Age differences are often discussed in terms of problem- and emotion-focused coping in the literature on *reactive coping* (i.e., coping after a stressor has occurred). Problem-focused coping that involves managing the problems and finding solutions is often considered more adaptive and is positively associated with better health and well-being, whereas emotion-focused coping that focuses on optimizing one's subjective feeling has been regarded as less productive and associated with negative outcomes such as problematic drinking behavior (e.g., Chen et al., 2018). Nonetheless, the effects of coping strategies go beyond the dichotomy of good versus bad, particularly when a lifespan developmental perspective is considered. Older age has been associated with less use of problem-focused coping

strategies (e.g., Blanchard-Fields, 2007) explained by age-related increases in physiological vulnerabilities (Charles & Luong, 2013) and strategic decisions to disengage from the stressors to facilitate emotion regulation (Blanchard-Fields et al., 1997). With respect to *anticipatory* coping, Neupert and Bellingtier's (2019) daily diary study found no age differences in the use of problem analysis and plan rehearsal (both focusing on the problems and solutions) for forecasted stressors across domains (e.g., home, work, and interpersonal stressors). However, older adults were less likely than younger adults to use avoidant strategies such as outcome fantasy and stagnant deliberation for forecasted interpersonal stressors as well as outcome fantasy for stressors anticipated to occur at home or to their network, and stagnant deliberation appeared to be maladaptive (associated with increased emotion reactivity to home stressors) for younger but not older adults (Neupert & Bellingtier, 2019). One conclusion therefore can be drawn is that the effects of the anticipatory coping strategies within individuals may not be consistent with Feldman and Hayes' (2005) cross-sectional findings, and the effects and age-differences in the effects may be more fruitfully investigated in a context-specific manner (Neupert & Bellingtier, 2019).

In the context of an election as an event at the macrosystem level, stressors can be characterized by relatively low controllability at the individual level. For example, the results of an election may not be controllable by any single individual (Stanton et al., 2010; DeJonckheere et al., 2018). Both problem analysis and plan rehearsal involve a focus on exerting control over a stressor or problem itself with respect to its cause and solutions, but such an expectation for control may be maladaptive when individuals do not have complete control over events (Lachman & Weaver, 1998). Therefore, there are reasons to suspect that problem analysis (e.g., trying to analyze why one party is winning over the other) and plan rehearsal (e.g., making a plan

to avoid exposure to the omnipresent news) may not be superior for coping with election stress compared to disengaged processes such as outcome fantasy that does not focus on actively seeking control over the events. In particular, due to age-related decreases in coping resources and preferences for disengaged coping (Charles & Luong, 2013; Blanchard-Fields et al., 1997), it seems reasonable to expect engaged, problem-focused processes of problem analysis and plan rehearsal to be less efficient and helpful with advancing age. In a similar vein, stagnantly dwelling on upcoming stressors about an election that one does not have complete control over may function to maintain or even exacerbate distress. Relatedly, intrusive thoughts were found to moderate anticipatory stress response, such that stressor anticipation was more strongly associated with NA when there were more intrusive thoughts (Neubauer et al. 2018). Although intrusive thoughts may be more disruptive than stagnant deliberation, both capture the unproductive thinking processes about upcoming stressors. It seems reasonable to predict that stagnant deliberation would be associated with elevated anticipatory stress response regardless of age. Fantasizing about desired outcomes may serve the purpose of protecting emotional well-being in the context that individuals do not have complete control over elections, it is plausible that outcome fantasy may serve to buffer anticipatory stress particularly in older individuals who tend to prioritize emotion-focused, disengaged coping.

### **PRESENT STUDY**

Shifting the temporal focus of previous electoral studies on reactive stress and coping, the present study aims to examine stressor forecasting, anticipatory stress response and coping, and age differences in these processes in the context of the 2018 U.S. midterm election. Midterm elections in the U.S. are held at the midpoint of a presidential term, often serving as a referendum on the performance of the administration. The midterm elections take place every four years.

Unlike presidential elections that determine who becomes the president, midterm elections involve the election of members of the Congress who represented the voters' states as well as some state and local officials. Therefore, midterm elections likely determine a more proximal level of representation for people and have more direct influences on people's day to day life. The 2018 midterm election occurred during the term of office of Donald Trump, who was a Republican candidate elected to be the President in the 2016 presidential election. Seats in the Congress were contested between two dominant parties: The Republican Party, associated with a more conservative ideology, and the Democratic Party, associated with a more liberal ideology. The Democratic Party consistently led the Republican Party in national polls throughout the campaign for the 2018 midterm election, and the election also featured the highest voter turnout (53.4%, an increase of 11% from the 2014 midterm election) among midterm elections in 40 years (Misra, 2019). For the purposes of the current study, there are no a priori hypotheses specific to this election and the focus is instead on *within-person* processes about responding to and coping with personally forecasted stressors.

**Aim 1:** To examine daily anticipatory election stress responses, that is, the unique influence of the forecasting of daily election stressors on daily NA over and above election exposure. I predict that forecasting will be positively associated with daily NA.

**Aim 2:** To examine age-related differences in anticipatory election stress responses. I hypothesize that greater anticipatory stress responses (i.e., stronger association between stressor forecasting and NA) will be observed in younger compared to older individuals. As an auxiliary aim, I also examine the potential moderating role of baseline election distress and political ideology because they might help explain age-related differences (when they are found) as the above reviewed literature indicates or play distinct roles beyond age.

**Aim 3:** To examine the effects of different anticipatory coping strategies. Their benefits (or costs) are evaluated in terms of both *main effects* - negative (or positive) associations with NA - and *moderating effects* on anticipatory stress. I predict that the effects of problem analysis, plan rehearsal, and outcome fantasy will be moderated by age, such that problem analysis and plan rehearsal will be less beneficial for older compared to younger individuals, and that outcome fantasy will be more beneficial for older individuals. Finally, I predict that stagnant deliberation will be costly regardless of age.

## METHOD

### Participants

Participants were part of the 2018 U.S. midterm ESCAPED (Election Stress Coping and Prevention Every Day) study (Smith & Neupert, 2021) and were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (mTurk). One hundred forty adults ages 19-86 ( $M = 35$ ,  $SD = 11.32$ ; Skewness = 1.57,  $SE = .21$ ; Kurtosis = 2.98,  $SE = .41$ ) in the U.S. were recruited for this daily diary study. Demographic information about the participants is presented in Table 1. The participants provided a total of 1056 daily reports.

### Procedure

The midterm election day was November 6th, 2018 and the study was conducted from October 15th - November 13th, 2018. Recruitment on mTurk involved posting a Human Intelligence Task (HIT) with basic information about the study. When interested participants clicked the link to the survey, they were redirected to Qualtrics, an online survey platform. They were presented with an informed consent form approved by the Institutional Review Board of North Carolina State University. Participants who consented advanced to the measures portion. On the first study day, participants completed a baseline survey asking about their demographic

information, political ideology, party identification, personality, and other information not analyzed in the current study such as adverse childhood experiences. They were then invited to complete one daily survey per day for the subsequent 29 days. The daily surveys included measures of daily affect, daily stressor forecasting and anticipatory coping with respect to the 2018 U.S. midterm election, and other information not analyzed in the current study such as daily memory failures. Participants were compensated \$1.00 for each day they completed a survey.

## **Measures**

**Daily negative affect (NA)** was measured using the 5-item subscale of the 10-item version of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson et al., 1988). Participants were asked, “Thinking about yourself and how you felt TODAY, to what extent did you feel: \_\_\_ (followed by an adjective)?” Responses were provided on a scale of 1 (“Not at all”) to 5 (“Extremely”). The adjectives for NA were upset, hostile, ashamed, nervous, and afraid. A mean score for the five items was created with a higher score indicating greater NA on a particular day (within-person reliability estimate = .73; Scott et al., 2020).

**Daily election stressor forecasting** was assessed with the question “How likely is it that you will experience stress related to the midterm election within the next 24 hours?” Responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale of 1 (Not at all likely) to 5 (Extremely likely). Higher scores indicated a greater degree of forecasting of election-related stressors to happen the following day.

**Daily anticipatory coping with forecasted election stressors** was measured using an adapted version of the Measure of Mental Anticipatory Processes (Feldman & Hayes, 2005). The original measure was adapted to assess coping strategies on a daily basis and used in previous

studies (Neupert & Bellingtier, 2019; Neupert et al., 2016). On each day, participants were asked “When you think about the potential stressful experience related to the midterm election, how often do you: \_\_\_ (followed by a specific item)?” There was a total of 15 items representing the four factors of anticipatory mental processes. Problem analysis included 5 items (e.g., “I think about why the problem is happening”; within-person reliability estimate = .63; Scott et al., 2020). Plan rehearsal contained 3 items (e.g., “I think about the solution in a step-by-step fashion”; within-person reliability estimate = .64; Scott et al., 2020). Stagnant deliberation contained 5 items (e.g., “I think about the problem without making progress on it”; within-person reliability estimate = .71; Scott et al., 2020). Outcome fantasy contained 2 items (e.g., “I daydream about the problem fixing itself”; within-person reliability estimate = .57; Scott et al., 2020). Responses were provided on a scale of 1 (“Never”) to 5 (“Always”). A daily mean composite score was created for each of the four factors with a higher score indicating a more frequent use of the respective strategy.

**Chronological age** is a continuous variable in the current study and was measured at baseline Day 1 survey.

**Covariates.** Daily exposure to the midterm election was assessed with a measure adapted from Frost and Fingerhut’s (2016) measure of exposure to the same-sex marriage campaign. Participants were asked if they had any of 10 types of exposure (e.g., “saw television report(s) about the midterm election” or “saw signage regarding the midterm election”) to the 2018 U.S. midterm election within the last 24 hours. Participants were asked to select “Yes” or “No” for each item, and a sum score representing the total number of “yes” responses was computed with a higher score indicating greater exposure. Baseline election stress was assessed with the perceived impact of the 2016 U.S. presidential election, the national election that preceded the

2018 U.S. midterm election. This was measured with the question “Thinking back to the last presidential election, to what extent did that election affect your well-being?” answered on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (a great deal). In addition, political ideology and trait neuroticism (associated with between-person differences in exposure and responses to stressors; Bolger & Schilling, 1991) measured at baseline were also included as person-level covariates (see Supplementary Table S1 footnote for their measurement).

### **ANALYTIC APPROACH**

Two-level Multilevel Modeling (MLM; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) was used primarily because of the nested structure of the data (days nested within persons). Level 1 is the day level, and Level 2 is the person level. A null model with no predictors was conducted to ensure significant variance in the dependent variable negative affect at both levels before proceeding to primary analyses.

Stressor forecasting and anticipatory coping were person mean centered by including the person means as person level (Level 2) covariates in all MLMs to account for the between-person differences in the mean levels of election stressor forecasting and anticipatory coping. Age, impact of the previous presidential election, political ideology, and trait neuroticism were grand mean centered by subtracting the grand means from each of the variables. Controlling for linear and quadratic times (study days) did not affect the pattern of any results, so they were not included in the final models for parsimony. Simplified versions of the equations (without all the covariates) are presented below for Aim 1 (Equations 1-3), Aim 2 (Equations 4-6), and Aim 3 (Equations 7-11).

Take Aim 2 equations (4-6) for example,  $\beta_{0i}$  can be interpreted as an individual’s level of negative affect (NA) on days when stressor forecasting is at his/her own mean level, and  $\beta_{1i}$

represents changes in NA associated with an individual's changes in forecasting (i.e., anticipatory stress response). The fixed effect  $\gamma_{01}$  represents the main effect of age on the mean levels of NA across study days. The fixed effect  $\gamma_{10}$  represents the average *anticipatory stress response slope* in the sample, while  $\gamma_{11}$  represents individual differences around the slope that can be explained by age, functioning as a cross-level interaction.  $r_{ij}$  and  $u_{0j}$ - $u_{3j}$  are residual terms.

### Aim 1

Level 1:

$$NA = \beta_{0i} + \beta_{1i} (\text{Forecasts}) + r_{ij} \quad (1)$$

Level 2:

$$\beta_{0i} = \gamma_{00} + u_{0j} \quad (2)$$

$$\beta_{1i} = \gamma_{10} \quad (3)$$

### Aim 2

Level 1:

$$NA = \beta_{0i} + \beta_{1i} (\text{Forecasts}) + r_{ij} \quad (4)$$

Level 2:

$$\beta_{0i} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} (\text{Age}) + u_{0j} \quad (5)$$

$$\beta_{1i} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11} (\text{Age}) \quad (6)$$

### Aim 3

Level 1:

$$NA = \beta_{0i} + \beta_{1i} (\text{Forecasts}) + \beta_{2i} (\text{Coping}) + \beta_{3i} (\text{Coping X Forecasts}) + r_{ij} \quad (7)$$

Level 2:

$$\beta_{0i} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} (\text{Age}) + u_{0j} \quad (8)$$

$$\beta_{1i} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11} (\text{Age}) \quad (9)$$

$$\beta_{2i} = \gamma_{20} + \gamma_{21} (\text{Age}) \quad (10)$$

$$\beta_{3i} = \gamma_{30} + \gamma_{31} (\text{Age}) \quad (11)$$

## RESULTS

### Preliminary analyses

Descriptive statistics of main variables of interest are displayed in Table 1. Details about other person level covariates (e.g., neuroticism) are presented in Supplementary Table S1.

Table 1  
*Descriptive Statistics of Demographic and Person Mean Variables*

Variable	M (SD/%)	Range
Age	35 (11.53)	19-86
Gender		
Men	76 (54%)	--
Women	64 (46%)	--
Race		
White	108 (77.14%)	--
Black	16 (11.43%)	--
Asian	10 (7.14%)	--
Native American	6 (4.29%)	--
Education		
High school or lower	10 (7.14%)	--
Some college	39 (27.86%)	--
Four-year college or higher	91 (65%)	--
Party identification		
Democrats	60 (43%)	--
Republican	48 (34%)	--
Third Party	3 (2%)	--
Not identified	29 (21%)	--
Political ideology	3.42 (1.60)	1 (Liberal) – 6 (Conservative)
Person mean forecasts	2.41 (1.11)	1.00-5.00
Person mean outcome fantasy	2.90 (1.26)	1.00-5.00
Person mean stagnant deliberation	2.55 (1.11)	1.00-4.86
Person mean problem analysis	3.10 (0.95)	1.00-4.95
Person mean plan rehearsal	2.75 (1.13)	1.00-4.93
Person mean negative affect (NA)	1.82 (0.98)	1.00-4.80
Person mean election exposure	4.21 (2.80)	0-10

*Note.* Age = uncentered chronological age measured on Day 1. Gender: Other response options were included but they were not chosen. The options were “Transgender”, “Gender variant”, and “Other”. Race: Other response options that were not endorsed include “Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander” and “Other (please specify)”. Party identification: “Not identified” = Do not identify with any political party.

Results of null model showed that there was significant variance at both between- and within-person levels for the outcome variable NA: 17% ( $\sigma^2 = 0.18$ ,  $z = 21.85$ ,  $p < .0001$ ) of the variance was within people, and 83% ( $\tau_{00} = 0.87$ ,  $z = 6.04$ ,  $p < .0001$ ) variance was between people. Sufficient variance in NA at both levels permitted the conditional models for Aim 1-3 to be run. Significant between- and within-person variance was also found for election stressor forecasting and the four anticipatory coping strategies (Supplementary Table S2).

Table 2  
*Multilevel Model Predicting Negative Affect from Election Stress Forecasting and Age*

Variable		B coefficient	SE	p value
Fixed effects				
Intercept		0.13	0.15	.39
Daily forecasts		0.04	0.02	.03
Age		-0.01	0.01	.06
Age X Daily forecasts		0.002	0.002	.20
Daily exposure		-0.001	0.01	.87
Person mean forecasts		0.65	0.06	<.0001
Random effects (variance components)				
Level 1	Residual (within-person)	0.16	0.01	<.0001
Level 2	Intercept (between-person)	0.24	0.05	<.0001
$R^2$ Level 1		62%		
$R^2$ Level 2		72%		

*Note.* Daily forecasts = daily forecasts of midterm election stress (higher score=higher forecasted likelihood of experiencing midterm election stress). Age was a continuous variable and was centered at 35 years old. Age X Daily forecasts = Interaction between age and daily forecasts. Daily exposure = daily election exposure (higher score=greater exposure). Outcome variable = daily negative affect [NA] (higher score=higher NA).

### **Aim 1 & 2: Anticipatory Election Stress and Age differences**

Models for Aim 1 and 2 were run with the difference being the addition of age as a moderator in the Aim 2 model. Including the interaction term did not change the pattern of results, so results of the Aim 2 model are presented in Table 2. Controlling for daily midterm

election exposure, daily election stressor forecasting was positively associated with daily NA (Table 2). There was no interaction between age and daily forecasting.

Post-hoc analyses were conducted to examine if baseline election distress (assessed with the impact of the 2016 presidential election), political ideology, or trait neuroticism would moderate anticipatory stress response. Results showed a moderation of political ideology (Supplementary Table S3), such that daily anticipatory stress responses were more pronounced in individuals who rated themselves as more conservative relative to individuals who rated themselves as more liberal (Supplementary Figure S1).

### **Aim 3: Effects of Anticipatory Coping and Age differences**

First, a model with anticipatory coping strategies as predictors of NA was run. Results of this model are presented in Table 3. Controlling for daily midterm election exposure, daily election stressor forecasting, and daily use of the other three strategies, daily *stagnant deliberation* was positively associated with daily NA. This suggests that on days when participants had increased stagnant deliberation above their own person mean, they also had higher NA. Person mean stagnant deliberation was positively associated with mean NA. There was no interaction between age and any of the anticipatory coping strategies. The positive association between daily forecasting and daily NA remained. Details about other person level covariates are shown in Supplementary Table S4.

Second, a model with anticipatory coping as moderators was also run. There was no Coping X Forecasts interaction in predicting NA (i.e., no anticipatory coping strategies moderated anticipatory stress response), and there were no Age X Coping X Forecasts three-way interactions. Results of this model along with details about other person level covariates are displayed in Supplementary Table S5.

Table 3

*Multilevel Model Predicting Negative Affect from Anticipatory Coping and Age*

Variable	B coefficient	SE	p value	
Fixed effects				
Intercept	0.27	0.24	.28	
Daily outcome fantasy	0.002	0.02	.91	
Daily stagnant deliberation	0.08	0.03	.008	
Daily problem analysis	0.02	0.03	.47	
Daily plan rehearsal	-0.01	0.02	.63	
Age	-0.02	0.01	.19	
Age X Daily outcome fantasy	0.0004	0.002	.81	
Age X Daily stagnant deliberation	-0.004	0.002	.11	
Age X Daily problem analysis	0.0004	0.002	.85	
Age X Daily plan rehearsal	0.002	0.002	.21	
Mean outcome fantasy	0.07	0.10	.46	
Mean stagnant deliberation	0.34	0.12	.007	
Mean problem analysis	-0.13	0.14	.36	
Mean plan rehearsal	0.17	0.13	.17	
Daily exposure	-0.001	0.01	.93	
Daily forecasts	0.04	0.02	.04	
Random effects (variance components)				
Level 1	Residual (within-person)	0.16	0.01	<.0001
Level 2	Intercept (between-person)	0.34	0.07	<.0001
$R^2$ Level 1	52%			
$R^2$ Level 2	61%			

*Note.* Daily fantasy to Daily rehearsal = daily frequency of outcome fantasy, stagnant deliberation, problem analysis, and plan rehearsal, respectively (higher score=used the strategy more often). Age was a continuous variable centered at 35 years old. Age X Daily fantasy to Age X Daily rehearsal = interaction between age and each of the four anticipatory coping strategies, respectively. Mean fantasy to Mean rehearsal = person mean of each of the four strategies (higher score=used the strategy more often). Daily exposure = daily midterm election exposure (higher score=greater exposure). Daily forecasts = daily forecasts of midterm election stress (higher score=higher forecasted likelihood of experiencing midterm election stress). Outcome variable = daily negative affect [NA] (higher score=higher NA).

Possible multicollinearity among the 4 coping strategies was checked by conducting 6 MLMs predicting each strategy from the others. Results showed that all four strategies are correlated at the day level: outcome fantasy ( $\gamma = 0.29, p < .001, R^2 = 36\%$ ), problem analysis ( $\gamma = 0.34, p < .001, R^2 = 20\%$ ), and plan rehearsal ( $\gamma = 0.23, p < .001, R^2 = 20\%$ ) are associated with

stagnant deliberation, problem analysis ( $\gamma = 0.44, p < .001, R^2 = 20\%$ ) and plan rehearsal ( $\gamma = 0.25, p < .001, R^2 = 10\%$ ) are associated with outcome fantasy, and problem analysis can be predicted by plan rehearsal ( $\gamma = 0.42, p < .001, R^2 = 43\%$ ). However, there is unique variance in each strategy that was not captured by the others.

## DISCUSSION

Using a daily diary design, the goal of the current study was to examine daily anticipatory stress and coping with respect to the 2018 U.S. midterm election and age-related differences in these processes within a U.S. adult lifespan sample. Daily anticipatory stress responses (i.e., forecasting-NA association) over a period of 29 days surrounding the election were observed, but there were no age differences in these responses. Daily stagnant deliberation about forecasted election stressors was associated with increased NA over and above stressor exposure and forecasting. No main or moderating effects were found for the other anticipatory coping strategies, nor were there age differences in the influences of any anticipatory coping strategies.

Supporting the hypothesis for Aim 1 (i.e., anticipatory stress response), on days when individuals had increased forecasts of election stressors for the next day, they also experienced increased levels of NA. This is the first empirical evidence of anticipatory stress response with respect to an election based on the operationalizations established in the anticipatory stress literature, adding empirical support for the conceptual model of anticipatory stress (Neupert et al., 2019) which indicates that anticipating future stressors is associated with stress responses as stressor exposure is. Particularly, the current results extend previous findings with domain-general everyday stressors (Scott et al., 2019; Hyun et al., 2018) to the specific context of a political election. This likely indicates the potential utility of zooming in on the day-to-day

experiences of anticipatory stress for the understanding of global distress associated with elections often reported by people.

Results did not support the predicted age differences in anticipatory election stress response (Aim 2). Although likely due to the sample being skewed toward the younger side, this result is consistent with previous findings of null age effects with domain-general daily anticipatory stress (Scott et al., 2019; Hyun et al., 2018). Null age effects for stress responses have been commonly reported. For example, a coordinated analysis of seven individual studies on emotional reactivity to daily stressors (i.e., stressor-affect association) revealed age differences in two studies only, with older age being associated with decreased reactivity (Stawski et al., 2019). While it is possible that the lack of age differences in the present study represents meaningful age-invariance in anticipatory stress for the midterm election, this remains to be tested in future research with a more age-heterogeneous sample. Previous research showed that controlling for global perceived stress (GPS) eliminated age differences in emotional reactivity to daily stressors (Scott et al., 2013). In the current study, baseline election distress (assessed through how much participants' well-being had been impacted by the previous presidential election) did not show a moderating effect, but it remains to be examined with a more comprehensive measure for future research. Not surprisingly, political ideology had a moderating effect, such that anticipatory stress responses appeared to be more pronounced in individuals self-rated as more conservative (relative to liberal). Although not a focus of the current study, this pattern is generally consistent with previous findings that supporters of the party losing support tend to experience greater stress response (e.g., Stanton et al., 2010). Together, it appears that anticipatory stress in this election did not significantly depend on age

but is modulated by political ideology that may be more closely associated with subjective appraisals of election stressors.

Supporting Aim 3 predictions, a main effect of daily stagnant deliberation was found for NA: on days when individuals had increased stagnant deliberation, they also experienced increased levels of NA. Although this is a within-person association and is not directly comparable to Feldman and Hayes' (2005) between-person findings, the direction of effect is consistent with their finding that stagnant deliberation was associated with greater worry, anxiety, and depression, adding support for the view of this strategy as unproductive. A main but not moderating effect suggests that stagnant deliberation may directly contribute to distress rather than modulate forecasting–NA association. Particularly, the negative effect of stagnant deliberation was additive over and above exposure and forecasting, extending previous finding showing additive effect of forecasting beyond exposure (Scott et al., 2019). Consistent with this direction of effect was the between-person finding: the main effect of *person mean* stagnant deliberation suggest that individuals who engaged in stagnant deliberation more often than others across study days also experienced higher NA on average, again consistent with Feldman and Hayes' (2005) findings. Together, the converging evidence across levels of analysis (i.e., at both the between- and within-person levels) indicates that by engaging in stagnant thinking about upcoming election stressors, people may lend themselves to greater rather than lower stress both when being compared to themselves and to other people. Being aware of the elevated distress when dwelling on election stressors may be critical for individuals in managing election stress, as these NA increases may build up over time and contribute to more prolonged stress. Outcome fantasy did not show any effects like stagnant deliberation, but this likely suggests its distinctiveness from stagnant deliberation. Although both were considered to contribute to

negative mood from a between-person perspective (Feldman & Hayes, 2005), outcome fantasy did not appear to exacerbate negative affect across the days surrounding of the election or elevate anticipatory stress response when individuals forecast election stressors. Likewise, problem analysis and plan rehearsal did not appear to be maladaptive as predicted. Although the null findings might be partially due to the four strategies being correlated with each other within person, it is also possible that the feeling of being stuck associated with fruitless rumination about election stressors that makes stagnant deliberation more distressing than analyzing the problem, coming up with a plan, or fantasizing about desired outcomes. No support was found for the hypothesized age differences in the effects of the anticipatory coping strategies, but the determination of this being reflective of meaningful age invariance remains a future direction.

In this study, the 2018 U.S. midterm election was leveraged as one example event associated with the sociopolitical system in which developing individuals, families, and communities are embedded. It may differ from the context of daily stressors from which many inferences about age differences in reactivity have been made, for the election may bring large-scale sociopolitical changes whereas the latter focuses on more routine like daily hassles in more proximal systems (e.g., home and work). In addition, timing remains to be an important factor to consider when conceptualizing age differences in stress response. Although generally lower election stress associated with advancing age may be reflective of strengths in experience (McCarthy & Saks, 2019) or in avoiding or limiting new exposure (Charles, 2010), it is possible that the anticipation of upcoming election stressors may be equally stressful for adults of all ages. Lastly, during time of uncertainty and stress, feeling stuck and being stagnant are normal. However, our findings suggest that dwelling on anticipated election stressors may exacerbate within-person daily elevations in psychological distress over and above stressor exposure and

forecasting, and resources and strategies that help people step out of the stagnant dwelling may be crucial for maintaining well-being during an election and probably beyond.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

This study has several strengths. A critical macrosystem event was leveraged to capture individuals' response while the event was in process. The study extends anticipatory stress and coping literature as well as election distress research. The daily diary design serves to capture day-to-day anticipatory stress and coping dynamics within individuals. There are also limitations with the study. An age heterogeneous sample is needed to increase representation of middle-aged and older adults. For stressor forecasting, we only examined the likelihood of forecasted future stressors but not other characteristics of stressors such as severity and controllability. For the measure of anticipatory strategies, the outcome fantasy factor with only two items had a within-person reliability estimate of .57. An improved version of this measure or other more reliable measures may be needed for examining anticipatory coping processes in the future. Relatedly, the current measure may not encompass all the mental processes people engage in to prepare for or pre-react to anticipated stressors related to elections. For future research, it would be important to include open-ended questions assessing a wider range of strategies, including both behavioral and mental, that people use to cope with election stress. Lastly, the study focused on the 2018 U.S. midterm election as an example of a macrosystem event, but findings may not generalize to other elections or sociopolitical events that may each have unique characteristics and influences.

### **Conclusion**

With daily diary assessments over 29 days surrounding the 2018 U.S. midterm election, the study suggests that anticipating upcoming election stressors contributes to daily

psychological distress experienced throughout the process of an election, and that stagnantly dwelling on forecasted election stressors may exacerbate rather than reduce distress. No age differences were found for anticipatory stress response and the effects of anticipatory coping. Understanding the experiences of distress due to expecting future stressors and how individuals are responding to this anticipatory stress may have unique implications for managing election stress across adulthood.

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## APPENDIX

## Supplementary Materials

Table S1  
*Descriptive Statistics of Demographic and Other Person Level Variables*

Variable	M (SD/%)	Range
Age	35 (11.32)	19-86
Gender		
Men	76 (54%)	--
Women	64 (46%)	--
Race/Ethnicity		
White	108 (77.14%)	--
Black	16 (11.43%)	--
Asian	10 (7.14%)	--
Native American	6 (4.29%)	--
Education		
High school or lower	10 (7.14%)	--
Some college	39 (27.86%)	--
Four-year college or higher	91 (65%)	--
Party identification		
Democrats	60 (43%)	--
Republican	48 (34%)	--
Third Party	3 (2%)	--
Not identified	29 (21%)	--
Political ideology	3.42 (1.60)	1 (Liberal) – 6 (Conservative)
Impact	4.22 (1.94)	1.00-7.00
Neuroticism	2.20 (0.74)	1.00-4.00
Person mean forecasts	2.41 (1.11)	1.00-5.00
Person mean outcome fantasy	2.90 (1.26)	1.00-5.00
Person mean stagnant deliberation	2.55 (1.11)	1.00-4.86
Person mean problem analysis	3.10 (0.95)	1.00-4.95
Person mean plan rehearsal	2.75 (1.13)	1.00-4.93
Person mean negative affect (NA)	1.82 (0.98)	1.00-4.80
Person mean election exposure	4.21 (2.80)	0-10

*Note.* Age = uncentered chronological age measured on Day 1. Political ideology: participants rated themselves on a scale of 1 (“liberal”) to 6 (“conservative”) when it comes to political issues. Party identification: participants reported which party they identified most with, the options being “Democrat”, “Republican”, “Third party”, and “I do not identify with a political party”. Because political ideology was highly correlated with party identification (Republican:  $r = .58, p < .001$ ; Democrats:  $r = -.55, p < .001$ ), only political ideology was included in subsequent analyses. Impact = perceived impact of the 2016 presidential election, ranging 1 (not at all) to 7 (a great deal). Neuroticism was measured by the neuroticism subscale of the Revised Midlife Development Inventory (MIDI) Personality Scales (Lachman & Weaver, 1997, 2005) including

four adjectives: Moody, Worrying, Nervous, and Calm. Participants answered on a 1 (“a lot”) to 4 (“not at all”) scale to indicate how well each of the adjectives described them. A mean composite score was created (“Moody”, “Worrying”, and “Nervous” were reverse coded) such that higher a score indicates higher trait neuroticism. In a previous sample in the Midlife in the United States (MIDUS) study (<http://midus.wisc.edu/index.php>), between-person  $\alpha$  was .74, and the value in the current sample is .77.

Table S2

*Variance Components of Election Stress Forecasting and Anticipatory Coping Strategies*

Variable	Variance Estimates	Percentage	SE	p value
<b>Daily forecasts</b>				
Level 1 (within-person, $\sigma^2$ )	0.59	36%	0.03	<.0001
Level 2 (between-person, $\tau_{00}$ )	1.06	64%	0.18	<.0001
<b>Outcome fantasy</b>				
Level 1 (within-person, $\sigma^2$ )	0.60	29%	0.03	<.0001
Level 2 (between-person, $\tau_{00}$ )	1.45	71%	0.24	<.0001
<b>Stagnant deliberation</b>				
Level 1 (within-person, $\sigma^2$ )	0.29	20%	0.01	<.0001
Level 2 (between-person, $\tau_{00}$ )	1.16	80%	0.19	<.0001
<b>Problem Analysis</b>				
Level 1 (within-person, $\sigma^2$ )	0.34	29%	0.02	<.0001
Level 2 (between-person, $\tau_{00}$ )	0.83	71%	0.14	<.0001
<b>Plan Rehearsal</b>				
Level 1 (within-person, $\sigma^2$ )	0.45	27%	0.02	<.0001
Level 2 (between-person, $\tau_{00}$ )	1.19	73%	0.20	<.0001

*Note.* Daily forecasts = daily forecasts of midterm election stress. Outcome fantasy = daily outcome fantasy. Stagnant deliberation = daily stagnant deliberation. Analysis = daily problem analysis. Rehearsal = daily plan rehearsal.

Table S3

*Multilevel Model Predicting Negative Affect from Election Stress Forecasting, Age, and Other Person Level Covariates*

Variable		B coefficient	SE	p value
Fixed effects				
Intercept		0.27	0.16	0.10
Age		-0.01	0.01	0.06
Ideology		0.01	0.05	0.84
Impact		0.03	0.04	0.49
Neuroticism		0.16	0.10	0.11
Daily forecasts		0.03	0.02	0.16
Age X Daily forecasts		0.003	0.002	0.18
Ideology X Daily forecasts		0.03	0.01	0.0095
Impact X Daily forecasts		-0.01	0.01	0.18
Neuroticism X Daily forecasts		-0.01	0.02	0.80
Daily exposure		0.004	0.01	0.64
Person mean forecasts		0.58	0.07	<.0001
Random effects (variance components)				
Level 1	Residual (within-person)	0.16	0.01	<.0001
Level 2	Residual (between-person)	0.23	0.05	<.0001
$R^2$ Level 1		63%		
$R^2$ Level 2		73%		

*Note.* Age was a continuous variable and was centered at 35 years old. Ideology = political ideology, ranging 1 (liberal) to 6 (conservative). Because political ideology was highly correlated with party identification (Republican:  $r = .58, p < .001$ ; Democrats:  $r = -.55, p < .001$ ), only political ideology was included. Impact = perceived impact of the 2016 presidential election (higher score=higher impact). Neuroticism = trait neuroticism (higher score=higher neuroticism). Daily forecasts = daily forecasts of midterm election stress (higher score=higher likelihood of forecasted stress). Age X Daily forecasts = Interaction between age and daily forecasts. Daily exposure = daily election exposure (higher score=greater exposure). Mean forecasts = person mean forecasting of midterm election stress (higher score=higher likelihood of forecasted midterm election stress). Outcome variable = daily negative affect [NA] (higher score=higher NA).

Table S4

*Multilevel Model Predicting Negative Affect from Anticipatory Coping, Age, and Other Person Level Covariates*

Variable		B coefficient	SE	p value
Fixed effects				
Intercept		-0.21	0.36	.56
Age		-0.02	0.01	.10
Ideology		0.10	0.05	.07
Impact		0.03	0.04	.45
Neuroticism		0.06	0.11	.59
Daily outcome fantasy		0.002	0.02	.90
Daily stagnant deliberation		0.08	0.03	.008
Daily problem analysis		0.02	0.03	.49
Daily plan rehearsal		-0.01	0.02	.65
Age X Daily outcome fantasy		0.0005	0.002	.78
Age X Daily stagnant deliberation		-0.004	0.002	.13
Age X Daily problem analysis		0.001	0.002	.75
Age X Daily rehearsal		0.002	0.002	.21
Person mean outcome fantasy		0.08	0.10	.40
Person mean stagnant deliberation		0.28	0.13	.04
Person mean problem analysis		0.08	0.14	.57
Person mean plan rehearsal		-0.03	0.15	.84
Daily exposure		-0.001	0.01	.88
Daily forecasts		0.04	0.02	.04
Random effects (variance components)				
Level 1	Residual(within-person)	0.16	0.01	<.0001
Level 2	Residual(between-person)	0.34	0.07	<.0001
$R^2$ Level 1	52%			
$R^2$ Level 2	61%			

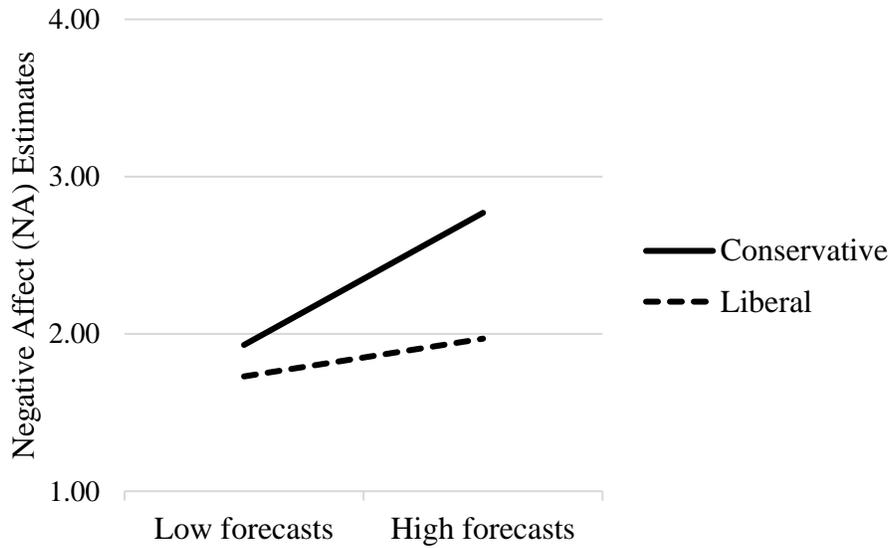
*Note.* Age was a continuous variable and was centered at 35 years old. Ideology = political ideology, ranging 1 (liberal) to 6 (conservative). Because political ideology was highly correlated with party identification (Republican:  $r = .58, p < .001$ ; Democrats:  $r = -.55, p < .001$ ), only political ideology was included. Impact = perceived impact of the 2016 presidential election (higher score=higher impact). Neuroticism = trait neuroticism (higher score=higher neuroticism). Daily outcome fantasy to Daily plan rehearsal = daily frequency of outcome fantasy, stagnant deliberation, problem analysis, and plan rehearsal, respectively (higher score=used the strategy more often). Age X Daily outcome fantasy to Age X Daily plan rehearsal = interaction between age and each of the four anticipatory coping strategies, respectively. Daily exposure = daily midterm election exposure (higher score=greater exposure). Daily forecasts = daily forecasts of midterm election stress (higher score=higher forecasted likelihood of experiencing midterm election stress). Outcome variable = daily negative affect [NA] (higher score=higher NA).

Table S5

*Multilevel Model Predicting Negative Affect from Anticipatory Coping, Age, and Other Person Level Covariates*

Variable		B coefficient	SE	p value
Fixed effects				
Intercept		0.55	0.51	.29
Age		-0.03	0.01	.01
Ideology		0.10	0.06	.11
Impact		0.04	0.04	.43
Neuroticism		0.04	0.14	.80
Daily outcome fantasy		0.02	0.09	.85
Daily stagnant deliberation		0.04	0.10	.70
Daily problem analysis		-0.12	0.10	.20
Daily plan rehearsal		-0.02	0.11	.85
Daily outcome fantasy X Forecasts		0.001	0.03	.98
Daily stagnant deliberation X Forecasts		0.01	0.03	.67
Daily problem analysis X Forecasts		0.01	0.04	.75
Daily plan rehearsal X Forecasts		0.04	0.03	.19
Age X Daily outcome fantasy X Forecasts		-0.0003	0.001	.72
Age X Daily stagnant deliberation X Forecasts		-0.001	0.001	.34
Age X Daily problem analysis X Forecasts		0.001	0.001	.19
Age X Daily plan rehearsal X Forecasts		0.001	0.001	.44
Person mean outcome fantasy		0.08	0.12	.48
Person mean stagnant deliberation		0.27	0.15	.08
Person mean problem analysis		0.10	0.20	.61
Person mean plan rehearsal		0.01	0.17	.96
Daily exposure		0.01	0.01	.40
Daily forecasts		-0.14	0.12	.26
Random effects (variance components)				
Level 1	Residual (within-person)	0.22	0.01	<.0001
Level 2	Intercept (between-person)	0.37	0.08	<.0001
R <sup>2</sup> Level 1	44%			
R <sup>2</sup> Level 2	57%			

*Note.* Age was a continuous variable and was centered at 35 years old. Ideology = political ideology, ranging 1 (liberal) to 6 (conservative). Because political ideology was highly correlated with party identification (Republican:  $r = .58, p < .001$ ; Democrats:  $r = -.55, p < .001$ ), only political ideology was included. Impact = perceived impact of the 2016 presidential election (higher score=higher impact). Neuroticism = trait neuroticism (higher score=higher neuroticism). Daily outcome fantasy X Forecasts=interaction between daily outcome fantasy and daily stressor forecasting. Age X Daily outcome fantasy X Forecasts= interaction between age, daily outcome fantasy, and daily stressor forecasting. Mean outcome fantasy to Mean plan rehearsal = person mean of each of the four strategies. Daily exposure = daily midterm election exposure (higher score=greater exposure). Daily forecasts = daily forecasts of midterm election stress (higher score=higher forecasted likelihood of experiencing midterm election stress). Outcome variable = daily negative affect [NA] (higher score=higher NA).



**Figure S1.** Political ideology x Daily election stressor forecasting for daily negative affect (NA). Estimates for low and high forecasts were computed based on 1 (Not at all likely) and 5 (Extremely likely) on forecasting, respectively. Estimates for political ideology were based on 1 (liberal) and 6 (conservative). Estimates were obtained controlling for age, impact of the 2016 presidential election, and trait neuroticism. Anticipatory stress responses (i.e., forecasts-NA association) appear to be greater in individuals self-rated as more conservative compared to those self-rated as more liberal.