Investigating How Socioeconomic Status May Relate to Political Action via Psychological Mechanisms

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Abstract

A resource model of political participation suggests that because higher socioeconomic status (SES) individuals have more financial resources and social capital, they are more likely to vote than lower SES individuals (e.g., Gurin, Hatchett, & Jackson, 1989; Verba & Nie, 1972). However, this is only part of the picture. In this paper, I investigated the role of *subjective socioeconomic status (SSS)* – feeling relatively richer or poor - on political action. Utilizing American National Election Studies data form 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020, as well as data from a nationally representative correlational study I examined the effect of SSS on various forms of political action. Further, I investigated potential mediators of the relationship between SSS and political actions. I was specifically interested in the mediating effect of one's sense of control and power, but also explored additional potential mediators (identified by previous research) such as distrust in the government, political efficacy, and interest in politics. Overall, I find that higher SSS predicts more political action across a wide range of different actions and years. However, I find relatively inconsistent mediation patterns across political actions and years. I conclude by suggesting that more work is needed to better understand this pattern.

Investigating How Socioeconomic Status may relate to Political Action via Psychological Mechanisms

Although democracy in the United States is supposed to represent the will of the majority, the data suggest that policies disproportionately represent the will of the wealthy elite (Gilens & Page, 2014). In fact, the impact of wealthy Americans on the U.S. political system is so severe that typical citizens, despite their numerical majority, appear to have little to no independent influence on policy (Gilens & Page, 2014). The overrepresentation of the will of the wealthy is, in part, because wealthy citizens are far more politically active than the typical citizen (Page, Bartels, & Seawright, 2013).

One reason why wealthy individuals have a disproportionate impact on politics is that they have the financial resources to have their opinions heard. For example, the strongest predictor of donating money to a political campaign is having money (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995). However, political action can take many forms that are not directly tied to finances, such as voting, signing a petition, contacting a representative, and volunteering on a political campaign. And yet, wealthier individuals are more likely to participate in all forms of political action (e.g., McElwee, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2015; Verba & Nie, 1972). This differential political participation suggests that there are social and psychological factors that also influence political action (e.g., Gurin, Hatchett, & Jackson, 1989; Verba & Nie, 1972).

The current dissertation seeks to understand two specific processes linking socioeconomic status and political action. I suggest that SES may increase one's psychological perception of their status in society relative to others – what I call *subjective socioeconomic status* (SSS; e.g., Adler et al., 2000; Kraus et al., 2012). Increased SSS may, in turn, increase (1) perceived power and (2) sense of control, leading to an increase in political action. Although my

primary interest is to examine the mediating roles of power and control, I will also build from prior literature and examine additional mediators, such as political self-efficacy and trust, which have been identified as being central to predicting voting.

Finally, in addition to examining multiple potential mediators, I will examine a wide range of political actions. Voting in elections is one of the most commonly used measure of political action. This makes sense as not only is voting highly important, (e.g., Rome, 2021; Shah & Smith, 2021), but previous research has shown that voting is habit forming – that is, people who vote in one election are more likely to vote in a future election (Gerber, Green, & Shachar, 2003). However, voting is not the only way individuals can engage in politics. More recent work has highlighted not just additional ways one can participate in politics in the Unites States (e.g., Ekman, J., & Amnå, E., 2012), but has also examined the ways in which one can engage in politics has changed as well (e.g., Koc-Michalska, et al., 2016). Thus in this paper I will look beyond voting behavior as the only outcome and instead include a range of political behaviors to broaden the scope of the research.

The Relationship Between Political Action and Socioeconomic Status

Political action is any behavior intended to influence political power or political channels (Campbell, 2012; Lawler & Bacharach, 1983; Soss, 1999). Donating money to a political campaign, calling an elected official, volunteering time to work on a campaign, signing a petition, or voting in an election are all examples of political action. Some of these behaviors, such as donating money, directly require financial resources. Other behaviors, however, may indirectly require financial resources. For example, although employers are legally required to allow employees to vote in an election, lower-SES individuals may not be able to afford the time-off or the transportation cost to get to a polling location (Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba,

Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Weeks, 2013). Thus, even though some political actions, such as voting, are intended to be inclusive to all citizens, there still exist objective financial barriers for lower-SES citizens.

In addition to objective financial resources, political action may be influenced by sociocultural factors. Higher-SES individuals tend to live in environments where politically active behaviors, such as voting, writing a senator, and posting a political campaign lawn-sign, are part of the social norm (Page, Bartels, & Seawright, 2013). However, lower-SES individuals tend to live in places where such behaviors are not part of the social norm. For example, a large portion of lower-SES individuals (approximately 41%) did not express a preference for a congressional candidate in a recent election (Pew Research Center, 2015). These findings are in line with other research suggesting that lower-SES individuals tend to be less willing to express a political opinion than higher-SES individuals are (Laurison, 2015). Together, this suggests that social and cultural factors may increase the likelihood of political action among higher-SES individuals.

Financial and sociocultural factors likely produce changes in psychological states that, in turn, influence one's motivation to engage politically. In the next section, I discuss how SES may trigger a psychological process, which also culminates in a variety of political actions.

SES Filters Through an Imperfect Lens: The Role of Subjective Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status is constituted by both material resources and subjective experiences of those resources. Material resources are commonly assessed by indicators of wealth, education level, and income. Subjective socioeconomic status (SSS), however, relies on an individual's perception of their social standing relative to others in the economic hierarchy (e.g., Adler et al., 2000; Kraus, Piff, & Keltner, 2011). A number of potentially interrelated

factors are relevant to SSS. For example, SSS may reflect, in part, a cognitive (and potentially imperfect) average of materials resources (e.g., Adler et al., 2000). This suggests that objective resources may inform SSS (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2014) which may be the more proximal predictor of attitudes and behaviors (Mistry et al., 2015). Thus when examining difference between social classes it is important to consider not only objective resources, but also the perceptions of said resources in comparison to others (i.e., SSS).

SSS is important in that it may reflect the social or human capital of one's networks, and sociocultural experiences (e.g., Cohen et al., 2017; Stephens, Markus, & Phillips, 2014). Moreover, SSS may reflect emotional components associated with social comparisons. That is, when making upward social comparisons, people may feel negative emotions regarding their current position; whereas, when making downward social comparisons, people may feel positive emotions regarding their current position (Kraus, Adler, & Chen, 2013). These social comparisons may further confer respect and/or power commanded by one's perceived position in the hierarchy relative to others (Anderson, Kraus, Galinsky, & Keltner, 2012).

More broadly, SSS may not perfectly align with reports of income, education, and/or wealth, as individuals tend to have both better insight into their full financial picture and their position within society. That is, through a couple of questions, it is difficult to obtain a complete objective picture of a person's standing within society. In addition, it is difficult to capture how one's objective standing in society is related to their local environment and their social capital. Thus, SSS may reflect people's experiences in their cultural environment in a way that is difficult to capture with objective measures. As a result, SSS may better predict outcomes relative to objective indicators because it may more accurately capture where one stands and perceives they stand within society.

Overall, the data suggest that both because of *and* independent of objective resources, individuals may experience SSS as a sociocultural framework (e.g., Stephens, Markus, & Phillips, 2014) and as a rank relative to others which shapes thoughts, goals, and behaviors (e.g., Adler et al., 2000; Kraus et al., 2012). Thus, given that SSS is malleable in a way that objective status is not, SSS may be a more useful measure to examine when looking at political action.

How SES May Increase Political Action: SSS

While we have seen that objective resources (SES) are associated with political action directly, it may also be the case that SES is informing SSS in such a way as to influence political action. Work by Brown-Iannuzzi and colleagues (2021) found that people who were given feedback that they were higher status compared to others, regardless of their objective SES, were less supportive of redistributive policies. One reason for this might be that SSS captures dimensions of status that objective indicators do not such as feelings of deprivation and perceptions of one's own status (Demakakos et al., 2008). Additionally, researchers have also found that SSS mediates the relationship between objective resources and psychological health (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2015) as well as between SES and physical health (Demakakos et al., 2008). These mediation patterns suggest that SSS is a mechanism through which one's SES influences outcomes. Thus, given this association between SES and SSS, and prior work using SSS as a mediator; it could be the case that SSS works as a mediator between SES and political outcomes. That is, SES would inform SSS, with higher SES individuals likely indicating higher SSS, and this higher status (both objective and subjective) would lead to an increase in political action.

How SSS May Increase Political Action: Power and Control

I am particularly interested in the mediating role of perceived power and control. Previous research has demonstrated that SSS increases people's sense of power and control (Anderson et al., 2012; Lachman & Weaver, 1998). However, the previous work has not connected these enhanced stances with political action. Below I discuss why perceived power and control may be related to both SSS and political action.

Power

Broadly speaking, power can be thought of in two interconnected, yet distinct ways: (1) feeling powerful (Rucker & Galinsky, 2017) and (2) having "asymmetric control over valued resources in social relations" (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). For the purpose of this dissertation, I use both aspects to define power. Namely, I consider power as a state in which someone feels powerful *and* feels they have control over others' outcomes. Importantly, a person can have power, but choose to not use that power, or fail to use it effectively.

Previous research has demonstrated that SSS can increase one's sense of power. For example, research finds a positive correlation between SSS and sense of power (Anderson et al., 2012; Dubois, Rucker, & Galinsky, 2015). Further, experimental findings suggest that manipulated SSS – by comparing oneself to those at the top or bottom of the socioeconomic distribution – causes changes in power such that participants in the high-SSS condition reported feeling more powerful than participants in the low-SSS condition (Dubois et al., 2015).

Power may increase political action because power activates the behavioral approach system (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003) and thus leads to increased action (Galinsky et al., 2003). Although research has not investigated the role of power with respect to SSS and political action, I anticipate that power may mediate the relationship between SSS and political

action. Specifically, I hypothesize that higher-SSS may lead to a greater sense of power and culminate in more political action. Thus, in this dissertation, I will examine the link between sense of power and political action.

Control

Perceived control is the belief that a person can determine and has control over their outcomes (e.g., Fast et al., 2009; Seeman, 1983; Wallston at el., 1987). Previous research has found that lower status individuals have a lower sense of control compared to their higher status counterparts (e.g., Kraus et al., 2009; Lachman, 1986; Lachman & Weaver, 1998), and that an elevated sense of control is beneficial as it protects against feelings of apathy (Taylor, 1989) and is associated with better health outcomes (Johnson & Krueger, 2005). Additionally, work by Fast and colleagues (2009) found that an increased sense of control led to an increase in political action – indicating plans to vote in an upcoming election. Additionally, a greater sense of control is more broadly associated with being more politically active (e.g., Erbe, 1964; Gore & Rotter, 1963; Schur, 1998). Based on this previous work, I anticipate that perceived control may be an additional mediational pathway between SSS and political action. Namely, I hypothesize that higher-SSS may increase perceived control and this increased sense of control would ultimately lead to an increase in political action.

How SSS May Increase Political Action: Trust, Political Self-Efficacy

Previous research has identified several constructs which predict political action: Distrust/Trust in the government, and political self-efficacy. Building from this work, it may be that the relationship between SSS and political action are mediated through these two constructs. I discuss this possibility below.

Distrust/Trust in the Government

Trust in the government is the extent to which individuals expect their government to do what is perceived to be right and fair (e.g., Easton, 1965). The relationship between trust and political action is convoluted. Some research finds that trust in the government positively predicts voter turnout (Grönlund & Setälä, 2007). However, other work has found little evidence for the idea that political action depends on trust in the government. For example, work by Uslaner and Brown (2005), investigated the relationship between trust in the government and five political action outcomes. The results revealed that trust in government has a positive yet statistically marginal relationship with the likelihood residents signed a petition. Thus, it is unclear whether trust in the government is related with political action.

The relationship between trust and political action may be further convoluted due to the fact that trust may be different and orthogonal to *dis*trust in the government. Although past work has not directly investigated whether trust and distrust in the government are orthogonal concepts, I contend that they might be given the recent data trends. Specifically, in recent years distrust in the government has been increasing (e.g., Williamson et al., 2011). Increasing distrust in the government is especially striking as scholars find that distrust enhances fears of voting irregularities (Nunnally, 2011), endorsement of conservative policy initiatives (Dyck, 2010), promotes non-cooperation with policies (Hetherington, 2004), and withdrawal from voting (Hooghe, Marien, & Pauwels, 2011). In essence, political distrust can create a vicious cycle where distrust breeds more distrust. Moreover, this cycle may be separate from people's feelings about trust in the government.[1]

[1] Some measures of trust view trust and distrust as opposite ends of a single continuum (e.g., Rotter, 1971). That is, low marks on a trust item would be assumed indicative of higher levels of distrust. However, some researchers argue that trust and distrust are distinct and can be operationalized as separate constructs (e.g., Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991).

Similar to the relationship between trust and political action, the relationship between SES/SSS and political action as mediated by trust may be convoluted. Previous work has found a positive link between SSS and *generalized* trust – meaning the trust I have in other members of society (e.g., Alesina & La Ferrara, 2002). Further, work by Kim and colleagues (2022) found that subjective SSS was positively associated with *institutional* trust, which is the trust I have in institutions, such as the government. Relatedly, Lerman and Weaver (2014) argue that lower status individuals' increased contact with the criminal justice system decreases their faith in the government and thus has implications for the involvement in politics. This might suggest that SSS would be negatively associated with *dis*trust in the government and may explain why lower-SES/SSS individuals are relatively less politically active. That said, system justification theory would suggest that lower-SES/SSS individuals might compensate for their position by showing greater endorsement of the system (Jost et al., 2003; Kay et al., 2008). Overall, I anticipate that distrust in government is an important variable to examine and that lower-SES/SSS individuals may distrust the government more and, in turn, may be less likely to engage in political action. Overall, I hypothesize that higher-SSS would lead to more trust in the government, which in turn would lead to increased political action. Regarding distrust, I hypothesize that lower-SSS individuals would have higher levels of distrust in the government, and as a result disengage leading to less political action.

Political Self-Efficacy

Political self-efficacy is, broadly speaking, the degree to which people feel able to perform a series of political behaviors (e.g., Caprara et al., 2009). People's political self-efficacy is particularly important, as it has been found to predict political participation (e.g., Bandura, 1997; Pinkleton & Austin, 2001). Additionally political self-efficacy is important for both

traditional and non-traditional forms of political participation (e.g., Abramson & Aldrich, 1982; Finkel, 1985; Madsen, 1987; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Morrell, 2003; Pollock, 1983). In addition to political participation, political efficacy has been argued as the most important variable to consider when looking at political trust (Aberbach & Walker, 1970). Consistent with previous research, I anticipate political self-efficacy to be an important variable to consider when trying to understand the relationship between SES/SSS and political action.

Although the literature is clear that one's political self-efficacy has implications for both traditional and non-traditional political action (e.g., Caprara et al., 2009), exactly *how* self-efficacy influences political action is less clear. People who are higher in efficacy beliefs react to the environment with less fear, and thus engage with it more (Bandura, 1994). Previous research has examined political self-efficacy as a mediating variable between education and voting intention and found some support for political self-efficacy as a mediator (Hoskins et al., 2016). Specifically, the researchers found that people from lower-SES backgrounds had lower political self-efficacy, and subsequently were less likely to vote. And, given the relationship between self-efficacy and political action is typically positive (e.g., Abramson & Aldrich, 1982; Finkel, 1985), self-efficacy may mediate the relationship between SES/SSS and political action either alone, or as part of a serial mediation. I hypothesize that people who are higher-SSS will also have higher self-efficacy leading to an increased participation in politics.

Other Exploratory Mediating Variables: Political Knowledge, Political Interest, and Ease of Understanding Politics

In addition to the variables listed above, I will investigate the role of political knowledge, interesting in politics, and how easily people understand politics on the relationship between SSS and political action. Political knowledge has been found to contribute to political action by

increasing support for democratic values, increasing trust in the political system, and broadly increasing support in political participation (Galston, 2001). Similarly, the relationship between interest in politics and political participation is one of the most consistently reported findings (e.g., Blais & Daoust, 2020; Brady et al., 1995; Delli Carpini, 2000; Smets & van Ham, 2013). Additionally, proponents of the resource model of political participation have acknowledged that "political interest is much more important than resources if our main project is to explain voting turnout" (e.g., Brady et al., 1995, p. 283). Finally, how easily (or difficult) people find politics to understand (also known as internal political efficacy) has been found to be positively associated with an increase in political action (e.g., Condon & Holleque, 2013). Thus, I will include these variables as exploratory mediators to see if I replicate previous findings.

Overview of the Current Research

As highlighted by Cohen and colleagues (2001), much of the research around political participation has examined either the effect of socioeconomic status *or* psychological variables. Yet, very little research has tried to integrate SES with psychological variables when predicting political action. Further, most work on political action focuses on voting behavior and neglects the wide range of political actions one may take. Finally, the research thus far has primarily focused on the role of SES (income and education) when predicting political action. Critically, while I suggest that SES may inform SSS, because SSS is a (imperfect) psychological reflection of one's SES it may better capture both the cultural capital, resources, and motivation that people may have when considering political actions. Therefore, SSS may be a more proximal and potent predictor of political actions.

Thus, the goal of the current research is to address the limitations of the previous research by investigating whether SSS predicts a wide range of political actions. Further, I investigate *why*

SSS may lead to political action by investigating the mediating role of one's perceived power and control. For completeness, I also investigating the mediating role of several other constructs the literature has previously identified as predicting voting behavior. Finally, to investigate the robustness of the relationship between SSS and political actions, as well as the robustness of the potential mediators, in Study Set 1, I investigate these questions across 4 time points of the American National Election Study: 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020. In addition, in Study 2 I collect one more representative quota sample of participants to investigate these questions using well-validated measures of perceive power and control.

Study Set 1: ANES Analyses Over Time

I investigated whether both SES and SSS predicted voting behavior as well as other political action behaviors using the American National Election Studies (ANES) Time Series Study Data from 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020. First, I sought to replicate previous findings demonstrating that higher-SES respondents were more likely to vote (Scott & Acock, 1979; Solt, 2008). Extending from previous findings, I sought to investigate whether higher-SSS respondents were more likely to vote and take part in other political action behaviors, controlling for objective resources. Then, I conducted exploratory analyses investigating whether the relationship between SSS and political action behaviors was mediated by (dis)trust in the government, political efficacy, the belief that politics are hard to understand, political knowledge, interest in politics, sense of control and sense of power. All continuous variables were standardized.

ANES 2008

Method

Respondents

Data were obtained from the American National Election Studies (ANES) 2008 Time Series Study, which periodically collects a representative sample of the American electorate. (For information on how respondents are sampled, please see http://www.electionstudies.org.) Of the 2,322 sampled, 2,102 reported whether they had voted in the 2008 election[2]. In order to appropriately generalize our analyses to the American voting electorate, I used post-election weights calculated by ANES.

Sensitivity Power Analysis

I ran a sensitivity power analysis using G*Power 3.1.9.4 (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). For the analysis I utilized an alpha of .05 and 80% power, and the 2,322 participants as our initial input. I set the probability of the null being true to 20%, and set the R^2 of other X to 0, as I will test the primary model with and without controls. Given our predictor is a continuous variable, I set the X distribution to normal, with the X mu parameter as 0, and the X sigma parameter as 1. The sensitivity power analysis revealed a critical odds ratio of 1.15. Based on these analyses, the sample was large enough to detect the effects reported below.

Measures

Socioeconomic Status Measures

Socioeconomic Status (SES). To measure SES, I utilized income and education. Income was measured such that higher numbers indicate greater education, (1 = *Less than $2,999 annually*; 25 = *$150,000 or more*) and education was similarly rated such that higher numbers

[2] Participants were not required to complete all questions; thus, degrees of freedom vary.

indicate greater educational attainment. (1 = *No High School Diploma*; 7 = *Advanced degree*). These variables were both standardized.

Subjective Socioeconomic Status (SSS). To measure SSS, I used participants' SSS ranking. The scale included these response options: 1 = *lower class or poor*, 2 = *working class*, 3 = *middle class*, 4 = *upper class*. The median response for this sample was "working class."

Political Action Measures

Voting. One item assessed whether or not the respondent voted in the 2008 election. This question stated, "Did respondent (you) vote in the November 2008 general elections?" (0 = *Did not vote*, 1 = *Voted*).[3]

Political Rally Attendance. One item assessed whether or not the respondent participated in political events for a particular candidate. This question stated, "Did you go to any political meetings, rallies, speeches, dinners, or things like that in support of a particular candidate?" (0 = *No*, 1 = *Yes*).

Campaign Button. One item assessed respondents' interaction with campaign related gear. This question stated, "Did you wear a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on your car, or place a sign in your window or in front of your house?" (0 = *No*, 1 = *Yes*).

Work for a Political Campaign/Party. One item assessed whether respondents worked for a campaign or candidate during the 2008 election. Specifically, "Did you do any (other) work for one of the parties or candidates?" (0 = *No*, 1 = *Yes*).

Campaign Contributions – Person. One item assessed whether respondents had donated money to a specific candidate. Specifically they were asked, "During an election year

[3] Note, the question difference between using 'respondent' and 'you' reflects the fact that some individuals were administered the survey questions in a face-to-face interview and some individuals were administered the survey questions on a computer.

people are often asked to make a contribution to support campaigns. Did you give money to an INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATE running for public office?" (0 = *No*, 1 = *Yes*).

Campaign Contributions – Party. One item assessed whether respondents had donated money to a political party. Specifically they were asked, "Did you give money to a POLITICAL PARTY during this election year?" (0 = *No*, 1 = *Yes*).

Protest Behavior. One item assessed whether respondents had participated in a protest. They were asked, "Have you done this, or have you never done it? Joined in a protest march, rally, or demonstration." (0 = *Never have done this*, 1 = *Have done this*).

Web-Based Petition. One item assessed whether respondents had signed an internet petition. They were asked, "Have you done this, or have you never done it? Signed a petition on the Internet about a political or social issue." (0 = *Never have done this*, 1 = *Have done this*).

Paper-Based Petition. One item assessed whether respondents had signed a paper petition. They were asked, "Have you done this, or have you never done it? Signed a petition on paper about a political or social issue." (0 = *Never have done this*, 1 = *Have done this*).

Discussing Politics. To assess whether respondents ever discuss politics with friends or family they were asked, "Do you ever discuss politics with your friends or family?" (0 = *No*, 1 = *Yes*).

Potential Mediating Variables

Distrust in Government. In order to assess respondents distrust in the government I looked at the following item - "Do you think that QUITE A FEW of the people running the government are crooked, NOT VERY MANY are, or do you think HARDLY ANY of them are crooked?" The variable was coded such that higher numbers indicate greater distrust in the government, (M = 2.47, SD = 0.62).

Trust in Government. Respondents were randomly assigned to rate their trust in the government using one of two items. The first item was, "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?" This item was asked on a 4-point scale (1 = *Never,* 4 = *Just about always*; *M* = 2.33, *SD* = 0.61). The second item was, "How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to make decisions in a fair way?" This item was asked using a 5-point scale (1 = *Never*, 5 = *Always*; *M* = 2.93, *SD* = 0.88). Because these items are on different scales they were standardized and combined to create an index of governmental trust.

Power. In order to assess respondents' sense of power I utilized the following item, "During the campaign, did you talk to any people and try to show them why they should vote for or against one of the parties candidates?" (0 = *No*, 1 = *Yes*).

Control. In order to assess respondents' sense of control I utilized the following item, "Some people say that it doesn't make any difference who is in power. Others say it makes a big difference who is in power. Where would you place yourself?" This was asked on a 5-point scale recoded such that 1 = *it makes a big difference,* and 5 = *it doesn't make any difference who is in power,* (*M* = 2.11, *SD* = 1.21).

Political Efficacy. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of two questions to assess political efficacy. The first item was, "People like me don't have any say about what the government does." This was assessed on a 5-point scale and coded such that higher numbers indicated greater disagreement (1 = *Agree strongly*, 5 = *Disagree strongly*; *M* = 2.79, *SD* = 1.32). The second item was, "How much can people like you affect what the government does?" This was assessed on a 5-point scale and recoded such that higher numbers indicate a greater say, (1 =

Not at all, 5 = *A great deal*; *M* = 2.74, *SD* = 1.19). These items were then combined to create a single item where higher numbers indicate higher political efficacy.

Politics are Hard to Understand. To assess how accessible/understandable politics are, respondents were randomly assigned to one of two items. The first item was, "Sometimes, politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on." This was assessed on a 5-point scale and recoded such that higher numbers indicate greater agreement with the statement, (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 5 = *Strongly agree*; *M* = 3.67, *SD* = 1.19). The second item was, "How often do politics and government seem so complicated that you can't really understand what's going on?" This was assessed on a 5-point scale and recoded such that higher numbers indicate an agreement, (1 = *Never*, 5 = *All of the time*; *M* = 3.01, *SD* = 1.02). These items were then combined to create a single item where higher numbers indicate a greater belief that politics are difficult to understand.

Political Knowledge. To assess how respondents understanding of political issues they were randomly assigned to one of two items. The first item was, "I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country?" This was assessed on a 5-point scale and recoded such that higher numbers indicate greater agreement, (1 = *Disagree strongly*, 5 = *Agree strongly*; *M* = 3.81, *SD* = 0.96). "The second item was "How well do you understand the important political issues facing our country?" This was assessed on a 5-point scale and recoded such that higher numbers indicate greater agreement with the statement, (1 = *Not at all well*, 5 = *Extremely well*; *M* = 2.94, *SD* = 0.93). These items were then combined to create a single item where higher numbers indicate a greater understanding of political issues.

Political Interest. To assess respondents' general interest/engagement in politics they were randomly assigned to one of two items. The first item was, "Some people seem to follow

what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs…". This item was assessed on a 4-point scaled and recoded so that higher numbers indicate greater interest in politics, (1 = *Hardly at all*, 4 = *Most of the time*; *M* = 2.81, *SD* = 0.94). The second item was "How often do you pay attention to what's going on in the government and politics?". This was assessed on a 5-point scale and recoded such that higher numbers indicate greater interest in politics, (1 = *Never*, 5 = *All the time*; *M* = 3.14, *SD* = 1.02). As these items were on different scales, they were first standardized and then combined to create a single item where higher numbers indicate a greater interest in politics.

Control Variables

I also selected three covariates related to voting behavior - political ideology (1 = *extremely liberal*; 7 = *extremely conservative*), political party leaning (1 = *strongly Democrat*; 7 = *strongly Republican*), and respondent's race/ethnicity (0 = *non-white*, 1 = *White*). It is important to control for these variables as research has found effects of race, ideology and party affiliation in terms of voting behavior and political engagement broadly (e.g., Bartels, 2000; Pew Research Center, 2018).

Results

First, I examined the correlations between the variables of interest. Table 1 displays the complete results. Overall, I find significant and positive correlations between SSS and political action and significant and negative correlations between conservative ideology and political action. No other consistent patterns emerged.

Regressions

Next, because I am interested in examining the unique effect of SSS on political action behaviors, I conducted a series of regressions where I control for variables known to be associated with voting behavior (i.e., race, political party affiliation, and conservative ideology). Further, I also control for SES (income and education) to determine the effect of SSS on political action above and beyond the influence of SES. For variables with binary outcomes, I ran logistic regressions. For continuous outcomes, I ran linear regressions. All continuous variables were standardized prior to model entry.

The complete results of the regression analyses with SSS as the predictor can be found in Table 2. Overall, I find that SSS significantly predicts increases in a wide range of political actions (e.g., voting behavior, attending political rallies, donating money, donating time, protesting, and signing petitions), and this pattern is robust to controlling for objective socioeconomic status (i.e., education and income), as well as political party affiliation and conservative ideology. I also find that SSS predicts a significant decrease in control, $\beta = -0.08$, $SE = 0.00$, $p < .001$, but predicts a significant increase in power, $OR = 1.06$, $p < .001$, 95% CI OR [1.06, 1.06].

Table 1.

Correlations Between Variables of Interest, ANES Data 2008

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Conservative	--																
2. Republican	.62**	--															
3. Edu	.11**	.23**	--														
4. Income	.11**	.23**	.31**	--													
5. SSS	.04**	.15**	.18**	.25**	--												
6. White	.14**	.32**	.17**	.18**	.12**	--											
7. Vote2008	.01**	.05**	.21**	.19**	.16**	.06**	--										
8. Power	.04**	.09**	.13**	.10**	.10**	.05**	.26**	--									
9. Control	.03**	.08**	-.03**	-.03**	-.10**	.02**	-.17**	-.19**	--								
10. PolRallies	-.11**	-.11**	.04**	-.01**	.05**	-.03**	.12**	.19**	-.07**	--							
11. PolButton	-.10**	-.11**	.02**	.05**	.03**	-.08**	.20**	.22**	-.11**	.35**	--						
12. PolPartyWork	-.07**	-.05**	-.03**	.00**	.01**	-.04**	.09**	.15**	-.07**	.41**	.30**	--					
13. DonateParty	-.01**	.00**	.09**	.12**	.11**	.02**	.14**	.18**	-.11**	.26**	.27**	.21**	--				
14. DonatePerson	-.09**	-.02**	.11**	.18**	.17**	.05**	.17**	.23**	-.12**	.33**	.35**	.33**	.66**	--			
15. JoinProtest	-.23**	-.14**	.12**	.07**	.12**	-.02**	.15**	.21**	-.11**	.26**	.19**	.18**	.12**	.24**	--		
16. WebPetition	-.80**	.04**	.21**	.21**	.15**	.10**	.20**	.20**	-.11**	.12**	.12**	.11**	.16**	.22**	.27**	--	
17. PaperPetition	-.10**	.05**	.25**	.22**	.11**	.16**	.32**	.27**	-.09**	.19**	.18**	.12**	.15**	.23**	.31**	.39**	--
18. DiscussPol	-.05**	.02**	.09**	.10**	.10**	.02**	.28**	.37**	-.16**	.10**	.18**	.08**	.13**	.12**	.17**	.15**	.28**

Note. White represents a binary variable where 1 = white, 0 = another race. ** indicates $p < .01$. * indicate $p < .05$. Correlation coefficients between two dichotomous variables represent Phi coefficients. Coefficients between dichotomous and continuous variables represent point-biserial correlations. All variable are scaled so that higher numbers represent more of that variable.

Exploratory Analyses

Mediations

Next, I conducted a series of mediation analyses to test whether the relationship between SSS and political actions were mediated by: distrust in government, trust in government, power, control, political efficacy, politics are hard to understand, political knowledge, and political interest. To investigate mediation patterns with continuous mediators, I used PROCESS with 5000 bootstrap samples (Model 4; Hayes, 2017)[4]. For the model with a dichotomous mediator, I followed steps adapted from MacKinnon & Dwyer (1993) to determine the percentage of the effect mediated and the Sobel test. As with the previous analyses, all continuous variables were standardized prior to model entry and each model controlled for objective SES (income and education), political party learning, conservative ideology, and race. Full mediation results are presented below: distrust in government (Table 3), trust in government (Table 4), political efficacy (Table 5), politics are hard to understand (Table 6), political knowledge (Table 7), interest in politics (Table 8), control (Table 9), and power (Table 10).

[4] PROCESS does not apply weights during mediation analyses, thus these analyses cannot be generalized to the broader population. Similarly, the mediation analysis with the dichotomous mediator was conducted without weights for consistency.

Table 2.

Logistic and Linear Regressions between SSS and Outcome Variables for ANES data between 2008 – 2020.

	2008			2012			2016			2020		
Outcome	**OR**	**95% CI**	**p-value**	**OR**	**95% CI**	**p-value**	**OR**	**95% CI**	**p-value**	**OR**	**95% CI**	**p-value**
VotingBehavior	**1.40**	**1.40, 1.41**	**< .001**	**1.16**	**1.03, 1.31**	**.013**	**1.24**	**1.07, 1.41**	**.002**	**1.35**	**1.32, 1.38**	**< .001**
Power	**1.06**	**1.06, 1.06**	**< .001**	**1.13**	**1.04, 1.23**	**.003**	1.05	0.96, 1.14	.265	**1.07**	**1.06. 1.09**	**< .001**
Control*	**-0.08`**	**-0.08, -0.08**	**< .001**	-0.03`	-0.07, 0.01	.151	-0.03	-0.07, 0.02	.234	**-0.04**	**-0.04, -0.03**	**< .001**
PolRallyAttendance	**1.25**	**1.24, 1.25**	**< .001**	1.13	0.96, 1.34	.146	1.12	0.95, 1.31	.173	**1.14**	**1.11, 1.17**	**< .001**
WearPolButton	**1.14**	**1.14, 1.15**	**< .001**	**1.26**	**1.13, 1.40**	**< .001**	.937	0.83, 1.06	.306	**1.05**	**1.03, 1.07**	**< .001**
WorkforParty	**1.12**	**1.12, 1.13**	**< .001**	1.18	0.96, 1.45	.109	**1.31**	**1.04, 1.64**	**.021**	**1.42**	**1.37, 1.47**	**< .001**
MoneyToParty	**1.55**	**1.54, 1.56**	**< .001**	**1.23**	**1.08, 1.40**	**.002**	**1.20**	**1.03, 1.39**	**.017**	**1.25**	**1.23, 1.28**	**< .001**
MoneyToCandidate	**1.75**	**1.74, 1.75**	**< .001**	**1.37**	**1.22, 1.53**	**< .001**	**1.36**	**1.20, 1.54**	**< .001**	**1.32**	**1.30, 1.34**	**< .001**
JoinProtest	**1.28**	**1.27, 1.28**	**< .001**	0.92	0.76, 1.11	.383	1.13	0.91, 1.40	.286	**1.10**	**1.07, 1.12**	**< .001**
WebPetition	**1.20**	**1.20, 1.21**	**< .001**	1.03	0.94, 1.12	.587	**0.89**	**0.80, 0.98**	**.019**	**0.97**	**0.96, 0.98**	**< .001**
PaperPetition	**1.12**	**1.11, 1.12**	**< .001**	**1.18**	**1.08, 1.29**	**< .001**						
DiscussPolitics	**1.34**	**1.34, 1.34**	**< .001**	**1.11**	**1.01, 1.22**	**.028**	**1.16**	**1.03, 1.30**	**.018**	**1.13**	**1.10, 1.15**	**< .001**

Note. ^ All items represent binary outcomes with the exception of Control. * The numbers presented for this variable are the beta coefficients. + For the years 2016 and 2020, there was only one item assessing respondents signing of petitions, so those cells are collapsed to represent the single item.

Table 3.

Mediation Results for Distrust in the Government, Comparing Results of ANES data between 2008 – 2020.

Mediation Models - Distrust in Government																
	2008				2012				2016				2020			
			95% CI				95% CI				95% CI				95% CI	
Path	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper
Social Class → Distrust in Gov → Vote	**.18**	**.07**	**.01**	**.04**	.003	.004	-.004	.011	.014	.008	-.001	.031	**.010**	**.004**	**.003**	**.019**
Social Class → Distrust in Gov → Attend Rally	-.00	.01	-.02	.02	.003	.003	-.003	.010	-.010	.009	-.029	.008	**-.008**	**.004**	**-.017**	**-.003**
Social Class → Distrust in Gov → Political Button	-.002	.01	-.02	.01	.002	.002	-.002	.007	.002	.007	-.012	.017	.002	.002	-.002	.007
Social Class → Distrust in Gov → Work for Party	-.01	.02	-.05	.02	.002	.003	-.003	.011	-.010	.014	-.038	.018	-.003	.005	-.013	.006
Social Class → Distrust in Gov → Donate Money Party	.02	.01	-.01	.04	.004	.004	-.004	.014	.013	.009	-.003	.033	**.014**	**.004**	**.006**	**.023**
Social Class → Distrust in Gov → Donate Money Person	.01	.01	-.01	.03	.004	.004	-.004	.013	.006	.007	-.008	.021	**.009**	**.003**	**.004**	**.015**
Social Class → Distrust in Gov → Join Protest	-.01	.01	-.03	.01	-.000	.002	-.005	.004	**-.037**	**.015**	**-.069**	**-.010**	**-.011**	**.004**	**-.021**	**-.004**
Social Class → Distrust in Gov → Web Petition	**-.01**	**.01**	**-.03**	**-.00**	-.002	.002	-.006	.002	**-.037**	**.015**	**-.069**	**-.010**	**-.010**	**.003**	**-.018**	**-.005**
Social Class → Distrust in Gov → Paper Petition	-.00	.01	-.02	.01	.000	.001	-.002	.003								

Note. Bolded numbers indicate a significant mediation pathway. [+] For the years 2016 and 2020, there was only one item assessing respondents signing of petitions, so those cells are collapsed to represent the single item

Table 4.

Mediation Results for Trust in the Government, Comparing Results of ANES data between 2008 – 2020

Mediation Models - Trust in Government																
	2008				2012				2016				2020			
			95% CI				95% CI				95% CI				95% CI	
Path	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper
Social Class → Trust in Gov → Vote	-.00	.00	-.01	.01	.003	.003	-.002	.009	-.008	.006	-.022	.003	**.008**	**.004**	**.002**	**.016**
Social Class → Trust in Gov → Attend Rally	-.00	.01	-.01	.01	.004	.004	-.002	.013	-.002	.007	-.016	.012	-.001	.003	-.007	.004
Social Class → Trust in Gov → Political Button	-.00	.00	-.01	.01	.004	.004	-.002	.012	-.007	.005	-.018	.004	**.006**	**.003**	**.001**	**.012**
Social Class → Trust in Gov → Work for Party	-.00	.01	-.02	.02	.004	.004	-.002	.013	.011	.011	-.008	.035	-.005	.004	-.015	.002
Social Class → Trust in Gov → Donate Money Party	.01	.01	-.00	.03	.002	.002	-.002	.007	.006	.006	-.006	.019	**.007**	**.003**	**.002**	**.015**
Social Class → Trust in Gov → Donate Money Person	.00	.01	-.01	.02	-.000	.002	-.004	.003	.004	.005	-.005	.015	**.004**	**.002**	**.001**	**.009**
Social Class → Trust in Gov → Join Protest	-.00	.00	-.01	.01	.001	.002	-.004	.006	-.017	.011	-.040	.002	**-.008**	**.004**	**-.016**	**-.002**
Social Class → Trust in Gov → Web Petition	-.01	.01	-.02	.00	-.003	.003	-.009	.002	**-.016**	**.006**	**-.029**	**-.006**	**-.003**	**.002**	**-.007**	**-.000**
Social Class → Trust in Gov → Paper Petition	-.00	.00	-.02	.00	-.001	.001	-.004	.001								

Note. Bolded numbers indicate a significant mediation pathway. [+] For the years 2016 and 2020, there was only one item assessing respondents signing of petitions, so those cells are collapsed to represent the single item

Table 5.

Mediation Results for Political Efficacy, Comparing Results of ANES data between 2008 – 2020

Mediation Models - Political Efficacy																
	2008				2012				2016				2020			
			95% CI				95% CI				95% CI				95% CI	
Path	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper
Social Class → Political Efficacy → Vote	**.01**	**.01**	**.00**	**.03**	.001	.002	-.002	.006	**.026**	**.009**	**.011**	**.045**	**.022**	**.006**	**.012**	**.034**
Social Class → Political Efficacy → Attend Rally	**.02**	**.01**	**.00**	**.04**	-.001	.002	-.007	.003	.005	.009	-.013	.022	.010	.006	-.001	.021
Social Class → Political Efficacy → Political Button	**.01**	**.01**	**.00**	**.03**	-.002	.002	-.007	.002	.013	.007	-.001	.029	**.013**	**.004**	**.006**	**.021**
Social Class → Political Efficacy → Work for Party	**.02**	**.01**	**.00**	**.05**	-.002	.004	-.011	.003	.015	.014	-.012	.044	**.019**	**.007**	**.005**	**.035**
Social Class → Political Efficacy → Donate Money Party	.01	.01	-.00	.04	.001	.002	-.002	.007	**.019**	**.009**	**.004**	**.038**	**.015**	**.004**	**.007**	**.024**
Social Class → Political Efficacy → Donate Money Person	**.02**	**.01**	**.00**	**.04**	.001	.002	-.002	.005	.033	.007	-.010	.017	**.016**	**.004**	**.009**	**.025**
Social Class → Political Efficacy → Join Protest	**.02**	**.01**	**.00**	**.04**	-.002	.003	-.009	.002	.005	.013	-.019	.031	**.012**	**.005**	**.004**	**.022**
Social Class → Political Efficacy → Web Petition	.01	.01	-.00	.02	-.001	.001	-.004	.001	-.004	.005	-.016	.005	**.006**	**.003**	**.001**	**.013**
Social Class → Political Efficacy → Paper Petition	**.02**	**.01**	**.00**	**.04**	-.000	.001	-.003	.002								

Note. Bolded numbers indicate a significant mediation pathway. [+] For the years 2016 and 2020, there was only one item assessing respondents signing of petitions, so those cells are collapsed to represent the single item

Table 6.

Mediation Results for the Belief Politics are Hard to Understand, Comparing Results of ANES data between 2008 – 2020

Mediation Models - Politics Hard to Understand																
	2008				2012				2016				2020			
			95% CI				95% CI				95% CI				95% CI	
Path	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper
Social Class → Politics Hard → Vote	**.02**	**.01**	**.00**	**.04**	**.011**	**.005**	**.002**	**.022**	**.009**	**.006**	**.000**	**.023**	**.016**	**.005**	**.006**	**.027**
Social Class → Politics Hard → Attend Rally	**.02**	**.01**	**.00**	**.05**	**.140**	**.008**	**.003**	**.030**	.010	.007	-.001	.025	**.017**	**.008**	**.003**	**.034**
Social Class → Politics Hard → Political Button	**.01**	**.01**	**.00**	**.03**	**.013**	**.006**	**.003**	**.026**	**.001**	**.006**	**.002**	**.025**	**.021**	**.005**	**.012**	**.032**
Social Class → Politics Hard → Work for Party	**.03**	**.02**	**.01**	**.07**	**.016**	**.008**	**.003**	**.034**	.012	.011	-.001	.040	**.020**	**.010**	**.002**	**.042**
Social Class → Politics Hard → Donate Money Party	.01	.01	-.00	.04	**.020**	**.008**	**.005**	**.037**	**.012**	**.007**	**.001**	**.028**	**.018**	**.005**	**.008**	**.029**
Social Class → Politics Hard → Donate Money Person	**.02**	**.01**	**.00**	**.05**	**.024**	**.010**	**.006**	**.044**	**.015**	**.006**	**.005**	**.030**	**.029**	**.006**	**.018**	**.042**
Social Class → Politics Hard → Join Protest	**.02**	**.01**	**.00**	**.04**	**.021**	**.009**	**.005**	**.041**	.011	.009	-.003	.032	**.017**	**.006**	**.007**	**.030**
Social Class → Politics Hard → Web Petition	**.03**	**.01**	**.01**	**.01**	**.009**	**.004**	**.002**	**.019**	**.013**	**.005**	**.004**	**.024**	**.014**	**.004**	**.007**	**.023**
Social Class → Politics Hard → Paper Petition	**.01**	**.01**	**.00**	**.03**	**.009**	**.004**	**.002**	**.019**								

Note. Bolded numbers indicate a significant mediation pathway. [+] For the years 2016 and 2020, there was only one item assessing respondents signing of petitions, so those cells are collapsed to represent the single item

Table 7.

Mediation Results for Political Knowledge, Comparing Results of ANES data between 2008 – 2020

Mediation Models - Political Knowledge																
	2008				2012				2016				2020			
			95% CI				95% CI				95% CI				95% CI	
Path	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper
Social Class → Political Knowledge → Vote	.01	.01	-.00	.03	.005	.008	-.009	.020	.008	.005	-.001	.020	**.029**	**.007**	**.017**	**.044**
Social Class → Political Knowledge → Attend Rally	.02	.02	-.01	.05	.008	.012	-.014	.033	**.019**	**.010**	**.001**	**.042**	**.042**	**.009**	**.025**	**.062**
Social Class → Political Knowledge → Political Button	.01	.01	-.00	.03	.005	.007	-.009	.021	.018	.010	-.001	.049	**.038**	**.008**	**.024**	**.053**
Social Class → Political Knowledge → Work for Party	.02	.02	-.01	.06	.007	.010	-.011	.027	.023	.013	-.000	.052	**.033**	**.009**	**.017**	**.053**
Social Class → Political Knowledge → Donate Money Party	.02	.02	-.01	.06	.007	.009	-.011	.025	**.018**	**.009**	**.001**	**.037**	**.043**	**.009**	**.027**	**.061**
Social Class → Political Knowledge → Donate Money Person	.03	.02	-.01	.07	.007	.010	-.012	.027	**.223**	**.011**	**.001**	**.045**	**.049**	**.009**	**.032**	**.068**
Social Class → Political Knowledge → Join Protest	.01	.01	-.00	.04	.008	.011	-.013	.030	.008	.007	-.002	.023	**.024**	**.006**	**.013**	**.037**
Social Class → Political Knowledge → Web Petition	.01	.01	-.01	.04	.005	.008	-.009	.021	**.013**	**.007**	**.000**	**.027**	**.024**	**.005**	**.014**	**.034**
Social Class → Political Knowledge → Paper Petition	.01	.01	-.00	.03	.004	.006	-.007	.016								

Note. Bolded numbers indicate a significant mediation pathway. [+] For the years 2016 and 2020, there was only one item assessing respondents signing of petitions, so those cells are collapsed to represent the single item.

Table 8.

Mediation Results for Political Interest, Comparing Results of ANES data between 2008 – 2020

Mediation Models - Political Interest																
	2008				2012				2016				2020			
			95% CI				95% CI				95% CI				95% CI	
Path	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper
Social Class → Political Interest → Vote	**.04**	**.02**	**.01**	**.08**	**.031**	**.013**	**.006**	**.057**	**.031**	**.010**	**.014**	**.052**	**.059**	**.010**	**.010**	**.080**
Social Class → Political Interest → Attend Rally	**.05**	**.03**	**.00**	**.11**	**.032**	**.015**	**.004**	**.063**	**.045**	**.012**	**.023**	**.071**	**.071**	**.013**	**.047**	**.099**
Social Class → Political Interest → Political Button	**.03**	**.02**	**.00**	**.06**	**.027**	**.012**	**.005**	**.053**	**.058**	**.015**	**.031**	**.090**	**.058**	**.010**	**.039**	**.078**
Social Class → Political Interest → Work for Party	**.07**	**.04**	**.00**	**.15**	**.037**	**.017**	**.007**	**.073**	**.078**	**.023**	**.037**	**.129**	**.076**	**.015**	**.048**	**.011**
Social Class → Political Interest → Donate Money Party	**.06**	**.03**	**.00**	**.12**	**.032**	**.014**	**.006**	**.060**	**.064**	**.017**	**.034**	**.100**	**.083**	**.014**	**.056**	**.111**
Social Class → Political Interest → Donate Money Person	**,06**	**.03**	**.00**	**.13**	**.036**	**.016**	**.004**	**.068**	**.071**	**.017**	**.039**	**.106**	**.085**	**.014**	**.059**	**.113**
Social Class → Political Interest → Join Protest	**.03**	**.01**	**.00**	**.06**	**.035**	**.016**	**.006**	**.068**	**.037**	**.014**	**.015**	**.071**	**.033**	**.007**	**.020**	**.048**
Social Class → Political Interest → Web Petition	**.03**	**.01**	**.00**	**.06**	**.021**	**.010**	**.004**	**.041**	**.035**	**.009**	**.018**	**.055**	**.032**	**.006**	**.021**	**.045**
Social Class → Political Interest → Paper Petition	**.03**	**.02**	**.00**	**.07**	**.018**	**.008**	**.003**	**.036**								

Note. Bolded numbers indicate a significant mediation pathway. [+] For the years 2016 and 2020, there was only one item assessing respondents signing of petitions, so those cells are collapsed to represent the single item

Table 9.

Mediation Results for Sense of Control, Comparing Results of ANES data between 2008 – 2020

Mediation Models - Control																
	2008				2012				2016				2020			
			95% CI				95% CI				95% CI				95% CI	
Path	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper
Social Class → Control → Vote	.00	.01	-.02	.03	**.013**	**.006**	**.001**	**.026**	.013	.010	-.005	.033	**.025**	**.008**	**.009**	**.041**
Social Class → Control → Attend Rally	.00	.01	-.01	.01	**.013**	**.007**	**.000**	**.030**	.011	.008	-.001	.029	**.018**	**.007**	**.006**	**.035**
Social Class → Control → Political Button	.00	.01	-.01	.01	**.013**	**.007**	**.001**	**.027**	.014	.008	-.001	.032	**.023**	**.008**	**.008**	**.040**
Social Class → Control → Work for Party	.00	.01	-.02	.02	**.018**	**.011**	**.001**	**.042**	.021	.014	-.003	.052	**.024**	**.010**	**.008**	**.047**
Social Class → Control → Donate Money Party	.00	.01	-.02	.02	**.019**	**.010**	**.000**	**.039**	.026	.016	-.002	.061	**.039**	**.013**	**.014**	**.065**
Social Class → Control → Donate Money Person	.00	.01	-.02	.02	**.018**	**.009**	**.002**	**.037**	.024	.014	-.002	.053	**.032**	**.011**	**.011**	**.054**
Social Class → Control → Join Protest	.00	.01	-.01	.02	**.007**	**.005**	**.000**	**.018**	.010	.008	-.001	.029	**.007**	**.004**	**.001**	**.015**
Social Class → Control → Web Petition	.00	.01	-.02	.02	**.010**	**.005**	**.000**	**.020**	.010	.006	-.001	.023	**.015**	**.005**	**.005**	**.026**
Social Class → Control → Paper Petition	.00	.00	-.01	.01	**.006**	**.003**	**.000**	**.013**								

Note. Bolded numbers indicate a significant mediation pathway. [+] For the years 2016 and 2020, there was only one item assessing respondents signing of petitions, so those cells are collapsed to represent the single item

Table 10.

Mediation Results for Sense of Power, Comparing Results of ANES data between 2008 – 2020

Mediation Models - Power												
	2008			2012			2016			2020		
Path	Proportion Mediated	Sobel	Sig	Proportion Mediated	Sobel	Sig	Proportion Mediated	Sobel	Sig	Proportion Mediated	Sobel	Sig
Social Class → Power → Vote	.064	.794	> .05	**.314**	**2.95**	**< .05**	.006	.119	> .05	**.048**	**12.50**	**< .05**
Social Class → Power → Attend Rally	.086	.794	> .05	**.504**	**2.92**	**< .05**	.016	.119	> .05	**.189**	**12.76**	**< .05**
Social Class → Power → Political Button	.094	.796	> .05	**.229**	**2.99**	**< .05**	.049	.119	> .05	**.403**	**13.01**	**< .05**
Social Class → Power → Work for Party	.331	.790	> .05	**.416**	**2.86**	**< .05**	.007	.119	> .05	**.089**	**12.67**	**< .05**
Social Class → Power → Donate Money Party	.046	.791	> .05	**.229**	**2.96**	**< .05**	.013	.119	> .05	**.079**	**12.85**	**< .05**
Social Class → Power → Donate Money Person	.047	.795	> .05	**.155**	**2.97**	**< .05**	.006	.119	> .05	**.077**	**12.98**	**< .05**
Social Class → Power → Join Protest	.044	.793	> .05	**.593**	**2.90**	**< .05**	.007	.119	> .05	**.271**	**12.79**	**< .05**
Social Class → Power → Web Petition	.087	.795	> .05	**2.09**	**2.96**	**< .05**	.011	.119	> .05	**.420**	**12.99**	**< .05**
Social Class → Power → Paper Petition	.133	.797	> .05	**.185**	**2.93**	**< .05**						

Note. Bolded numbers indicate a significant mediation pathway. Proportion mediated can vary significantly and can even be negative or greater than 1. In these instances rely on Sobel's z for significance. [+] For the years 2016 and 2020, there was only one item assessing respondents signing of petitions, so those cells are collapsed to represent the single item.

Overall, I find inconsistent mediation patterns for each outcome. Distrust in the government was not a consistent mediator across the different outcomes, mediating only voting behavior and signing a web petition. Trust in the government failed to mediate a single outcome. Political efficacy was more consistent as a mediator as it mediated all pathways except donating money to a political party and signing a web based petition. Similarly, the belief that politics are hard to understand mediated all paths except for donating money to a political party. Political knowledge did not mediate a single pathway. The most consistent mediator was political interest as it mediated all of the tested pathways. Finally, both sense of control and sense of power failed to mediate any outcomes.

Discussion

Across a wide range of political action outcomes, I find a significant relationship between SSS and political action such that higher SSS predicts more political action. This relationship is robust to controlling for objective SES. Interestingly, I find an inconsistent relationship between objective SES and all political action outcomes, suggesting that sometimes objective SES significantly increases political actions whereas sometimes there is no relationship between objective SES and political action. This inconsistent relationship between objective SES and political action may signal that it is not always the case that objective resources increase political action. Instead, there may be a psychological mechanism that links objective resources to political action (via SSS).

That said, I find inconsistent mediation between SSS and different forms of political action. Inconsistent mediation patterns may suggest that a mediational process could be specific to a certain type of political action. For example, distrust in the government may mediate the process between SSS and voting in particular but may not mediate the relationship between SSS

and other political action behaviors (e.g., protesting). If this were the case, I would expect to see consistent mediational patterns across ANES surveys. Thus, to investigate consistent mediation across ANES surveys, I next replicate these results utilizing the 2012 ANES survey.

ANES 2012

Method

Respondents

Data were obtained from the American National Election Studies (ANES) 2012 Time Series Study, (for information on how respondents are sampled, please see http://www.electionstudies.org.). Of the 5,914 sampled, 5,510 reported whether they had voted in the 2012 election[5]. In order to appropriately generalize our analyses to the American voting electorate, I used post-election weights calculated by ANES.

Sensitivity Power Analysis

I ran a sensitivity power analysis using G*Power 3.1.9.4 (Faul et al., 2009). For the analysis I utilized an alpha of .05 and 80% power, and the 5,914 participants as our initial input. I set the probability of the null being true to 20%, and set the R^2 of other X to 0, as I will test the primary model with and without controls. Given our predictor is a continuous variable, I set the X distribution to normal, with the X mu parameter as 0, and the X sigma parameter as 1. The sensitivity power analysis revealed a critical odds ratio of 1.09. Based on these analyses, the sample was large enough to detect the effects reported below.

[5] Participants were not required to complete all questions; thus degrees of freedom vary.

Measures

Unless otherwise specified, all of the measures are identical to what was measured in 2008. Below, I only report on measures that are conceptually similar to the latent construct, but may have been idiosyncratically asked in this specific year.

Socioeconomic Status (SES)

In 2012, income was measured using a 28-point scale (1 = *Less than $5,000 annually*; 28 = *$250,000 or more*) and education was again asked on a 7-point, but with different anchors (1 = *Less than first grade*; 7 = *Doctoral degree*). Both variables were standardized

Subjective Socioeconomic Status (SSS)

Participants rated their SSS from "lower class" to "upper class" on a 5-point scale. The scale included these response options: 1 = *lower class or poor*, 2 = *lower [middle/working class]*, 3 = *average [middle/working class]*, 4 = *upper [middle/working class]*, 5 = *upper class*. The median response for this sample was "average [middle/working class]."

Voting

One item assessed whether or not the respondent participated in the 2012 election. This question stated: "Did respondent (you) vote in the November 2020 elections?" (0 = *Did not vote*, 1 = *Voted*).[6]

Control variables

As in the prior ANES analyses, I controlled for - political ideology (1 = *extremely liberal*; 7 = *extremely conservative*), political party leaning (1 = *strongly Democra*t; 7 = *strongly Republican*), and respondent's race/ethnicity (0 = *non-white*, 1 = *White*).

[6] Note, the question difference between using 'respondent' and 'you' reflects the fact that some individuals were administered the survey questions in a face-to-face interview and some individuals were administered the survey questions on a computer.

Table 11.

Correlations Between Variables of Interest, ANES Data 2012

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Conservative	--	.															
2. Republican	.61**	--															
3. Edu	-.06**	.07**	--														
4. Income	.04**	.13**	.40**	--													
5. SSS	.02	.06**	.19**	.28**	--												
6. White	.10**	.28**	.08**	.16**	.07**	--											
7. Vote2012	.02	0.01	.21**	.20**	.08**	.01	--										
8. Power	.07**	.08**	.08**	.09**	.08**	-.02	.23**	--									
9. Control	-.04**	-.02	-.06**	-.06**	-.04*	.01	-.13**	-.17**	--								
10. PolRallies	-.02	-.01	.06**	.02	.03	-.06**	.09**	.18**	-.05**	--							
11. PolButton	-.02	-.07**	-.01	-.02	.04**	-.11**	.12**	.24**	-.13**	.33**	--						
12. PolPartyWork	-.04**	-.04**	.05**	-.01	.02	-.05**	.08**	.17**	-.05**	.42**	.27**	--					
13. DonateParty	-.02	-.02	.09**	.09**	.09**	-.03	.12**	.21**	-.10**	.31**	.29**	.33**	--				
14. DonatePerson	-.04**	-0.02	.14**	.14**	.15**	-.04**	.16**	.24**	-.12**	.35**	.28**	.31**	.72**	--			
15. JoinProtest	-.09**	-.06**	.08**	.00	.02	-.00	.07**	.16**	-.05**	.25**	.17**	.21**	.15**	.16**	--		
16. WebPetition	-.04**	.00	.16**	.09**	.05**	.04*	.15**	.20**	-.07**	.15**	.16**	.16**	.19**	.23**	.23**	--	
17. PaperPetition	-.07**	-.03	.14**	.09**	.07**	.04**	.16**	.18**	-.07**	.19**	.15**	.16**	.18**	.21**	.21**	.33**	--
18. DiscussPolitics	.02	.06**	.22**	.20**	.09**	.03	.28**	.34**	-.19**	.11**	.16**	.10**	.14**	.17**	.10**	.21**	.19**

Note. White represents a binary variable where 1 = white, 0 = another race. ** indicates $p < .01$. * indicate $p < .05$. Correlation coefficients between two dichotomous variables represent Phi coefficients. Coefficients between dichotomous and continuous variables represent point-biserial correlations. All variable are scaled so that higher numbers represent more of that variable.

Results

First, I examined the correlations between the variables of interest. Table 11 displays the complete results. Consistent with 2008, I find significant and positive correlations between SSS and political action (except for attending political rallies, working for a political party, and taking part in a protest). I also find significant positive correlations between power and all political outcomes (Table 11, column 8).

Regressions

Next, to replicate our findings from the 2008 ANES data, I investigate the effect of SSS on political action behaviors, controlling for variables known to be associated with political outcomes (i.e., race, political party affiliation, and conservative ideology). Similar to our 2008 analyses, I also controlled for education and income in all models, unless otherwise noted. For variables with binary outcomes, I ran logistic regressions. For continuous outcomes, I ran linear regressions. All continuous variables were standardized prior to model entry.

The complete results of the regression analyses can be found in Table 2. Overall, consistent with the 2008 findings, in 2012 I find that SSS significantly predicts increases in: voting behavior, wearing a political button, donating money to a political party, donating money to a candidate, signing a paper petition, and discussing politics with other people. However, inconsistent with 2008, in 2012 SSS did not significant predict: political rally attendance, working for a political party, joining a protest, or signing a web based petition. Also counter to 2008, SSS did not predict one's sense of control. However, consistent with 2008, SSS positively predicts a significant increase in power, $OR = 1.13$, $p = .003$, 95% CI OR [1.04, 1.23].

Exploratory Analyses

Mediations

Next, I conducted the same series of mediation analyses as with the 2008 ANES data to test whether the effects above (i.e., SSS to political outcome) were explained in part by our mediators. To investigate mediation patterns with continuous mediators, I used PROCESS with 5000 bootstrap samples (Model 4; Hayes, 2017)[7]. For the model with a dichotomous mediator, I followed steps adapted from MacKinnon & Dwyer (1993) to determine the percentage of the effect mediated and the Sobel test. As with the previous analyses, all continuous variables were standardized prior to model entry and each model controlled for objective SES (income and education), political party learning, conservative ideology, and race. Full mediation results are presented as follows: distrust in government (Table 3), trust in government (Table 4), political efficacy (Table 5), politics are hard to understand (Table 6), political knowledge (Table 7), interest in politics (Table 8), control (Table 9), and power (Table 10).

Again, I find consistent mediation pathways for a given mediating variable, but not for specific outcomes. Distrust in the government did not significantly mediate between SSS and a single political action outcome. This lack of mediation across all political action outcomes is also inconsistent with that I found in 2008 (where distrust significantly mediated the relationship between SSS and voting and signing a web petition). Consistent with the 2008 data, trust in the government failed to mediate any of the outcomes. For political efficacy, in 2012, there were no significant mediation pathways, replicating a lack of mediation for donating money to a political party and signing a web-based petition that I saw in 2008. These findings are mostly inconsistent

[7] PROCESS does not apply weights during mediation analyses, thus these analyses cannot be generalized to the broader population. Similarly, the mediation analysis with the dichotomous mediator was conducted without weights for consistency.

with the 2008 data where I found significant mediation between SSS and: voting, attending a political rally, wearing a political button, working for a political party, donating money to a candidate, joining a protest, and signing a paper petition. In 2012, the belief that politics are hard to understand significantly mediated all outcomes. This is consistent with the findings from 2008 with one exception – here I find significant mediation for donating money to a political party, and this was non-significant in 2008. For political knowledge I find consistent results with 2008 – no mediating pathway was significant. Also consistent with 2008 were the findings for political interest. In both 2008 and 2012, all mediating pathways were significant. Finally, in 2012, I find that sense of control and sense of power mediated all of the outcomes of interest. However, these findings are to counter to the 2008 data where there were no significant mediations for any outcome.

Discussion

Consistent with the 2008 findings, across a wide range of political action outcomes, I find a significant relationship between SSS and political action such that higher SSS predicts more political action. This relationship is robust to controlling for objective SES. Unfortunately, I generally do not find a consistent mediation pattern between SSS and the wide range of political action outcomes for a given mediator. More critically, I also do not generally find a consistent mediation pattern between SSS and a specific political action outcome for a given mediator across the 2008 and 2012 years. For example, in 2008 distrust in the government mediated the relationship between SSS and voting, but in 2012 distrust in the government did not significantly mediate this relationship. In fact, the only mediators for which I find a similar mediational pattern across the 2008 and 2012 years are: the belief that politics are hard to understand, and political interest.

Although these inconsistent mediational patterns across the 2008 and 2012 years are not encouraging, it is difficult to discern whether there may be a mediational pattern across two time points only. Further, although President Obama was the elected in both of these years (i.e. some consistency), the 2008 election signaled a rise in power by the Tea Party and a general shifting back towards the political right across these years. Thus, the shifting political tides may mean that mediational patterns could become more consistent when I investigate additional years. For this reason, I next examined these same questions utilizing the 2016 ANES data.

ANES 2016

Method

Respondents

Data were obtained from the American National Election Studies (ANES) 2016 Time Series Study, which periodically collects a representative sample of the American electorate. (For information on how respondents are sampled, please see http://www.electionstudies.org.) Of the 4,271 sampled, 3,331 reported whether they had voted in the 2016 election[8]. In order to appropriately generalize our analyses to the American voting electorate, I used post-election weights calculated by ANES.

Sensitivity Power Analysis

Following the same steps from the previous ANES datasets, I ran a sensitivity power analysis using G*Power 3.1.9.4 (Faul et al., 2009). The sensitivity power analysis revealed a critical odds ratio of 1.11. Based on these analyses, the sample was large enough to detect the effects reported below.

[8] Participants were not required to complete all questions; thus degrees of freedom vary.

Measures

Unless otherwise specified, all of the measures are identical to what was measured in 2008 and 2012. Below, I only report on measures that are conceptually similar to the latent construct, but may have been idiosyncratically asked in this specific year.

Socioeconomic status (SES)

Income was measured in the same manner as in 2012. However, education was measured on a 16-point scale in 2016, (1 = *Less than first grade*; 16 = *Doctorate degree*). Both variables were standardized.

Subjective socioeconomic status (SSS)

Participants rated their SSS from "lower class" to "upper class." Participants were randomly assigned to complete either a 6-point or 8-point scale. The 6-point scale included these response options: 1 = *lower class*, 2 = *working class*, 3 = *lower middle class*, 4 = *middle class*, 5 = *upper middle class*, 6 = *upper class*. The 8-point scale included these response options: 1 = *lower class*, 2 = *lower working class*, 3 = *working class*, 4 = *upper working class*, 5 = *lower middle class*, 6 = *middle class*, 7 = *upper middle class*, 8 = *upper class*. Of the participants that completed a version of the SSS measure, 2,649 respondents completed the 6-point scale version and 1,566 respondents completed the 8-point scale version. I investigated whether SSS ranking differed depending on the measure the participant received by running an independent samples *t*-test. Levene's test for equality of variances was significant, so I report the adjusted results. The results revealed that SSS ranking did not differ depending on the measure the respondent received, $t(3285) = 1.47$, $p = .142$, 95% $CI_{\text{Mean Dif}}$ [-.11, .02]. Therefore, I standardized scores for each version separately and then merged them into a single variable where higher numbers represent higher-SSS.

Voting

One item assessed whether or not the respondent participated in the 2016 election. This question stated: "Did respondent (you) vote in the November 2016 elections?" (0 = *Did not vote*, 1 = *Voted*).[9]

Protest Behavior

One item assessed whether respondents had participated in a protest. They were asked, "During the past 12 months, have you joined in a protest march, rally, or demonstration, or have you not done this in the past 12 months?" (0 = *Never have done this*, 1 = *Have done this*).

Petition

The 2016 ANES data utilized one question to assess respondents' engagement with both web and paper based petitions. They were asked, "During the past 12 months, have you signed a petition on the Internet or on paper about a political or social issue, or have you not done this in the past 12 months?" (0 = *Never have done this*, 1 = *Have done this*).

Potential Mediating Variables

Distrust in Government. In order to assess respondents distrust in the government I looked at the following item - "How many of the people running the government are corrupt?" This was asked on a 5-point scale that was recoded such that higher numbers indicate greater distrust in the government, (M = 3.11, SD = 0.89).

Trust in Government. To assess trust in the government, all respondents answered the following item – "How often can you trust the federal government in Washington to do what is

[9] Note, the question difference between using 'respondent' and 'you' reflects the fact that some individuals were administered the survey questions in a face-to-face interview and some individuals were administered the survey questions on a computer.

right?" This item was asked on a 5-point recoded scale with (1 = *Never*, 5 = *Always*; *M* = 2.45, *SD* = 0.89).

Political Efficacy. In order to assess respondents' political efficacy I utilized the following item, "People like me don't have any say about what the government does." This was assessed on a 5-point scale and coded such that higher numbers indicated greater disagreement (1 = *Agree strongly*, 5 = *Disagree strongly*; *M* = 2.71, *SD* = 1.23).

Politics are Hard to Understand. To assess how accessible/understandable politics are, respondents were asked, "How often do politics and government seem so complicated that you can't really understand what's going on?' This was assessed on a 5-point scale and recoded such that higher numbers indicate a greater belief that politics are difficult to understand, (1 = *Never*, 5 = *Always*; *M* = 2.83, *SD* = 1.05).

Political Knowledge. To assess how respondents understanding of political issues they answered the following question, "How well do you understand the important political issues facing our country?" This was assessed on a 5-point scale and recoded such that higher numbers indicate greater agreement with the statement, (1 = *Not at all well*, 5 = *Extremely well*; *M* = 3.08, *SD* = 0.97).

Control variables

As in the prior ANES analyses, I controlled for - political ideology (1 = *extremely liberal*; 7 = *extremely conservative*), political party leaning (1 = *strongly Democra*t; 7 = *strongly Republican*), and respondent's race/ethnicity (0 = *non-white*, 1 = *White*).

Results

First, I examined the correlations between the variables of interest. Table 12 displays the complete results. Overall, I find significant and positive correlations between SSS and political

action (except for wearing a political button, taking part in a protest, and signing a petition). I also find significant positive correlations between power and all political outcomes, (Table 12, column 8). Additionally I find significant negative correlations between control and all political outcomes, (Table 12, Column 9)

Regressions

Next, to replicate our findings from the previous ANES datasets, I investigated the effect of SSS on political action behaviors, controlling for variables known to be associated with political outcomes (i.e., race, political party affiliation, and conservative ideology). Similar to our previous analyses, I also controlled for education and income in all models, unless otherwise noted. For variables with binary outcomes, I ran logistic regressions. For continuous outcomes, I ran linear regressions. All continuous variables were standardized prior to model entry.

The complete results of the regression analyses with SSS as the predictor can be found in Table 2. Consistent with results from 2008 but not 2012, I find that SSS significantly predicts working for a political party. Next, consistent with both 2008 and 2012 I find that SSS significantly predicts, voting, donating money to a party and a candidate, signing a petition, and discussing politics. Counter to the findings from 2008 and 2012, SSS did not significantly predict wearing a political button in 2016. Also counter to 2008 and 2012, SSS did not predict ones sense of power. Further, consistent with 2012, but inconsistent with 2008, SSS did not significantly predict ones sense of control either.

Table 12.

Correlations Between Variables of Interest, ANES Data 2016

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. Conservative	--															
2. Republican	.70**	--														
3. Edu	-.09**	.01	--													
4. Income	.03	.12**	.40**	--												
5. SSS	.01	.09**	.31**	.36**	--											
6. White	.09**	.28**	.13**	.18**	.17**	--										
7. Vote2016	.02	.02	.15**	.17**	.14**	.10**	--									
8. Power	-.06**	-.03	.11**	.09**	.07**	.05**	.14**	--								
9. Control	.02	-.02	-.09**	-.08**	-.08**	-.04*	-.18**	-.18**	--							
10. PolRallies	-.09**	-.06**	.05**	.01	.04*	-.01	.03	.15**	-.07**	--						
11. PolButton	-.07**	-.05**	-.01	-.03	-.03	-.00	.06**	.20**	-.09**	.29**	--					
12. PolPartyWork	-.09**	-.06**	.06**	.02	.04*	-.03	.01	.12**	-.05**	.33**	.28**	--				
13. DonateParty	-.02	-.04*	.07**	.05**	.06**	-.01	.08**	.14**	-.12**	.22**	.24**	.31**	--			
14. DonatePerson	-.10**	-.07**	.16**	.09**	.12**	.02	.09**	.19**	-.14**	.27**	.30**	.30**	.69**	--		
15. JoinProtest	-.17**	-.12**	.03	-.02	.00	-.04*	0.02	.12**	-.04**	.30**	.14**	.20**	.13**	.16**	--	
16. Petition	-.21**	-.12**	.17**	.10**	.02	.01	.10**	.22**	-.10**	.12**	.16**	.12**	.14**	.22**	.21**	--
17. DiscussPolitics	.03	.06**	.22**	.17**	.17**	.08**	.16**	.32**	-.20**	.09**	.09**	.03	.06**	.12**	.06**	.13**

Note. White represents a binary variable where 1 = white, 0 = another race. ** indicates $p < .01$. * indicate $p < .05$. Correlation coefficients between two dichotomous variables represent Phi coefficients. Coefficients between dichotomous and continuous variables represent point-biserial correlations. All variable are scaled so that higher numbers represent more of that variable.

Exploratory Analyses

Mediations

Next, I conducted the same series of mediation analyses as with the 2008 and 2012 ANES data to test whether the effects above (i.e., SSS to political outcome) were explained in part by our mediators. To investigate mediation patterns with continuous mediators, I used PROCESS with 5000 bootstrap samples (Model 4; Hayes, 2017)[10]. For the model with a dichotomous mediator, I followed steps adapted from MacKinnon & Dwyer (1993) to determine the percentage of the effect mediated and the Sobel test. As with the previous analyses, all continuous variables were standardized prior to model entry and each model controlled for objective SES (income and education), political party learning, conservative ideology, and race. Full mediation results are presented as follows: distrust in government (Table 3), trust in government (Table 4), political efficacy (Table 5), politics are hard to understand (Table 6), political knowledge (Table 7), interest in politics (Table 8), control (Table 9), and power (Table 10).

As in both the 2008 and 2012 ANES data, I once again find inconsistent results regarding the mediators. Distrust in the government was a significant mediator for signing a petition, which is consistent with 2008 where signing a web petition was significant. Distrust also mediates joining a protest – a first for this out. The 2016 data also fails to replicate the finding from 2008 around voting behavior. Trust on the other hand remained consistent with both the 2008 and 2012 data with one exception. In 2016, trust in the government was a significant mediator for signing a petition. When looking at political efficacy, in 2016 I find two significant effects. SSS

[10] PROCESS does not apply weights during mediation analyses, thus these analyses cannot be generalized to the broader population. Similarly, the mediation analysis with the dichotomous mediator was conducted without weights for consistency.

mediates SSS and both voting behavior and donating money to a political party. This is the first time that donating money has been significant, while the voting behavior finding replicates the 2008 finding, with a null finding in 2012. The belief that politics are hard to understand shows some amount of consistency across the years. For example, it is a significant mediator for voting, wearing a political button, donating money to a political candidate, and signing a petition across 2008, 2012, and 2016. It is not significant for attending a rally, working for a political party or attending a protest, which were significant in 2008 and 2012. Lastly, donating money to a political party was significant in 2016, which replicates the 2012 data, but it was not significant in 2008. Political knowledge was also inconsistent, but this time it is because we find significant mediation paths. In 2016, attending a rally, donating money to both a political party and a political candidate, and signing a petition were all significant – the opposite of the findings in 2008 and 2012. Political interest was once again the most consistent mediator – it was a significant mediator for all outcome variables, and this is consistent with 2008 and 2012. Finally, in 2016, I find that sense of control and sense of power do not mediate a single outcome of interest. These findings are to counter to the 2012 data where there was significant mediation for every outcome, but are in line with the 2008 data where there were also no significant mediations for any outcome.

Discussion

Consistent with the 2008 and 2012 findings, across a wide range of political action outcomes, I find a significant relationship between SSS and political action such that higher SSS predicts more political action. This relationship is robust to controlling for objective SES. Interestingly, and similar to the 2008 and 2012 findings, I again find an inconsistent relationship between objective SES and all political action outcomes. This inconsistent relationship objective

SES and political action may signal that it is not always the case that objective resources increase political action.

Again, I generally do not find a consistent mediation pattern between SSS and the wide range of political action outcomes for a given mediator. More critically, I also do not generally find a consistent mediation pattern between SSS and a specific political action outcome for a given mediator across the 2008 and 2012 years. Most critically to my research hypotheses, two of my main mediators of interest (power and control) failed to mediate a single outcome in 2016. In fact, the only mediators for which I find a similar mediational pattern across the 2008, 2012, 2016 years are: politics are hard to understand, and political interest.

Again, these inconsistent mediational patterns across the 2008, 2012, and 2016 years are not encouraging. However, in 2016 we see a historic shift toward the far right and the rise of the populist movement and alt-right voting with the election of President Trump. This shift may make 2016 a particularly aberrant year. Thus, while I still find a significant relationship between SSS and a wide range of political action outcomes (similar to 2008 and 2012), the particular political shifts across these years may mean that mediational patterns between SSS and political action outcomes are more dependent on the political tides and thus may not be consistent across years. For the sake of completeness and to get a fuller picture of the relationship between SSS and political action outcomes, I finally turn to the 2020 ANES data.

ANES 2020

Method

Respondents

Data were obtained from the American National Election Studies (ANES) 2020 Time Series Study, which periodically collects a representative sample of the American electorate.

(For information on how respondents are sampled, please see http://www.electionstudies.org.) Of the 8,280 sampled, 7,489 reported whether they had voted in the 2020 election[11]. In order to appropriately generalize our analyses to the American voting electorate, I used post-election weights calculated by ANES.

Sensitivity Power Analysis

Following the same steps from the previous ANES datasets, I ran a sensitivity power analysis using G*Power 3.1.9.4 (Faul et al., 2009). The sensitivity power analysis revealed a critical odds ratio of 1.08. Based on these analyses, the sample was large enough to detect the effects reported below.

Measures

Unless otherwise specified, all of the measures are identical to what was measured in 2008. Below, I only report on measures that are conceptually similar to the latent construct, but may have been idiosyncratically asked in this specific year.

Socioeconomic status (SES)

Income was measured in a similar manner to previous years. In 2020 however, participants responded on a 22-point scale (1 = *Under $9,999 annually*; 22 = *$250,000 or more*). Similarly, education was measured on an 8-point scale, (1 = *Less than high school*; 8 = *Professional school degree*). Both variables were standardized.

Subjective socioeconomic status (SSS)

Participants rated their SSS from "lower class" to "upper class" on a 4-point scale. The scale included these response options: 1 = *lower class*, 2 = *working class*, 3 = *middle class*, 4 = *upper class*. The median response for this sample was "middle class."

[11] Participants were not required to complete all questions; thus degrees of freedom vary.

Voting

One item assessed whether or not the respondent participated in the 2020 election. This question stated: "Did respondent (you) vote in the November 2020 elections?" (0 = *Did not vote*, 1 = *Voted*).[12]

Control variables

As in the prior ANES analyses, I controlled for - political ideology (1 = *extremely liberal*; 7 = *extremely conservative*), political party leaning (1 = *strongly Democra*t; 7 = *strongly Republican*), and respondent's race/ethnicity (0 = *non-white*, 1 = *White*).

Results

First, I examined the correlations between the variables of interest. Table 13 displays the complete results. Overall, I find significant positive correlations between SSS and every political action outcome. Further, replicating results from the 2016 ANES data, I find significant positive correlations between power and all political outcomes, (Table 13, column 8), as well as significant negative correlations between control and all political action outcomes, (Table 13, Column 9)

Regressions

Next, to replicate our findings from the previous ANES datasets, I investigated the effect of SSS on political action behaviors, controlling for variables known to be associated with political outcomes (i.e., race, political party affiliation, and conservative ideology). Similar to our previous analyses, I also controlled for education and income in all models, unless otherwise

[12] Note, the question difference between using 'respondent' and 'you' reflects the fact that some individuals were administered the survey questions in a face-to-face interview and some individuals were administered the survey questions on a computer.

noted. For variables with binary outcomes, I ran logistic regressions. For continuous outcomes, I ran linear regressions. All continuous variables were standardized prior to model entry.

The complete results of the regression analyses with SSS as the predictor can be found in Table 2. The results form 2020 show that SSS predicts all outcome variables as well as sense of power and control. This is consistent with the 2008 data, where all outcome variables were also significant. Breaking these findings down further, voting behavior, donating money to a political party or political candidate, signing a petition, and discussing politics were significant across 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020. Attendance at a political rally was only significant in 2020 and 2008, as was joining a protest. Wearing a political button was significant in all years except 2016. Working for a political party was significant in all years except 2012. Counter to null findings in 2012 and 2016, in 2020 (and consistent with 2008 data) we find that SSS significantly predicts a decrease in sense of control, $\beta = -0.04$, 95% CI [-0.04, -0.03]. Finally, consistent with all years except 2016, SSS predicts a significant increase in power, $OR = 1.07$, $p < .001$, 95% CI OR [1.06, 1.09].

Exploratory Analyses

Mediations

Next, I conducted the same series of mediation analyses as with the 2008, 2012, and 2016 ANES data to test whether the effects above (i.e., SSS to political outcome) were explained in part by our mediators. To investigate mediation patterns with continuous mediators, I used PROCESS with 5000 bootstrap samples (Model 4; Hayes, 2017)[13]. For the model with

[13] PROCESS does not apply weights during mediation analyses, thus these analyses cannot be generalized to the broader population. Similarly, the mediation analysis with the dichotomous mediator was conducted without weights for consistency.

Table 13.

Correlations Between Variables of Interest, ANES Data 2020

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. Conservative	--															
2. Republican	.75**	--														
3. Edu	-.16**	-.11**	--													
4. Income	-.01	.02**	.38**	--												
5. SSS	-.03**	-.02**	.38**	.45**	--											
6. White	.11**	.24**	.09**	.14**	.13**	--										
7. Vote2020	-.01*	-.04**	.23**	.21**	.21**	.12**	--									
8. Power	-.02**	-.03**	.08**	.06**	.08**	.05**	.14**	--								
9. Control	-.01**	.03**	-.06**	-.07**	-.07**	-.06**	-.21**	-.17**	--							
10. PolRallies	.01**	.03**	.04**	.03**	.04**	.01**	.05**	.14**	-.06**	--						
11. PolButton	.01**	.01*	-.00	.03**	.03**	.06**	.10**	.24**	-.14**	.25**	--					
12. PolPartyWork	-.13**	-.11**	.10**	.05**	.09**	.01**	.05**	.15**	-.07**	.30**	.14**	--				
13. DonateParty	-.06**	-.08**	.13**	.11**	.12**	.06**	.13**	.17**	-.17**	.14**	.21**	.18**	--			
14. DonatePerson	-.13**	-.12**	.21**	.15**	.18**	.08**	.16**	.22**	-.18**	.21**	.25**	.24**	.69**	--		
15. JoinProtest	-.20**	-.14**	.10**	.02**	.05**	-.01*	.06**	.16**	-.05**	.29**	.18**	.13**	.11**	.19**	--	
16. Petition	-.19**	-.13**	.15**	.06**	.05**	.01**	.11**	.23**	-.13**	.12**	.19**	.14**	.21**	.26**	.29**	--
17. DiscussPolitics	-.03**	-.01**	.15**	.17**	.13**	.10**	.19**	.21**	-.14**	.06**	.11**	.05**	.07**	.10**	.07**	.15**

Note. White represents a binary variable where 1 = white, 0 = another race. ** indicates $p < .01$. * indicate $p < .05$. Correlation coefficients between two dichotomous variables represent Phi coefficients. Coefficients between dichotomous and continuous variables represent point-biserial correlations. All variable are scaled so that higher numbers represent more of that variables

dichotomous mediator, I followed steps adapted from MacKinnon & Dwyer (1993) to determine the percentage of the effect mediated and the Sobel test. As with the previous analyses, all continuous variables were standardized prior to model entry and each model controlled for objective SES (income and education), political party learning, conservative ideology, and race. Full mediation results are presented as follows: distrust in government (Table 3), trust in government (Table 4), political efficacy (Table 5), politics are hard to understand (Table 6), political knowledge (Table 7), interest in politics (Table 8), control (Table 9), and power (Table 10).

As in previous three sets of ANES data, I once again find inconsistent results regarding the mediators. Distrust in the government was a significant mediator for donating money to both a political party and a political candidate, as well as attending a political rally. These significant results were unique to the 2020 data. Replicating results from 2008 and 2016, distrust also significantly mediated signing a petition. Replicating 2016, distrust was a significant mediator of joining protest. Last, replicating the findings from 2008, distrust was a mediator of voting behavior. In prior years, trust in the government was only a significant mediator for signing a petition (in 2016), with no other significant results. In 2020, not only was signing a petition significant, but so was: voting, wearing a political button, donating money to both a political party and political candidate, and joining a protest. When looking at political efficacy, the 2020 results most clearly replicate the data from 2008. Specifically in both year, wearing a political button, working for a political party, donating money to a political candidate, joining a protest, and signing a petition were significant. Additionally, voting was significant in 2008, 2016, and 2020. Finally, donating money to a political party was significant in 2016 and 2020. The belief that politics are hard to understand was significant for every outcome in 2020. The replicates the

findings from 2012 that also found all statistically significant mediation. Differing from the 2016 data, attending a rally, working for a party and joining a protest were all significant in 2020, but not 2016. The only other discrepancy across years for this variable is for donating money – it was non-significant in 2008, but significant in all subsequent years. For the first time, political knowledge was a significant mediator for all outcomes. It failed to mediate a single outcome in 2008 and 2012. The significant results in 2020 match the 2016 data for, attending a rally, donating money to both a political party and a political candidate, and signing a petition. Political interest remained the most consistent mediator – all outcomes were mediated in every year of the ANES data analyzed. Finally, in 2020, I find that sense of control and sense of power mediate every outcome of interest which replicates the findings from 2012. These findings are to counter to the 2008 and 2016 data where there was no significant mediation for any outcome.

Discussion

Consistent with the 2008, 2012, and 2016 findings, across a wide range of political action outcomes, I tend to find a significant relationship between SSS and political action such that higher SSS predicts more political action. This relationship is robust to controlling for objective SES. Interestingly, and similar to the 2008, 2012, and 2016 findings, I again find an inconsistent relationship between objective SES and all political action outcomes. This inconsistent relationship objective SES and political action may signal that it is not always the case that objective resources increase political action.

Again, I generally do not find a consistent mediation pattern between SSS and the wide range of political action outcomes for a given mediator. More critically, I also do not generally find a consistent mediation pattern between SSS and a specific political action outcome for a given mediator across the 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020 years. In fact, the only mediators for

which I find a similar mediational pattern across the 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020 years are: politics is hard to understand, and political interest. Moreover, political interest is the only mediator that was completely consistent across all years of the ANES data.

If you remember, I was particularly interested in whether SSS and political action outcomes were mediated by one's sense of control and sense of power. However, because I was utilizing ANES data (which has obvious advantages, such as being able to investigate patterns over time with a representative sample of the American Electorate), I was limited by using the items that were asked in these surveys. And, while some constructs (e.g., political self-efficacy) utilized well-validated scales, other constructs (e.g., one's sense of control and sense of power) did not. Thus, with the ANES data I was forced to settle for items that only loosely were related to these constructs of interest. Because, in my opinion, this is a severe limitation of the ANES data, I sought to investigate whether the relationship between SSS and a wide range of political action outcomes was mediated by one's sense of control and sense of power using well-validated measures of both constructs in a nationally representative quota sample in Study 2.

Study 2: Nationally Representative Study

This study sought to investigate the relationship between SSS and a wide range of political action outcomes was mediated by one's sense of control and sense of power using well-validated measures of both constructs. These data were collected during the 2020 primaries, prior to the summer party conventions by Lucid.

Method

Participants

Previous research by Oppenheimer and colleagues (2009) suggests that attention checks can improve data quality, thus an attention check was included as the first item in the survey,

with participants who incorrectly answered the survey being excluded from analyses (N = 238). The final sample included 295 participants, however not all participants completed all measures, so the degrees of freedom vary across analyses. The sample was comprised of 144 men and 151 women. The average age was 49.50 (SD = 16.52), the median level of education was a 2-year college degree and the median income was between $40,000 and $49,999.

Sensitivity Analyses

I ran a sensitivity power analysis using G*Power 3.1.9.4 (Faul et al., 2009) to determine the minimum effect size our sample would be able to detect. The sensitivity power analysis revealed an f^2 value of .027, which converts to an R^2 value of .026. Based on these analyses, the sample is large enough to detect what are traditionally considered to be small effect sizes.

Measures

Socioeconomic status (SES)

To measure SES I asked participants to indicate their income (range from less than $5,000 to more than $175,000; *Mdn* = $40,000-$49,999), and their highest level of education ranging from less than a high school diploma to a doctoral level degree (*Mdn* = 2-year college degree).

Subjective Socioeconomic Status (SSS)

Unlike in the ANES data, here to assess participant's SSS I used the MacArthur Ladder (Adler et al., 2000). The MacArthur ladder asks participants to imagine a ladder that represents the social hierarchy (e.g., the United States, within a social group, etc.). At the top of the ladder are the people who are the best off, and those at the bottom of the ladder are the worst. Participants were instructed to indicate where on the ladder they fall (M = 5.41, SD = 1.96). In addition, participants also completed a 6-item measure aimed at assessing the SSS while growing

up and as an adult (Griskevicius et al., 2011). Sample items include the following: "I grew up in a relatively wealthy neighborhood" (childhood focus; *M* = 3.75, *SD* = 1.63; Cronbach's α = .81) and "I have enough money to buy things I want" (adult focus); *M* = 4.03, *SD* = 1.96; Cronbach's α = .87). All items were assessed on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree,* 7 = *strongly agree*). Given they were on different scales, I standardized and then combined the adult-SSS scale with the MacArthur ladder to create an index of SSS, where higher numbers indicate higher subjective socioeconomic status (*M* = .01, SD = .89; Spearman-Brown = .72).

Voting Behavior

To assess voting behavior I asked participants how often in the last four years participants voted in local[state/national] elections from never (1) to almost always (5). These items were averaged together to create an index of voting where higher values indicate more frequent voting behavior (*M* = 3.68, *SD* = 1.45, Cronbach's α = .95).

Political Rally Attendance

Again, based off on questions asked in the ANES, I asked participants, "How frequently in the last 4 years did you attended a political rally, speech, debate, or campaign event?" This was asked on a 1-5 scale with higher numbers indicating greater attendance, (*M* = 1.69, *SD* = 1.10).

Campaign Button

I asked participants how frequently in the last 4 years the, "Posted signs (such as on your lawn) or stickers (such as on your car or computer) for a political candidate, political party, political issue or an organization that supported political candidates running for office." This was asked on a 5-point scale, (*1* = Never, *5* = All the time; *M* = 1.91, *SD* = 1.22).

Work for a Political Campaign/Party

I asked participants, "How frequently in the last 4 years did you volunteer for a candidate, political party, or an organization that supported political candidates running for office?" This was asked on a 1-5 scale with higher numbers indicating greater attendance, (M = 1.61, SD = 1.05)

Protest Behavior

I asked participants, "How frequently in the last 4 years did you take part in a political protest, march, or demonstration?" This was asked on a 1-5 scale with higher numbers indicating a greater number of protests attended, (M = 1.66, SD = 1.12)

Petition

I asked participants, "How frequently in the last 4 years did you sign a petition about a political issue?" This was asked on a 1-5 scale with higher numbers indicating a greater number of petitions signed, (M = 2.21, SD = 1.31)

Discussing Politics

I asked participants, "How frequently in the last 4 years did you discuss political parties, candidates, and/or political issues with others?" This was asked on a 1-5 scale with higher numbers indicating a greater number a greater frequency of these discussions, (M = 3.18, SD = 1.07)

Potential Mediating Variables

Sense of Control. To measure participants' sense of control, I used a modified version of the Lachman and Weaver scale (1998). Sample items include, "What happens in my life is often beyond my control" (reverse coded) and "Whether or not I am able to get what I want is in my own hands." All items were assessed on a 6-point scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 6 = *Strongly*

agree). Negatively worded items were reverse coded and all items were averaged together to create an index of participants' sense of control where higher values indicated a greater sense of control (M = 4.20, SD = .87, Cronbach's α = .76).

Sense of Power. In order to assess people's sense of power I used Anderson and colleagues (2012) sense of power scale. Items include, "I can get other people to listen to what I say" and "Even if I voice them, my views have little sway on others' opinions" (reverse scored). All negatively worded items were recoded so that higher numbers indicate greater perceived power and all items were averaged together to create an index of perceived power (M = 3.79, SD = .90, Cronbach's α = .84).

I also measured sense of power using an item based on the ANES questions. Specifically, I asked, "How frequently in the last 4 years did you try to change others' opinions on political parties, candidates, and/or political issues?" This was asked on a 5-point scale where higher numbers indicated a greater frequency of doing the action, (M = 2.40, SD = 1.24).

Deservingness. To assess participants' perceptions of deservingness of their status, they were your asked: "Do you think you deserve [earned/are entitled to] your current socioeconomic standing?" (1 = *completely undeserved/unearned/unentitled*, 6 = *completely deserved/earned/entitled*; M = 4.15, SD = 1.38; Cronbach's α = .81).

Political Interest. I asked participants, "How frequently in the last 4 years did you stay up to date on government or political affairs (such as by watching the news, reading the newspaper, finding information online, etc.?" This was asked on a 1-5 scale with higher numbers indicating a greater number a greater frequency, (M = 3.41, SD = 1.26)

Control Variables

In addition to the variables above, I also measured participants' political party affiliation (*Mdn* = Independent) and their political identity related to social and fiscal issues. These two items were assessed on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly liberal*, 7 = *Strongly conservative*), and these items were averaged together to create an index of conservative ideology (*M* = 4.00, *SD* = 1.78, Spearman-Brown = .89). I also controlled for participants', race/ethnicity (0 = *non-white*, 1 = *White*).

Results

Table 14 displays the bivariate correlations between the variables of interest. First, SSS was positively correlated to all political action outcomes with the exception of signing a petition. These results are conceptually similar to ANES data years 2008, 2012, 2016 and 2020. Importantly, the correlation between SSS and voting behavior was significant across all ANES years as well as in this study. Finally, SSS was positively correlated with feelings of deservingness, sense of control and sense of power. This replicates the findings for sense of power in all years of the ANES data. Regarding sense of control, although there is a significant correlation, in this data it is a positive coefficient, while in the ANES data the coefficient was negative for 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020.

Regressions

Next, and consistent with the ANES analyses I conducted a series of regressions where I control for variables known to be associated with voting behavior (i.e., race, political party affiliation, and conservative ideology). Further, I also control for SES (income and education) to determine the effect of SSS on political action above and beyond the influence of SES. All continuous variables were standardized prior to model entry.

Table 14.

Correlations Between Variables of Interest, Study 2

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. Conservative	1															
2. Republican	.636**	1														
3. Edu	-.023	-.016	1													
4. Income	.029	.061	.444**	1												
5. SSS	.031	.047	.354**	.618**	1											
6. White	.109*	.236**	.047	.123**	.019	1										
7. VoteBx	.084	.015	.293**	.241**	.246**	.120**	1									
8. Power	.015	.038	.127**	.264**	.363**	.032	.185**	1								
9. Control	.104*	.03	.047	.275**	.404**	.088*	.167**	.534**	1							
10. Deservingness	.129**	.121**	.223**	.409**	.576**	.072	.184**	.226**	.287**	1						
11. PolRallies	-.034	.023	.202**	.078	.216**	-.082	.129**	-.04	-.156**	.099*	1					
12. PolButton	.035	.038	.172**	.055	.232**	-.102*	.186**	-.071	-.226**	.082	.636**	1				
13. PolInterest	.055	.024	.181**	.169**	.193**	.078	.517**	.156**	.114*	.169**	.189**	.197**	1			
14. PolPartyWork	-.048	.069	.144**	.027	.218**	-.154**	.106*	-.113*	-.258**	.065	.648**	.628**	.087	1		
15. JoinProtest	-.104*	-.039	.139**	.018	.176**	-.169**	.075	-.092*	-.228**	.01	.730**	.584**	.110*	.718**	1	
16. Petition	-.121**	-.098*	.109*	.046	.048	-.052	.316**	-.03	-.109*	-.012	.505**	.437**	.327**	.432**	.547**	1
17. DiscussPolitics	.016	.056	.168**	.174**	.173**	.04	.386**	.109*	-.004	.106*	.343**	.364**	.561**	.266**	.262**	.390**

Note. White represents a binary variable where 1 = white, 0 = non-white. ** indicates $p < .01$. * indicate $p < .05$. All variable are scaled so that higher numbers represent more of that variable.

The complete results of the regression analyses with SSS as the predictor can be found in Table 15. Overall, I find that SSS significantly predicts increases in political rally attendance (consistent with 2008 and 2020 ANES data), wearing a political button (consistent with 2008, 2012, and 2020), working for a political party (2008, 2016, and 2020) and joining a protest (2008 and 2020). I also find that SSS predicts a significant increase in control, $\beta = .42$, $SE = .08$, $p < .001$, which is in the opposite direction of the ANES data where I found significant negative results in 2008 and 2020. Consistent with the ANES data I also find a significant increase in sense of power, $\beta = .40$, $SE = .09$, $p < .001$, which is similar to the findings in 2008, 2012, and 2020.

Table 15

Standardized coefficients, standard errors, and confidence intervals for outcome and mediation variables of interest.

Variable	β	SE	95% CI	p-value
VotingBehavior	.06	.08	-.10, .22	.461
Power	**.40**	**.09**	**.23, .57**	**< .001**
Control	**.42**	**.08**	**.26, .58**	**< .001**
Deservingness	**.58**	**.07**	**.44, .72**	**< .001**
PoliticalInterest	.08	.08	-.08, .25	.308
PolRallyAttendance	**.23**	**.07**	**.10, .36**	**< .001**
WearPolButton	**.28**	**.07**	**.15, .42**	**< .001**
WorkforParty	**.24**	**.07**	**.11, .37**	**< .001**
JoinProtest	**.17**	**.07**	**.03, .30**	**.017**
Petition	.01	.09	-.15, .18	.869
DiscussPolitics	.06	.09	-.10, .23	.463

Note. All variables are scaled such that higher numbers indicate more of that variable. All variables were standardized.

Exploratory Mediations

Next, I tested the extent to which deservingness, political interest, control and power mediated the relationship between SSS and political outcomes. To investigate mediation patterns with continuous mediators, I used PROCESS with 5000 bootstrap samples (Model 4; Hayes, 2017)[14]. As seen in Table 16, I found evidence consistent with mediation for a few different variables.

First looking at deservingness, a variable that was not present in the ANES, I find no significant mediation effects for any outcome variable. Next, looking a political interest, a construct that was present in the ANES data, I also find no significant mediations. This is counter to the ANES data where political interest mediated all outcome variables across all years of the ANES data. Next looking at sense of control, another construct that was present in the ANES data, we do find some significant mediation pathways. Specifically, control mediates the relationship between SSS and: voting (positive), wearing a political button (negative), working for a political party (negative), and attending a protest (negative). With the exception of voting behavior, these results are in the opposite direction of the effects found with the ANES data. Further, these significant results only replicate significance, not direction for the 2012 and 2020 ANES. No other pathways were significant. Lastly, I examined the role of power as a mediator. First, I examined the mediating effect of power using the scale. Here I found that power significantly mediated voting behavior (positive) and working for a political party (negative) but found no other significant mediations. The results for voting conceptually replicate the findings from 2008 and 2020, but working for a political party, although significant is in the opposite

[14] PROCESS does not apply weights during mediation analyses, thus these analyses cannot be generalized to the broader population. Similarly, the mediation analysis with the dichotomous mediator was conducted without weights for consistency.

direction of the ANES data. Finally, examining power using the same item from the ANES data, I find no significant results in this data. This is counter to the ANES data where I found that power was a significant mediator for all outcomes in both 2012 and 2020.

Discussion

Consistent with the ANES 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020 findings, across a wide range of political action outcomes, I tend to find a significant relationship between SSS and political action such that higher SSS predicts more political action. This relationship is robust to controlling for objective SES. Importantly and counter to the findings from the ANES data where this relationship is significant across 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020, I do not find that SSS predicts voting behavior.

Critically, when using well-validated measures of one's self control and sense of power I find significant mediation between SSS and political action outcomes, however these findings are not consistent, nor do these constructs significantly mediate the relationship between SSS and all outcome variables. While of course there are limitations to these data, this finding suggests that researchers need to consider both of these constructs and how these constructs are measured to better investigate whether they predict political action outcomes.

Table 16

Standardized coefficients, standard errors, and confidence intervals for mediation results.

	Deservingness				Political Interest				Control				Power				Power (ANES)			
			95% CI				95% CI				95% CI				95% CI				95% CI	
SSS → Mediator → Outcome	β	SE	Lower	Upper	β	SE	Lower	Upper	β	SE	Lower	Upper	β	SE	Lower	Upper	β	SE	Lower	Upper
VotingBehavior	-.011	.041	-.091	.070	.036	.039	-.042	.113	**.045**	**.025**	**.003**	**.102**	**.051**	**.028**	**.002**	**.115**	.033	.023	-.008	.082
AttendPolRally	-.011	.032	-.082	.046	.013	.014	-.017	.042	-.024	.024	-.073	.021	-.019	.021	-.064	.020	.062	.042	-.016	.146
PolButton	-.006	.038	-.080	.067	.010	.012	-.011	.035	**-.062**	**.027**	**-.119**	**-.011**	-.040	.024	-.089	.004	.061	.042	-.017	.143
WorkforParty	-.022	.035	-.098	.040	.004	.007	-.008	.020	**-.078**	**.026**	**-.135**	**-.033**	**-.053**	**.023**	**-.104**	**-.013**	.050	.034	-.013	.118
Protest	-.056	.036	-.139	.004	.009	.011	-.011	.033	**-.049**	**.023**	**-.097**	**-.009**	-.038	.023	-.091	.001	.055	.037	-.015	.133
Petition	-.066	.045	-.156	.021	.023	.029	-.032	.085	-.023	.032	-.093	.039	-.011	.030	-.074	.044	.064	.045	-.029	.147
DiscussPol	-.032	.043	-.117	.052	.047	.050	-.054	.143	-.008	.023	-.062	.050	.027	.026	-.022	.079	.086	.054	-.027	.189

Note. All variables have been standardized. Bolded paths are significant at the $p < .05$ level.

General Discussion

The current work sought to investigate whether SSS is associated with political actions broadly construed, and sought to understand what mediates the relationship between SSS and political actions. Using data from nationally representative samples of the American electorate across four separate elections, as well as a separate nationally representative quota sample of American voters, I found that higher-SSS individuals were more likely to partake in a wide range of political actions. Further, this pattern is robust to controlling for income, education, political ideology, political affiliation, and race. This relationship suggests that SSS may be particularly important to consider when trying to understand political actions. Further, this finding suggests that SSS may indicate a psychological mechanism that underlies how objective resources may lead to political actions.

In order to further understand this potential psychological mechanism, I investigated whether a number of different constructs mediated the relationship between SSS and political actions. In particular, I investigated the following constructs as potential mediators: distrust in the government, trust in the government, political efficacy, the belief politics are hard to understand, political knowledge, political interest, sense of control, sense of power, and feelings of deservingness. To ensure that the results were not due to idiosyncrasies associated with a particular political action or particular timepoint in history, I investigated these mediational patterns across a wide range of political actions (from voting to protesting) and years (2008-2020) using a representative sample of the American Electorate with ANES data. In addition, because I was limited by ANES questions which loosely approximate two key meditators of interest: one's sense of power and control, I also collected a representative quota sample of Americans and asked well-validated measures of these constructs.

Overall, however, I do not find evidence for consistent mediation for any psychological constructs of interest to me. What I did find is that having an interest in politics was the most consistent mediator for the ANES data, mediating every outcome. However, for the quota sample, an interest in politics failed to mediate a single pathway. The next most consistent mediator was the belief that politics are hard to understand. This construct mediated all outcome variables in 2012 and 2020, while only failing to mediate donating money to a political party (2008), attending a political rally (2016), working for a political party (2016), and joining a protest (2016). Importantly, the Study 2 quota sample did not have a measure of this construct, so I am unable generalize beyond the ANES data.

Although I do find these consistent mediators, I was particularly interested in the role of perceived power and one's sense of control as mediators to political action. Unfortunately, I do not find consistent mediation with these variables. In the ANES data, perceived power and control significantly mediated all outcomes in 2012 and 2020, however failed to mediate a single outcome in 2008 and 2016. Additionally, the well-validated measure of power only mediated voting behavior and working for a political party in Study 2. Also in Study 2, the single item measure power that was also used in the ANES data was not a significant mediator for any outcome. The most consistent mediator in Study 2 was the well-validated measure of control. This measure was a significant mediator for voting, wearing a political button, working for a political party, and attending a protest. Importantly, these were all negative coefficients, with the exception of voting behavior, which had a positive effect. Specifically, SSS was associated with an increase in one's sense of control, and this is turn was associated with an increase in voting behavior. These results are counter to the ANES data, which showed control having a positive effect on all political outcomes in 2012 and 2020, and having no effect in 2008 and 2016.

This lack of consistency may be a result of scale issues. In particular, in the ANES data, the construct used in the mediation analyses were most commonly just a single item that roughly approximated the desired construct. For example, political self-efficacy was measured using two items in 2008 and 2012, but only one item in 2016 and 2020. Further, I did not include a measure of self-efficacy in the quota sample so it is unclear what effect a more validated measure of self-efficacy would have had on the findings. Additionally, a sense of power and control were the primary mediators of interest, and these constructs may have suffered from scale issues. In the ANES data, the item chosen to represent control was a very loose proxy of the construct – does it matter who is in power? This does not tap fully into the construct of sense of control, and thus may have contributed to our inconsistent findings. Similarly, to stand in for a measure of power I chose a variable that simply asked respondents if they had tried to change someone's mind about the election. While this can work as a proxy, it is limited in the scope of what we might find using a better version of the construct. We also see in the quota sample that this item failed to mediate any political outcome. Thus, it is important to be consistent and clear when choosing measures to examine an effect.

Implications

The current dissertation has important implications for understanding the motivational processes of political action. The findings indicate that, on average, a person's SSS is associated with various forms of political action, even controlling for more objective measures of social status. This work adds to the previous literature that investigated the role of individual characteristics (e.g., education, income, race, gender) and extends it to examine not just the role of SSS but also the psychological mechanisms that might link social status to political action.

This work contributes to the current literature examining the role of SSS above and beyond the role of SES in predicting outcomes (e.g., Adler et al., 2000; 2008), and expands it into the political domain. By demonstrating that higher-SSS individuals are more politically active than lower-SSS individuals controlling for variables known to be associated with political participation I highlight that it is important to examine people's subjective evaluation of their position, not just their objective resources. However, given that SES also predicts many of the same political action items as SSS, it is important to recognize and acknowledge that SSS is likely informed by people's objective SES. Further, Adler and colleagues (2008) found that the relationship between SSS and SES might follow different patterns depending on a person's race and gender so it is important to consider both variables and their relationship when examining outcomes.

Limitations

This research is not without limitations. In particular, the current research does not provide an exhaustive understanding of how SSS may influence voting and other political actions. I imagine that political knowledge and political efficacy may further explain the relationship between SES or SSS and voting. That is, higher-SES/SSS individual may have more knowledge of the political system as these individuals tend to go to better quality schools (e.g., Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2006; Pribesh, Gavigan, & Dickinson, 2011) and live in areas where political knowledge is more overtly displayed (e.g., Burbank, 1997; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Relatedly, higher-SES/SSS may have a greater sense of perceived political efficacy because of the cultural context they have been raised in. Future research should better understand how/why SSS and political self-efficacy are related.

In this same vein, the analyses conducted on the ANES data relied on single item measures taken from broader scales on a given topic (e.g., self-efficacy), or were chosen as proxy measures for certain constructs (e.g., power and control). The lack of validated scales in the ANES data greatly limits our ability to be confident in our findings given these proxy measures. Further, some of the wording/timing of the ANES may also be influencing the results. Specifically for the political action items, in 2008 respondents are asked if they have done the action in the last 4 years. In 2016, this becomes the last 12 months. This difference in timeframe might have an effect on the number of people who are doing each action, as these variables are binary in nature. Thus asking about behavior over four years is different from asking about respondents' behavior over a year. Future research should use better measures of sense of control and power when investigating this question. Additionally, future research should aim to have consistent language to aid in interpretability and comparison across samples.

Another limitation of this research is that all of the data was correlational in nature. While there is an advantage to the data we used, specifically that we were able to apply weights to the ANES data to generalize beyond the sample, and that Study 2 was a representative quota sample of the United States, I was still unable make causal claims given the correlational nature. That said, because the results were so inconsistent across mediator, outcome, and year, it is unclear whether moving into an experimental design would be useful.

Perhaps the most important limitation of the current research would be the need to consider history. With the election of Barack Obama in 2008 came the swift introduction of the Tea Party in early 2009. Building from this movement, we have continued to see a major shift in political opinions over the intervening years. Importantly, it does not appear that this trend will settle down in the near future. Just last year for the first time ever we witnessed the removal of

the Speaker of the House, a move that was initiated by eight members of his own political party. Further, predictive models for election forecasting have become almost obsolete in recent elections, lending evidence to the shifting tides in politics. Thus, these questions may be best considered in future research once we get a better handle on what is going on with our voting electorate.

Conclusion

In a democracy, it is important to understand whose voice is being heard. Voting is intended to give power and influence to the powerless and temper the influence of the powerful. Despite this intention, however, research suggests that policies disproportionately represent the will of the wealthy (e.g., Gilens & Page, 2014). The current research investigated whether one reason why wealthy voices are louder is because they believe position in the hierarchy is associated with greater feelings of power, interest in politics, and political knowledge, and are thus motivated to be heard. The evidence supporting this hypothesis, however, is mixed. However, I do consistently find that one's perception of their standing in the socioeconomic hierarchy is related to greater political action across a wide range of behaviors. I conclude by suggesting that more work is needed to better understand this pattern.

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