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# From Social Dominance Orientation to Political Engagement: The Role of Group Status and Shared Beliefs in Politics Across Multiple Contexts

**Abstract**

In three surveys of adults in 5 nations, we investigated how shared beliefs about the political system motivate individuals' political engagement. Specifically, we tested whether individuals' beliefs that the political context is fair, non-corrupt, and their belief that they could influence politics motivates political engagement to a higher extent for higher compared to lower status group members. In a novel use of social dominance theory, we theoretically conceived of these political beliefs as legitimizing ideologies, so that we predicted that people with higher social dominance orientation endorse these beliefs, which in turn enhance the motivation to engage in politics to support current social hierarchical systems. Moreover, we expected that these relationships would be stronger for higher compared to lower status groups. These hypotheses were tested considering different levels of group status: wealth status within a country (Study 1), political-regional differences within a country (Study 2), and international status (i.e., between countries; Study 3), and were largely supported.

Word Count: 157

*Keywords*: Social dominance; political engagement; political corruption; political self-efficacy; fairness; legitimizing myths; intergroup relations.

Interest and participation in politics is a prerequisite for proper modern democratic governance (Conge, 1988; Dahl, 1998; Pateman, 1970). Political engagement encompasses actions designed to influence the choice of governing actors, including citizens' voluntary activities of knowing and influencing political choices at various levels of the political system (Huntington & Nelson 1976; Kaase & Marsh 1979; Riley et al., 2010). Yet in some established democracies, political participation rates have dropped alarmingly, which can allow non-democratic practices to flourish (e.g., Bélanger & Nadeau, 2005). The present research examines what could influence citizens to become politically engaged. We employ Social Dominance Theory (SDT; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) to understand how political beliefs motivate political engagement aimed at stabilizing or challenging group-based dominance, both within and between different nations. In particular, we tested SDT hypotheses that shared beliefs about the political system that motivate individuals' political engagement depend jointly on (a) how congenial those beliefs are for individuals' group status position, (b) the resonance of those beliefs with individuals' cultural worldviews, and (c) individuals' level of social dominance orientation.

To explain our approach and predictions, we first review the relevant tenets of SDT. Second, we summarize research on shared beliefs about the political system as motivators of political engagement. Then, we derive predictions from SDT concerning cultural beliefs about politics, and group status differences in psychological processes related to group dominance.

**Social Dominance Theory and its Legitimizing Myths**

Most contemporary societies are structured as group-based dominance hierarchies (e.g., Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The vestiges of past formal systems of group dominance (e.g.,

colonialism, India's caste system) are present even in modern republics and democracies exhibiting substantial inequality between socially-defined groups (Pratto et al., 2013).

What factors support the maintenance of such societal cohesion and group-based dominance? SDT identifies and understands intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup and institutional mechanisms that produce and maintain group-based social hierarchy and how, in turn, this hierarchy affects these mechanisms. According to this theory, to justify and persuade others of the rightness or wrongness of group-based dominance practices, people rely on *legitimizing myths* (LMs), which are societally-known prescriptions of how people should and should not act or be, such as prescriptive stereotypes, social and political ideologies, moral admonitions, and the like (e.g., Pratto, 1999). In order to be potent and make sense to people, legitimizing myths must be derived from, or minimally, be compatible with, their cultural worldviews. A *cultural worldview* is a widely-shared epistemology that establishes for people what exists or can exist, who they are, why things happen, and what should and what should not be (Johnson, 1994). Cultural worldviews are broad enough to be flexible and to be made relevant in a huge variety of circumstances and across historical time. SDT holds that legitimizing myths provide coherence to societies and stability for their social structure by co-ordinating individual action and institutional behavior.

An example can illustrate how LMs derived from a cultural worldview propel similar enough action-patterns to continually recreate a group dominance societal structure. From 1619 in colonial Virginia, colonizers distinguished between "Christians" (themselves) and "Africans" – not only linguistically, but socially, legally, and economically (e.g., Franklin, 1956). Ideological/cultural elements associated with Protestant Christianity are foundational to cultural worldviews in the U.S. (e.g., Fredrickson, 1988). For centuries, White elites advocated that

enslaving Black people was highly moral, on the Christian grounds that it saved Blacks from the deadly sin of sloth (e.g., Lyman, 1991). Still referencing the sin of sloth in the 20th century, White elites perpetuated the myth of the lazy Black and the industrious "American" (e.g., Katz & Braly, 1933). This legitimizing myth is still found today, in Symbolic Racism, a predominant and indirect form of anti-Black racism (e.g., Henry & Sears, 2002).

**Social Dominance Orientation and Hierarchy Enhancing Myths**

In addition to cultural worldviews and shared beliefs as mechanisms influencing social practices, SDT introduced *Social Dominance Orientation* (SDO), a person's general orientation concerning group-based dominance (e.g., Ho et al., 2012; Pratto et al., 1994). In studies around the globe, people who oppose group-based dominance (i.e., are "low" on SDO) reject hierarchy-enhancing LMs (e.g., Symbolic Racism), and instead endorse hierarchy-attenuating LMs (e.g., feminism), whereas the reverse is true for people who tolerate or favor group-based dominance (i.e., are "high" on SDO; see Lee et al., 2011 for a meta-analysis). In other words, in contexts where political engagement sustains group hierarchy, SDO can positively predict shared beliefs in support of the system; on the contrary if in a social context political engagement is meant to weaken hierarchies then SDO should negatively predict beliefs in support of egalitarian views. In this vein, not just cultural worldviews, but also individuals' SDO can influence what shared beliefs motivate engagement in politics to maintain or reduce social hierarchies.

Notably, even in modern societies based on egalitarian values, intergroup disparities and discriminations towards minority groups still persist. In this context, a democratic means to get control over the social order and eventually maintain existing social differences is political engagement. This can be conceived as a means to fulfil the internal motivation to seek out and

elaborate information in order to be active participants in the power dynamics (Prior, 2010; Renninger, 2000).

**Group Differences on Social Dominance Orientation and Ideological Asymmetry**

One of the novelties of SDT is to distinguish the different but equally active roles of dominant and dominated groups in maintaining or reducing social hierarchies. Specifically, SDT predicts that generally members of dominant groups will have higher SDO than members of subordinate groups, for which there is ample evidence across nations and types of groups (e.g., Lee et al., 2011; Pratto & Stewart, 2012; Sidanius et al., 2000; Sidanius et al., 1994). Moreover, SDT states that compared to low-status group members, high-status group members are more motivated to preserve both the current social structure and their own position within it (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Thus, the relationship between SDO and support of hierarchy-enhancing (or opposition to hierarchy-attenuating) beliefs is stronger for dominant group members than dominated group members. This asymmetry has been referred to as the *ideological asymmetry hypothesis* (Sidanius et al., 1994). For example, evidence for ideological asymmetry is observed in stronger correlations between SDO and a variety of measures of racism among Whites than among other people (Stern & Axt, 2019).

The present research tests the ideological asymmetry hypothesis regarding the relationship between SDO and shared beliefs about political engagement, and provides replications by using different operationalizations of group status in different cultural contexts. We now turn to research on political engagement to identify beliefs that may serve as LMs or as psychological factors to test ideological asymmetry.

**Shared Beliefs Motivating Political Engagement**

Research in established democracies has identified several political shared beliefs, as common views of the world influencing ideological convictions (Hardin & Higgins, 1996) that robustly help to promote political engagement. One such belief is that politics (the political system, electoral processes, politicians, etc.) is fair (Jost et al., 2017). *Fairness* is often conceived of as democratic, wherein institutions and authorities follow the same procedures for all, and give no special advantage to any person or group (Tyler et al., 1989). When people perceive procedural fairness in a political system they are encouraged to participate in it to further support their own political goals and values.

A contrasting belief to procedural fairness is reciprocal favoritism, wherein more powerful individuals and authorities grant favors or take bribes to treat different people unequally; this is also called *corruption*. In established and recent/partial democracies, perceived political corruption suppresses voter turnout in regions within Europe (Sundström & Stockemer, 2015), decreases activism in the Communist Party, in public fora, and internet comments in China (Zheng, Liu, Huang, & Tan, 2017), and decreases political participation as measured in multiple ways across the Americas and Caribbean (Bonifácio & Paulino, 2015) and Europe (Hooghe & Quintellier, 2013). We note, however, that a national study of Hungarians found that those who perceived that corruption was spreading were *more* likely to vote and to engage in non-electoral authorized political activities (Kostadinova & Kmetty, 2018). Thus, although political corruption often appears to make people turn away from political participation, people may also become *more* politically engaged to combat unfairness in the political system.

Research on political engagement motivations has also identified a psychological factor that is likely linked to one's group-status position: the belief that one can be *effective* via political

activism (for a review, see Craig, 1979). Given, however, that even contemporary democracies and republics are structured as group-based hierarchies (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), SDT leads us to expect that dominant group members are more likely to believe they can influence politics than are subordinate group members, because, in fact, government and other bureaucracies often do serve dominants better than they serve subordinates (e.g., Gilens & Page, 2014). Further, education levels are higher for dominants than subordinates (e.g., Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, Chapter 7), more education increases self-efficacy in general (Sherer et al., 1982), and those with higher educational levels participate more in their political communities (Galston, 2001). This research suggests we consider the following as beliefs that may motivate political engagement: (1) perceived fairness of the political system, (2) perceived corruption of the political system, and (3) perceived political self-efficacy.

This is consistent with other research examining the interplay between individual differences, ideological motivations, and contextual factors to understand the concurrent presence of system supporting engagement maintaining social hierarchies, as well as social change engagement attempting to attenuate them (Jost et al., 2017; Osborne et al., 2019). It is also consistent with dynamic models of collective action in politics underscoring the roles of group-based grievances, efficacy, and context (e.g., van Zomeren, Leach, & Spears, 2012).

## Overview

Drawing from the tenets of SDT, we derive hypotheses regarding how the three target political beliefs can be related to people's political engagement. Considering whether more political engagement actually helps to maintain or to reduce group-based inequality, it is necessary to understand whether any of the three political beliefs serve as LMs (i.e., whether these beliefs are related to SDO and political engagement). That is, in a *context* where political

engagement sustains group hierarchy, SDO should positively predict shared beliefs in support of the political system such as perceived political fairness and self-efficacy in politics, and negatively predict perceived corruption in politics. In contrast, if the context imbues political engagement with hierarchy-attenuating implications, then SDO should show the opposite pattern of association with these beliefs. In turn, these political beliefs should predict political engagement, with fairness and efficacy beliefs generally increasing engagement, and perceived corruption reducing it.

However, SDT proposes that the strength of the relationship between SDO and shared beliefs as well as that between shared beliefs and political engagement depend on one's group status. Thus, the *ideological asymmetry hypothesis* predicts that all these paths (see Figure 1, Paths C and D on Paths A and B) should be stronger for members of dominant rather than subordinate groups, when the context implies that political engagement supports group hierarchy. We expect the mirror opposite when the context gives political engagement a hierarchy-attenuating character; i.e., model paths should be stronger for subordinate groups than for dominant ones. Overall, we should see the mediation of political beliefs as LMs, in the relationship between SDO and political engagement, moderated by group status.

In addition, if political beliefs are functioning as LMs, then they should show stronger relationships when they are compatible with participants' cultural worldviews than when they are not. We also tested SDT's *cultural-potency hypothesis* by comparing whether moderation by group status differed for different political beliefs (i.e., whether a political belief was culturally-rooted to a higher extent for higher – or lower - status groups). We expected that culturally potent beliefs would be more strongly linked to SDO and engagement than those less culturally grounded.

Our three studies operationalized group status across individual, regional and international levels. The choice of carrying out the studies in intra-national contexts as well as international ones aimed to provide consistent and convergent support for the underlying theoretical assumptions across different structural and cultural situations. Specifically, in Study 1, group status was operationalized as greater personal wealth in a study including Northern and Central Italians. We predicted that political fairness would mediate the relationship between SDO and political engagement, and this mediation would be stronger for high-status groups, who are interested in maintaining their position in the system, compared to low-status groups. Study 2 distinguished dominant and subordinate groups by comparing Northern and Southern Italians. Further, given that regional cultures regarding politics vary within Italy, Study 2 tested the cultural-potency hypothesis by using different political beliefs more culturally-appropriate for Southern or Northern Italy. As efficacy is expected to be higher among higher-status groups, and should encourage political engagement, we expected the indirect effect of SDO on political engagement (through belief in efficacy) to be stronger in Northern versus Southern Italians. Conversely, since corruption is more common among lower-status than higher status groups and because perceiving corruption should generally discourage political engagement, we expected the negative mediation paths to be stronger in Southern versus Northern Italians.

Study 3 replicated Study 2 using the same two political beliefs as potential LMs, but extended the scope of our model by operationalizing group status in terms of more and less dominant nations, sampling heterogeneously within nations to average out regional differences, and again testing the cultural-potency hypothesis at the national level instead of the regional.

## Study 1

Study 1 tested whether belief in fairness of the Italian political system mediates the influence of SDO on political engagement among Italians. Group status was operationalized in terms of wealth, given that Italy is a capitalist democracy with a relatively high GINI (i.e., the degree of inequality in the distribution of family income in a country) index of 31.9. Considering beliefs of political fairness as hierarchy-enhancing LMs that suit cultural worldviews of higher-status groups (Vargas-Salfate et al., 2018), we hypothesized that political fairness would mediate the effect of SDO on political engagement, and this mediation would be stronger for high-status Italians, who are interested in maintaining their position in the system, compared to low-status Italians.

### Method

***Participants.*** North Italian adults (N= 92) were recruited in different public places, such as airports, train stations and coffee shops, to obtain a heterogeneous sample (other demographic details are in Table 1). Data collection was gathered in two main regions of Northern-Central Italy – Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany. Respondents were screened before completing the questionnaire to ensure they were residents of these regions. They were 57.6% Christians, 40.2% atheists, and 2 respondents did not report their religious affiliation. At the time of data collection in 2011, the national government of Italy was dominated by the center-right-wing party Forza Italia.

***Procedure and Materials.*** Respondents completed a questionnaire containing the following measures in mixed order.

SDO was assessed by the 4-item Short-SDO scale (SSDO; Pratto, Çidam et al., 2013). Ratings ranged from 1 (*strongly oppose)* to 10 (*strongly favour*). After reversing two items, a composite SDO index (α = .71) was created, whereby high scores indicate high SDO.

Political fairness was measured with ratings of two items, "The political system in my country is very fair," "The political institutions and authorities in my country are very fair" ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 10 (*very much*; $\alpha$ = .68), which we averaged.

Political engagement was the average rating of four items rated using the same scale as for political fairness: "I avoid engaging in politics," "I take practical steps to advance my political convictions," "I never engage in political action," "I try to engage in political action also about international issues." Reversing the first and third items, the measure was internally reliable ($\alpha$ = .76).

Wealth status was measured from responses to the question, "Compared to other people in your society, what is your economic situation?" Response options were destitute (1), poor (2) so-so (3), good (4), better than most (5), and wealthy (6).[1]

**Results**

***Correlations.*** Table 2 presents means, standard deviations and inter-correlations for our variables (see Online Appendices for further details).

A *t*-test showed that SDO levels were higher in the higher- than in the lower-status group, $t$ (90) = 2.84, $p$ = .006, group difference = 1.07, CI = [0.32, 1.80][1], d = 0.59 supporting previous

[1] Scores from 1 to 3 were recoded as 1 (low status; N = 53) and scores from 4 to 6 as -1 (high status; N = 39).

evidence. Moreover, political fairness scores were higher in the higher- than in the lower-status group, $t$ (90) = 3.08, $p$ = .003, group difference = 1.11, CI = [0.39, 1.83], d = 0.64.

***Moderated mediation analysis*.** We tested the conceptual model in Figure 1, using the PROCESS macro (Hayes et al., 2011) for SPSS (model 58). Specifically, the mediating role of political fairness in the relationship between mean-centered SDO and political engagement for high *vs*. lower-status groups was tested, controlling for participants' level of education.

As the regression coefficients in Table 3 show, SDO predicted perceived political fairness (Path A), whereas status did not reliably predict political fairness, but there was an interaction between status and SDO (Path C). As shown in Figure 2, among higher-status people, those with high SDO (+1 *SD* or more above SDO mean) scored higher on political fairness than those with low SDO (-1 *SD* or more below SDO mean), $B$ = 0.74, SE = 0.14, BC CI (0.45, 1.02). Among lower-status people, there was a weaker significant relationship between SDO and political fairness, $B$ = 0.29, SE = 0.13, BC CI (0.01, 0.56).

We also found that wealth status and education did not predict political engagement, but there was a main effect of political fairness on political engagement (Path B). Moreover, the expected interaction between political fairness and status was significant (Path D). Among the higher-status group, those who believe political fairness to be high scored higher on political engagement than those who perceived lower fairness, $B$ = .79, BC CI (0.49, 1.08). For the lower-status group, political engagement was unrelated to level of perceived fairness, $B$ = .27, BC CI (-0.04, 0.59). To test this conditional indirect effect, we computed bias-corrected bootstrap-based confidence intervals (95%) for the indirect effect taking 5,000 samples from the original data set. The conditional indirect effect was significant, $B$ = 0.24, SE = .08, BC CI (0.09, 0.45). For higher-status group, the indirect effect of SDO on political engagement through fairness was

reliable, *B* = .51, BC CI (0.18, 0.89), whereas for the lower-status group, it was not, *B* = .06, BC CI (-0.02, 0.21), supporting the ideological asymmetry hypothesis.

**Discussion**

Study 1 showed that wealthier people are more politically engaged when they perceive the political system to be fair. This evidence replicates prior studies using U.S. samples (e.g., Muhlberger, 2000; Skitka & Bauman, 2008). In addition, we found that for wealthy individuals, being higher on SDO was associated with endorsing beliefs of political fairness. Moreover, fairness mediated the effect of SDO on political engagement for the higher-status group, but did not mediate the relationship reliably for the lower-status group. The results suggest that perceiving fairness in the political system may be serving as a hierarchy-enhancing legitimizing ideology. Further research is needed to understand whether this is a robust effect and its potential boundary conditions.

## Study 2

Study 2 extended our conceptual model by investigating the role of two new potential LMs - political self-efficacy (Tan et al., 2017) and system corruption (Stewart et al., 2016), and used a group-based (region) rather than individual-level (wealth) operationalization of status as the moderator.

Cultural-geographical divisions in Italy are deep enough to have undermined the achievement of a widely-shared national identity (Lyttelton, 1993). The best-known division is that between North (generally, North of Rome) and South. Among others, research on stereotypes supports this distinction, and stereotypes can be considered as LMs for social actions (Tajfel, 1982). Northern Italians perceive themselves to be more competent than Southern Italians (Durante et al., 2009), and people often associate competence with high group status

(Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008). This, together with a history of active citizenship, characterized by goal-oriented motivation and individual meritocracy (Foschi & Lauriola, 2016; Pellegata & Memoli, 2016), suggests that political self-efficacy may be a culturally consonant political belief in the North. In contrast, Southern Italians perceive themselves as warmer than Northern Italians (Durante et al., 2009), and people often associate warmth with high interdependence (Cuddy et al., 2008). This interdependence, combined with the history of clientelism and weakness of legalistic institutional culture and norms (Putnam, 1993), suggests that corruption prevalence may be a more culturally relevant political belief in the South rather than in the North. We emphasize again that while these belief differences are naturally responsive to objective differences in the politics of these contexts, the two (objective differences and subjective beliefs) should not be confounded, since these beliefs also incorporate, as mentioned above, normative, stereotypical, and (sub)cultural content.

Considering political self-efficacy as a HE legitimizing myth and political corruption perceptions as HA legitimizing myth, we predicted that Northern Italians higher on SDO would report greater political self-efficacy, which in turn would be associated with greater engagement in politics. Whereas, for Southern Italians, the higher their SDO, the lower the perceived corruption, and the higher the political engagement (ideological asymmetry hypothesis). Furthermore, to the extent that people perceive the political system to operate in accordance with their cultural norms, we hypothesized that political corruption perceptions but not political efficacy for Southern Italians, and political efficacy but not political corruption for Northern Italians, would mediate the relationship between SDO and political engagement (cultural-potency hypothesis).

**Method**

***Participants.*** The same recruitment procedure as in Study 1 produced a heterogeneous sample (N = 221; Southern Italians = 113; Northern Italians = 108) and included 64.7% participants who declared themselves to be Christians and 35.3% atheists (see Table 1 for more demographic information). Respondents were recruited in two different regions: Emilia Romagna and Puglia, that are respectively in the Northern and Southern part of Italy. Moreover, before filling the questionnaire, respondents were asked where they actually lived to systematically involve in the survey only people of that specific areas.

***Procedure and Materials.*** Respondents completed a questionnaire. Non-demographic items were rated on the same 1 (*not at all*) to 10 (*very much*) scale as in Study 1.

SSDO, α = .85, and political engagement, $\alpha$ = .74, were measured as in Study 1.

Belief in political corruption in politics was the average of ratings of 3 items: "In my view, my country is corrupt," "Officials providing services often require unofficial payments in my country," "In some situations, it is right to pay someone extra in order to get things done quickly, even if the law forbids such practices." (latter item is from Leong & Lin, 2010), $\alpha$ = .87. Political self-efficacy was the average of ratings of 3 items: "It doesn't matter what I do, I can't affect anything that happens in politics," "My voice is heard in this political system," "Political views like mine have influence in my country's political system" (Caprara et al., 2009); reverse-scoring the first item, $\alpha$ = .89.

**Results**

***Correlations.*** Table 4 shows means, standard deviations and correlations separately for Northern and Southern Italians (see also Online Appendices). SDO levels were higher for Northern Italians than Southern Italians, as predicted, $t$ (218) = 8.56, $p$ = .001, group difference = 1.55, CI = [1.18, 1.91], d = 1.15. Moreover, Northern Italians considered themselves to be higher

in political self-efficacy than Southern Italians did, $t$ (218) = -2.14, $p$ = .033, group difference = -0.47, CI = [-0.90, -0.38], d = 0.29. However, Southern Italians rated perceived political corruption to be higher than Northern Italians, $t$ (218) = 6.74, $p$ = .001, group difference = 1.67, CI = [1.18, 2.16], d = 0.90.

***Moderated mediation analyses***. Using the PROCESS macro (model 58), we tested the mediating roles of political self-efficacy and corruption in the relationship between mean-centered SDO and political engagement for high and low status groups. Based on standard of living (Bonati & Campi, 2005; Peracchi, 2008) and stereotypes, we assumed that Northern Italians (coded -1) were a higher-status group compared to Southern Italians (coded 1).

First of all, results in the top of Table 5 show that SDO positively predicted political self-efficacy (Path A), and the interaction of SDO and region on political self-efficacy was also reliable (Path C). The interaction pattern (see Figure 3) showed that in the higher-status group, those higher in SDO scored higher on political self-efficacy than those lower in SDO, $B$ = .58, BC CI (0.37, 0.78). In the lower-status group, SDO was unrelated to political self-efficacy, $B$ = -.09, BC CI (-0.31, 0.13).

Second, SDO predicted lower perceived political corruption (Path A). These effects were modified by an SDO × region interaction (Path C). As shown in Figure 4, among the lower-status group, those with low SDO reported higher corruption in politics than those with high SDO, $B$ = -.45, BC CI (-0.72, -0.19). For the higher-status group, the relationship between political corruption and SDO, $B$ = .11, BC CI (-0.13, 0.35) was not significant.

Third, results in the bottom of Table 5 show that neither region nor political corruption had direct effects on political engagement, but political self-efficacy did (Path B). Moreover, there was a reliable political self-efficacy × region interaction (Path D). Among the higher-status

group those with higher political self-efficacy scored higher on political engagement than those with lower political self-efficacy, *B* = .44, BC CI (0.21, 0.67). For the lower-status group, there was no significant difference in political engagement between those with low and those with high political self-efficacy, *B* = -.04, BC CI (-0.24, 0.16). We also found that there was the expected interaction between political corruption and region (Path D). Among the lower-status group, those who believed political corruption to be low scored higher on political engagement than those who perceived higher corruption, *B* = -.32, BC CI (-0.53, -0.12). For the higher-status group, political engagement was unrelated to level of perceived corruption, *B* = .10, BC CI (-0.07, 0.28).

Then, testing whether political self-efficacy and corruption work as LMs mediating the relationship between SDO and political engagement in a different way for higher and lower status groups (i.e., moderated mediation), we found support for our hypotheses. Among the higher-status group, political self-efficacy mediated the effect of SDO on political engagement, *B* = .19, BC CI (0.03, 0.39), whereas for the lower-status group, political self-efficacy did not mediate this effect, *B* = .00, BC CI (-0.02, 0.06). This moderated mediation was significant, *b* = -0.19, SE = .09, BC CI (-0.40, -0.03). Moreover, for the lower-status group, perceived low corruption in politics mediated the effect of SDO on political engagement *B* = .12, BC CI (0.01, 0.28), whereas for the higher-status group, perceived corruption in politics did not mediate the relationship between SDO and political engagement *B* = .01, BC CI (-0.01, 0.08). This moderated mediation was significant, *b* = 0.11, SE = .06, BC CI (0.00, 0.27).

**Discussion**

Study 2 conceptually replicated and extended Study 1. We found that the higher-status group (Northern Italians) perceived more political self-efficacy and less political corruption than

the lower-status group (Southern Italians). These political beliefs mediated the effect of SDO on political engagement at the individual level. Moreover, region moderated the mediation of these political beliefs in directions compatible with our cultural potency hypothesis. Specifically, only perceived corruption mediated SDO's association with political engagement among Southern Italians, and only perceived self-efficacy mediated SDO's association with political engagement among Northern Italians. These dissociations related to regional cultures further support our hypothesis that these political beliefs can serve as LMs.

## Study 3

Study 3 was designed to test the robustness of the findings of Studies 1 and 2 by addressing the role of beliefs in political corruption and political self-efficacy, using nations with different international status and political cultures. As in comparing Northern and Southern Italy, one finds in comparing nations around the world that national status and cultural values focused on merit (high status) or corruption (low status) tend to be confounded (e.g., Marsh, 2014). Thus, analogous to Southern Italy, we expected political corruption to be the most salient legitimizing political belief associated with political engagement in more clientelist, lower-status countries. And, as we predicted for Northern Italy, we expected that for countries with stronger meritocratic cultural norms and higher status, political self-efficacy will be the more culturally-appropriate legitimizing political belief associated with political engagement. We again hypothesized two moderated mediations, with perceived corruption as the negative mediator of SDO on political engagement in the two lower-status countries and political self-efficacy as the positive mediator in the two higher-status countries. As we have seen, regional differences within country matter. We address this confound in examining national context as our moderating factor through our sampling strategy for this study.

## Method

***Political Context.*** We selected two nations high and two nations low in status to reflect the critical dimensions of status and culture identified previously. Table 6 illustrates some indices of nations' status (e.g., influence from outside entities, democratization, functioning of government and how well governments serve their citizens, Bohara et al., 2004) for the four countries used in Study 3. They show that by any measure, there is a large gap between the lower-status countries, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Lebanon, and the higher-status countries, the US and UK. The former have been described as clientelist (e.g., Hermez, 2011; Vetters, 2014), with substantially higher levels of corruption, more external influence, lower government legitimacy and democratization, lower economic wealth, and are considered "hybrid regimes" (i.e., neither authoritarian regimes, flawed democracies, or full democracies) by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2011), whereas the US and UK have been described as meritocratic and plutocratic (e.g., Littler, 2013), despite being considered full democracies (albeit with their own objectively observed hierarchies and flaws; see Gilens & Page, 2014).

***Procedure and Participants.*** A total of 451 respondents (lower-status countries: Bosnia-Herzegovina = 60; Lebanon = 132; higher-status countries: US Whites = 153; UK Whites = 106) were recruited from late July through September 2011 for an anonymous survey called "International Social and Political Life" (see Stewart et al., 2016). Instructions and questions were in Bosnian for Bosnia-Herzegovina, English for the US and the UK, and Arabic for Lebanon. In the US and UK, respondents completed questions on-line, and UK participants received a small monetary reward. In Bosnia-Herzegovina and Lebanon, some respondents were interviewed in person, some completed questionnaires on paper, and some completed the study on-line. As in Studies 1 and 2, samples were recruited to be demographically heterogeneous

(Table 1). However, in order to examine our hypotheses at the national level without confounding the data by regional differences such as those seen in Study 2, we also targeted different geographical regions of each of these countries, with the on-line surveys in particular open to all citizens of each of these countries. This allowed us to reduce potential regional effects, although the absence of formal stratification by region of the samples does remain a limitation, as we discuss later.

***Measures.*** SSDO (ICC = .72; range across countries = .51 - .82), perceived corruption (ICC = .80; range across countries = .36 - .71), political self-efficacy (ICC = .70; range across countries = .54 - .81) and political engagement (ICC = .54; range across countries = .21 - .60) were measured as in Study 2[2]. The relatively low reliabilities are still within acceptable range for short measures.

**Results**

***Measurement invariance.*** We tested measurement invariance in SSDO, perceived corruption, political self-efficacy and political engagement, within high and low status countries by conducting sequential multigroup CFAs (e.g., Chen, 2007; van de Schoot et al., 2012). In line with the best practices of the measurement invariance literature (e.g., Cheung & Rensvold, 2002), we tested differences between configural, metric and scalar models representing the various levels of invariance considering changes in fit indices. Specifically, we followed Chen (2007) and Satorra and Bentler's recommendations (2001) according to which to determine

[2] Perceived corruption was composed only of two of the three items employed in Study 2 (e.g., "In my view, my country is corrupt," "Officials providing services often require unofficial payments in my country,"), and political engagement was composed of only two of the four items employed in Study 2 (e.g., "I never engage in political action," "I try to engage in political action also about international issues.").

significant differences between models, at least two of these three criteria had to be matched: Δ CFI ≥ .010 supplemented by Δ RMSEA ≥ .015 and a significant value of Δ $\chi^2$ (for further measurement invariance see Online Appendices).

*High status countries invariance.* As can be seen in Table 7, we found that the configural model fitted the data well. Also the metric model fitted the data well; however, the ΔCFI and $\Delta\chi^2$ exceeded the threshold. So, we conducted ancillary analyses to detect which factor loadings could be released to obtain a partial metric invariance model. Specifically, we tested a partial metric model in which factor loadings of items 1 and 2 of Social Dominance Orientation were free to vary across groups, whereas all the other items were fixed. According to the $\Delta\chi^2$, the ΔCFI and the ΔRMSEA this partial metric model did not differ from the configural model. Findings indicated that the model with full scalar invariance did not differ from metric model. We established partial invariance for high status countries models.

*Low status countries invariance.* Results (see Table 7) indicated that all levels (i.e., configural, metric, full scalar) of invariance in SSDO, perceived corruption, political self-efficacy and political engagement were established in the total sample.

***Correlations.*** Table 8 presents means, standard deviations and correlations separately for higher-status and lower-status countries.

SDO levels were higher for higher compared to lower status countries, $t$ (442) = 7.00, $p$ = .001, group difference = 1.13, CI = [0.81, 1.45], d = 0.69. Moreover, participants in high status countries considered themselves as higher in political self-efficacy than those in low status countries did, $t$ (442) = 6.54, $p$ < .001, group difference = 1.23, CI = [0.85, 1.61], d = 0.61. In contrast, participants in low status countries rated political corruption higher than those in high-

status countries, $t$ (442) = -18.75, $p$ < .001, group difference = -3.56, CI = [-3.93, -3.19], d = 1.80.

***Moderated mediation analyses.*** The same analytic procedure employed in Study 2 was used. Higher-status countries were coded -1 and lower-status countries were coded 1, and SDO was mean-centered. The regression results at the top of Table 9 show that SDO was reliably associated with political self-efficacy, even after including country status as a predictor in the equation (Path A). The expected interaction of SDO and country status was significant (Path C). Figure 5 plots predicted political self-efficacy against SDO separately for higher and lower-status countries. In line with our hypothesis, in higher-status countries, people high in SDO scored higher on political self-efficacy than those low in SDO, $B$ = 0.33, BC CI (0.19, 0.45). Among citizens of lower-status countries, on the other hand, SDO was unrelated to self-efficacy, $B$ = 0.07, BC CI (-0.11, 0.25).

Regarding perceived political corruption, SDO predicted perceived corruption (Path A). Evidence also showed the expected SDO × country status interaction (Path C, see regression coefficients in Table 9). As shown in Figure 6, in lower-status countries, people with low SDO scored higher on perceived corruption in politics than those with high SDO, $B$ = -0.48, BC CI (-0.66, -0.29). In higher-status countries, SDO was not related to perceived corruption, $B$ = -0.01, BC CI (-0.12, 0.15).

Furthermore, the regressions showed that political self-efficacy and corruption had direct effects on political engagement (Path B). There was no political self-efficacy × country status interaction effect on political engagement (Path D), inconsistent with the ideological asymmetry hypothesis. However, we found the expected interaction between perceived corruption in politics and country status (Path D). In lower-status countries, people who perceived little corruption in

politics scored higher on political engagement than those who perceived more corruption, *B* = -0.43, BC CI (-0.60, -0.26). In higher-status countries, political engagement was unrelated to perceived corruption, as predicted, *B* = -0.12, BC CI (-0.25, 0.01).

Then, testing whether political self-efficacy and corruption work as LMs in mediating the relationship between SDO and political engagement in a different way for higher and lower status groups, we found partial support. Regarding political self-efficacy, the moderated mediation was not significant, *b* = -0.04, SE = .03, BC CI (-0.11, 0.02). However, as expected for higher-status countries, political self-efficacy mediated the effect of SDO on political engagement, *B* = 0.06, BC CI (0.01, 0.12), whereas for lower-status countries, political self-efficacy did not mediate this effect *B* = 0.01, BC CI (-0.02, 0.07). Regarding political corruption, we found that for lower-status countries, perceived corruption in politics mediated the effect of SDO on political engagement, *B* = 0.18, BC CI (0.09, 0.29). However, for higher-status countries, as expected, perceived corruption in politics did not mediate the relationship between SDO and political engagement *B* = -0.00, BC CI (-0.03, 0.02). This moderated mediation was significant, *b* = 0.18, SE = 0.05, BC CI (0.09, 0.29).

**Discussion**

Study 3 brought converging evidence at the international level for our hypotheses by considering how citizens in high and lower-status countries with different political cultures view domestic politics. Among lower-status countries, more socially dominant participants perceived low political corruption as a marker of legitimization of the system and a motivator of political engagement, whereas it seems that those (lower SDO) citizens who saw high levels of corruption considered the system as illegitimate and were not willing to commit to politics. Among higher-status countries, seeing the self as capable of influencing the system acted as LMs for those

people high on SDO, while not holding these beliefs among low SDO people suppressed their intention to engage in politics. Findings then supported our hypotheses that these political beliefs serve as LMs. However, an intriguing exception was noted in the consistent support for our hypotheses – political efficacy did not function in the same way as beliefs regarding system fairness or prevalence of corruption. We discuss why this may be the case shortly.

## General Discussion

The present research provides a new theoretical lens for understanding why particular political beliefs are associated with higher engagement in political processes. We examined, across different regions and countries, the beliefs that one's political system is fair (Study 1) or is corrupt, and whether one can be efficacious in politics (Studies 2 and 3). We found that all three of the political beliefs in question not only motivated political engagement, but were associated with participants' levels of SDO, participants' group status, and were more potent where they were more culturally-grounded. Our results showed that feeling one has political efficacy and perceiving one's political system to be fair and uncorrupt function as LMs, motivating political engagement to support hierarchical systems, in the societies we studied.

Furthermore, the results consistently demonstrated that political fairness and self-efficacy explain the relationship between SDO and political engagement for higher- compared to lower-status groups, whereas the same path is explained by perceived political corruption for lower- compared to higher-status groups. Importantly, our data show that incorporating status as a moderator of the SDT model of legitimization has important implications for studies examining the mediation of LMs (for another example, see Stern & Axt, 2019). Given that higher-status groups often endorse hierarchy-enhancing LMs more than lower-status groups do, samples that

include mixed-status groups without testing for moderation of group membership (the group-status interaction hypothesis) might produce results that show no overall mediation of the LMs.

One result in our studies that was not hypothesized was the failure to detect the country status moderation of political efficacy's effect on political engagement. There are several explanations for why this may be the case, although these remain theoretical and speculative until further research is conducted. First, our efficacy measure was limited to one form of self-efficacy, voice or influence in the political system. Prior research has suggested that such forms of efficacy may not be globally or historically the forms of efficacy most relevant to political engagement, and that indeed self-efficacy of any kind may not always be tied to engagement (especially under extreme or repressive contexts; e.g., Adra et al., 2020; Vollhardt, Okuyan, & Ünal, 2020). This may be leading to unexpected interactions with context further modifying the relationships between SDO and political engagement in ways that are still underspecified (e.g., fearful contexts; Adra et al., 2020). Second, the implications of political self-efficacy are different when domestic political systems themselves vary in their characteristics (e.g., strength, autonomy). For example, from an egalitarian *or* socially dominant Lebanese citizen's perspective, what is the point of being politically influential, if domestic politics plays a relatively minor role in the trajectory of the nation and its hierarchies in any case (e.g., Pratto et al., 2014)? This is much more likely in the low status nations studied, given objectively observed differences in levels of external intervention, for example (Fragile States Index). Again, this may be complicating the relationship between SDO, efficacy, and engagement, in ways not yet specified by our model, but that are not mutually exclusive with that model. Future research should attempt to replicate and extend our understanding of this unexpected finding.

Another finding that was not predicted was the relationship between SDO and corruption. One could expect that, given the need for dominant group members to maintain the status quo, there should be a stronger negative relationship between SDO and perceived political corruption in dominant compared to dominated groups. Our evidence did not support this assumption across the studies (see Figure X/Table X?).

**Implications for Inequality and Democratic Participation**

As noted at the outset, political engagement is essential to democratic functioning and to how well democracies serve their citizenry. The present results imply that group differences in endorsement of LMs can serve to discourage participation systematically by those in lower-power positions and who have relatively low levels of SDO. Study 1 showed that higher-status people endorse the belief in fairness of a political system. Parallel results can be found in a number of public opinion polls in other nations. For example, European-Americans perceive the police to be fairer than do African-Americans, and there is more than ample independent evidence that the criminal justice system is heavily biased against African-Americans (e.g., Gabbidon & Higgins, 2009). In Studies 2 and 3, SDO also correlated positively with beliefs in political self-efficacy, and lack of corruption, giving further weight to the idea that those who accept the legitimacy of their political systems are more tolerant of group-based inequality and more likely to participate in the political system. Given that higher participation levels may be driven by political LMs, such persons may have outsized effects on democratic systems (especially without compulsory voting). In fact, right-wing partisans tend to have higher turnout in elections than others, especially when inequality is higher (e.g., Citrin et al., 2003; Martinez & Gill, 2005). Conversely, it may be that people with lower SDO have higher (egalitarian)

standards for democratic governance, and so they are more likely to reject the legitimacy of their political systems. So long as they neglect to participate in politics, their influence will be overwhelmed by those motivated to sustain the political system as it is.

However, as the literatures on collective action and social change (Wright & Tropp, 2002) suggest, lower-status groups do engage in political action under specific conditions. For instance, political instability and power vacuums increase lower-status group perceived efficacy and consequent action, whereas perceiving political unfairness elicits effective informal political actions (e.g., strikes and protest), which often lead to formal political change. We might speculate that at least some of the conditions that prompt more political participation among lower SDO and lower-status people are those in which the potency of HE LMs has been reduced, or where HA LMs are potentiated or culturally rooted. For the opposite reason, such as to maintain and reinforce LMs of social hierarchy, high SDO and higher-status people would also engage in politics when HE LMs strength is decreasing and where HA LMs are weak or culturally contested.

Our research illustrates that not only do individuals' levels of SDO influence the political beliefs they endorse, and both SDO and political beliefs correspond to people's group position, it would seem that these political beliefs can serve as gates to select what groups and people will have the most political influence. Thus, we show, in new ways, how LMs can help perpetuate inequality, as SDT has long predicted. Yet because LMs are linked to a shared culture, they enable mutually-compatible political sense-making across people who differ in SDO levels, group position, and/or endorsement of political perceptions. The cultural embeddedness of worldviews suggests that political disagreements between those with different values and beliefs will nonetheless be framed from the same worldview. Furthermore, the gathered evidence

highlights how these status-based asymmetries influence citizens' political engagement in a way that can adversely affect a democratic responsiveness. In line with our findings, research has shown that in contrast to the ideal of political equality, many government policies strongly reflected the preference of the most affluent citizens in the USA, and being in contrast to those of poor or middle-income Americans (Gilens, 2005). This supports the crucial role of income as a fundamental indicator of social status in the political context.

It is also worth to notice that in line with previous research, SDO was higher for people in high compared to low status positions across the different contexts in which the research was conducted such as at the individual, regional and international ones. However, it should be observed that a very high difference in SDO was found between Italians living in Northern and Southern regions. This might be due to the concurrent, potentially multiplicative, role of historical, socio-political, cultural and stereotypical factors (Durante et al., 2009) that across time contributed to maintaining the difference in social status of the two regional groups in Italy, and influencing SDO levels. Future research could help to disentangle which of these factors is most effective in maintaining this pronounced difference in SDO levels among Northern versus Southern Italians.

Overall, our results support the assumption that as a systemic theory that links multiple levels of social organization and culture, SDT makes predictions at and between each level of social organization. Indeed, we found the same patterns across very different operationalizations of status, and at different levels of analysis.

**Limitations and suggestions for future research**

These studies have measurement and sampling limitations. Our samples were designed to be heterogeneous in terms of age, gender, education and income, but they were not completely

random samples and followed different data collection procedures. Therefore, further studies are required to test the generalizability of our findings. Nevertheless, we shed some light on one important psychological question concerning context, that is, which facet(s) of a socio-political culture make different LMs resonate with people in different political contexts. How this happens precisely is still unclear due to the cross-sectional nature of our data. We cannot test whether the observed SDO-corruption link, for example, occurred because the egalitarianism of people low on SDO leads them to reject clientelist relationships, and/or because people higher on SDO are more likely to be the beneficiaries in clientelist relationships due to their tendency to be higher in status. Generally, cultures are described by a large number of more precise dimensions (see Greenfield, 2000 for a review; see also Sen & Wasow, 2016), and our cross-cultural data lack sufficient breadth to unpack various other societal and cultural-level factors' influences on the relationships between our variables in context. Future studies should seek to address this limitation.

## Conclusions

General democratic ideals are widespread, but there is considerable variance across countries in the extent to which such ideals have been realized, and in their indigenous political cultures. For such reasons, we assert that there can be different political perceptions or beliefs that motivate political engagement in different socio-political contexts. We identified perceiving fairness in the political system, and political self-efficacy, as LMs in higher-status and more individualistic contexts, and lower perceived corruption as LMs in lower-status clientelist contexts. We provide evidence from five countries that such beliefs function as LMs in promoting individual political engagement in general. These beliefs, then, are not value-neutral,

but help to indicate whether people engage in politics to support political institutions that serve some or all.

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## Notes

[1] A sensitivity analysis for t-test analysis conducted with G*Power (Erdfelder, Faul, & Buchner, 1996; Mayr, Erdfelder, Buchner & Faul, 2007) showed that our sample of Study 1 was sufficient to detect small effects of d = .052 assuming an alpha of .05 and power of .80. Similarly, our sample was sufficient to detect small effects for multiple regressions of $f^2 = 0.06$ assuming an alpha of .05 and power of .80.

**Table 1.**

*Demographic characteristics of samples.*

| Demographic | Study 1 | Study 2 Southern Italians | Study 2 Northern Italians | Study 3 Lower-status countries | Study 3 Higher-status countries |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age range in years | 18 to 72 | 22 to 65 | 22 to 69 | 18 to 72 | 18 to 78 |
| Median age in years | 35 | 34 | 37 | 31 | 39 |
| % of women | 44.6 | 51.3 | 52.8 | 42.3 | 47.6 |
| Political Orientation: | | | | | |
| % of left-wing supportes | 43.5 | 46 | 38 | 32.8 | 38.6 |
| % of center supporters | 26.1 | 12.4 | 17.6 | 25.5 | 22.4 |
| % of right-wing supporters | 30.4 | 22.1 | 44.4 | 22.9 | 36.3 |
| Missing political orientation | 0 | 19.5 | 0 | 18.8 | 2.7 |
| Education level: | | | | | |
| % of primary school title | 2.2 | 0 | 0 | 2.5 | 0.8 |
| % of secondary school title | 12 | 20.4 | 17.6 | 30.3 | 3.5 |
| % of high school title | 43.5 | 53.1 | 31.5 | 60.7 | 32.8 |
| % of university title | 41.3 | 26.5 | 50.9 | 4.2 | 10.4 |
| Missing educational level | 1.1 | 0 | 0 | 36.5 | 62.5 |
| % of high economic status | 42.4 | 61.9 | 66.7 | 10.9 | 13.9 |
| Missing economic status | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.1 | 2.7 |

**Table 2.**

*Correlations among variables, Study 1.*

| | *M (SD)* | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 6. | 7. | 8. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Age | 35.29 (14.30) | -- | .04 | -.15 | -.43** | .06 | .04 | -.05 | -.09 |
| 2. Religiosity | 1.13 (0.82) | | -- | -.06 | -.04 | .10 | .14 | .19 | .04 |
| 3. Political orientation | 1.85 (0.83) | | | -- | -.01 | -.08 | .06 | -.12 | -.01 |
| 4. Education | 3.25 (0.75) | | | | -- | .02 | -.04 | .15 | .17 |
| 5. Wealth | 3.31 (1.09) | | | | | -- | .23* | .20 | .36** |
| 6. SDO | 2.92 (1.84) | | | | | | -- | .52** | .37** |
| 7. Political fairness | 3.54 (1.79) | | | | | | | -- | .50** |
| 8. Political engagement | 4.32 (2.30) | | | | | | | | -- |

*Note.* * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$. Political orientation was coded: 1= Left or center-left wing; 2 = Moderate; 3 = Right or center-right wing. Education was coded: 0 = None; 1 = Elementary school; 2 = Secondary school; 3 = Professional institute; 4 = University degree.

**Table 3.**

*Coefficients of moderation models, with upper and lower limits of bootstrapped 95% Cls, Study 1.*

| Predictor variable | Outcome variable | Coefficient | *SE* | *t* | *p* | 95% CI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wealth Status | Political fairness | 0.16 | 0.15 | 1.11 | 0.26 | [-0.13, 0.46] |
| SDO | Political fairness | 0.51** | 0.09 | 5.83 | 0.00 | [0.34, 0.69] |
| Wealth × SDO | Political fairness | 0.21* | 0.10 | 2.04 | 0.04 | [0.00, 0.41] |
| Education | Political fairness | 0.42* | 0.21 | 2.03 | 0.05 | [0.01, 0.84] |
| Wealth Status | Political engagement | 0.56** | 0.18 | 3.05 | 0.00 | [0.19, 0.93] |
| SDO | Political engagement | 0.16 | 0.13 | 1.25 | 0.21 | [-0.09, 0.41] |
| Political fairness | Political engagement | 0.45** | 0.13 | 3.44 | 0.00 | [0.19, 0.70] |
| Wealth Status × fairness | Political engagement | 0.22* | 0.09 | 2.35 | 0.02 | [0.03, 0.41] |
| Education | Political engagement | 0.35 | 0.26 | 1.32 | 0.18 | [-0.17, 0.87] |

*Note.* * $p < .05$, ** $p < .005$.

**Table 4.**

*Means, standard deviations and correlations among variables, Study 2.*

| | *Northern Italians* *M (SD)* | *Southern Italians* *M (SD)* | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 6. | 7. | 8. | 9. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Age | 41.16 (13.08) | 38.34 (12.50) | -- | -.23* | .10 | -.42** | -.07 | .43** | -.08 | .18 | .13 |
| 2. Religiosity | 2.55 (1.95) | 0.68 (0.47) | .24* | -- | -2.04* | .05 | .04 | -.39** | -.01 | -.14 | -.07 |
| 3. Political orientation | 2.06 (0.90) | 1.70 (0.87) | -.03 | -.03 | -- | -.18 | .23* | .23* | -.17 | .13 | .22* |
| 4. Education | 2.33 (0.76) | 3.06 (0.68) | .08 | .01 | -.10 | -- | -.44** | -.32** | -.16 | -.17 | -.31** |
| 5. Wealth | 0.33 (0.47) | 0.38 (0.49) | -.25** | -.05 | -.06 | -.12 | -- | .06 | -.02 | -.01 | .35** |
| 6. SDO | 3.81 (1.41) | 2.26 (1.28) | -.07 | .16 | .20 | -.03 | -.08 | -- | .08 | .53** | .28* |
| 7. Political corruption | 5.57 (2.00) | 7.24 (1.68) | -.05 | -.09 | -.07 | -.16 | .12 | -.35** | -- | .07 | .11 |
| 8. Political self-efficacy | 4.42 (1.53) | 3.95 (1.71) | -.08 | .03 | -.06 | .03 | .01 | -.07 | .20* | -- | .36** |
| 9. Political engagement | 4.96 (1.90) | 4.01 (1.91) | .18 | .06 | .19 | -.18 | -.07 | .19* | -.28* | -.04 | -- |

*Note.* * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$. Correlations between variables of North Italians sample are displayed above the diagonal and correlations between variables of South Italians sample are displayed below the diagonal.

**Table 5.**

*Coefficients of moderation models, with upper and lower limits of bootstrapped 95% Cls, Study 2.*

| Predictor variable | Outcome variable | Coefficient | *SE* | *t* | *p* | 95% CI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Italian region | Political self-efficacy | -0.03 | 0.12 | -0.30 | 0.75 | [-0.28, 0.20] |
| SDO | Political self-efficacy | 0.23** | 0.07 | 2.96 | 0.00 | [0.07, 0.38] |
| Italian region × SDO | Political self-efficacy | -0.34** | 0.08 | -4.31 | 0.00 | [-0.49, -0.18] |
| Italian region | Political corruption | 0.72** | 0.14 | 5.11 | 0.00 | [0.44, 1.01] |
| SDO | Political corruption | -0.17 | 0.09 | -1.92 | 0.05 | [-0.35, 0.00] |
| Italian region × SDO | Political corruption | -0.29** | 0.09 | -3.23 | 0.00 | [-0.47, -0.11] |
| Italian region | Political engagement | -0.21 | 0.15 | -1.39 | 0.16 | [-0.52, 0.09] |
| SDO | Political engagement | 0.16 | 0.10 | 1.54 | 0.12 | [-0.04, 0.36] |
| Political self-efficacy | Political engagement | 0.18* | 0.08 | 2.28 | 0.02 | [0.02, 0.34] |
| Political corruption | Political engagement | -0.11 | 0.07 | -1.62 | 0.10 | [-0.25, 0.02] |
| Italian region × Self-efficacy | Political engagement | -0.16* | 0.08 | -2.05 | 0.04 | [-0.32, -0.01] |
| Italian region × Corruption | Political engagement | -0.18* | 0.07 | -2.59 | 0.01 | [-0.32, -0.04] |

*Note*. Italian region is coded 1 for Southern and -1 for Northern.

**Table 6.**

*Political context variables for countries in Study 3.*

| Country | Corruption Perceptions Index | External intervention | Government Legitimacy | Political Democracy Index | GDPPP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bosnia-Herzegovina | 3.2 | 7.6 | 8.00 | 5.24 | 9,893.39 |
| Lebanon | 2.5 | 8.0 | 7.00 | 5.82 | 15,694.97 |
| US | 7.1 | 1.3 | 2.20 | 8.18 | 49,790.67 |
| UK | 7.8 | 1.9 | 1.40 | 8.16 | 36,456.00 |

*Note.* All indices correspond to the year of data collected from participants. The Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International, 2011) ranges from 0 to 10, with higher scores indicating less corruption. The External Intervention Index is from the Fragile States Index (Fund for Peace, 2011) and can range from 0 to 10, with higher numbers indicating higher outside interference via military intervention and in the economy and government. The Government Legitimacy Index is from is from the Fragile States Index (Fund for Peace, 2011) and ranges from 0 to 10, with higher numbers indicating less legitimacy. The Political Democracy Index by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2011) can range from 0 to 10 where 10 indicates the most democracy. GDPPP is Gross Domestic Per Capita Purchasing Power Parity and is given in billions of international dollars (World Bank, 2011).

**Table 7.**

*Tests of Social Dominance Orientation, Political engagement, Political Corruption and Self-efficacy Measurement invariance for all countries, Study 3.*

| | Model fit | | | | Model comparison | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | $\chi^2$ | *df* | CFI | RMSEA [90% CI] | Models | ΔCFI | ΔRMSEA |
| M1. Configural | 200.807 | 152 | 0.946 | 0.053 [0.03, 0.07] | | | |
| M2a. Metric | 253.194 | 173 | 0.911 | 0.064 [0.046 0.081] | M2a – M1 | -0.035 | 0.011 |
| M2b. Partial metric | 221.566 | 171 | 0.944 | 0.051 [0.029 0.069] | M2b – M1 | -0.002 | -0.013 |
| M3a. Full scalar | 333.379 | 192 | 0.842 | 0.081 [0.066 0.095] | M3a – M2b | -0.102 | 0.030 |
| M3b. Partial scalar | 239.391 | 187 | 0.942 | 0.050 [0.028, 0.068] | M3b – M2b | -0.002 | -0.001 |

*Note*. $\chi 2$ = chi-square; *df* = degrees of freedom; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; CI = confidence interval; Δ = change in the parameter.

**Table 8.**

*Correlations among variables, Study 3.*

| | *Higher status countries* *M(SD)* | *Lower status countries* *M(SD)* | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 6. | 7. | 8. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Age | 41.60 (15.67) | 35.56 (13.73) | -- | .13* | .15 | .09 | .10 | -.10 | .01 | .04 |
| 2. Political orientation | 1.97 (0.89) | 1.48 (0.69) | .14 | -- | -.04 | .10 | -.08 | .05 | -.18* | .01 |
| 3. Education | 3.71 (1.04) | 3.52 (0.94) | -.02 | -.03 | -- | .26** | .16 | -.17 | -.01 | .01 |
| 4. Wealth | 0.92 (0.59) | 1.03 (0.43) | -.18* | -.11 | .13 | -- | .08 | -.13* | .08 | .05 |
| 5. SDO | 3.95 (1.85) | 2.79 (1.52) | -.15* | .02 | -.08 | .07 | -- | -.02 | .31** | -.02 |
| 6. Political corruption | 4.85 (2.10) | 8.51 (2.01) | .21** | .02 | .05 | -.16* | -.38** | -- | -.17** | -.11 |
| 7. Political self-efficacy | 4.93 (1.88) | 3.73 (2.09) | -.10 | -.08 | -.01 | .07 | .05 | -.18** | -- | .18** |
| 8. Political engagement | 5.52 (2.09) | 4.18 (2.39) | -.24** | -.23** | -.02 | .18** | .20** | -.34** | .22** | -- |

*Note.* * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$. Correlations between variables of higher-status countries sample are displayed above the diagonal and correlations between variables of lower-status countries sample are displayed below the diagonal.

**Table 9.**

*Coefficients of moderation models, with upper and lower limits of bootstrapped 95% Cls, Study 3.*

| Predictor variable | Outcome variable | Coefficient | *SE* | *t* | *p* | 95% CI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Country status | Political self-efficacy | -0.05 | 0.20 | -0.26 | 0.78 | [-0.45, 0.34] |
| SDO | Political self-efficacy | 0.20** | 0.05 | 3.54 | 0.00 | [0.08, 0.31] |
| Country status × SDO | Political self-efficacy | -0.13* | 0.05 | -2.35 | 0.01 | [-0.24, -0.02] |
| Country status | Political corruption | 2.48** | 0.20 | 11.88 | 0.00 | [2.07, 2.90] |
| SDO | Political corruption | -0.123* | 0.06 | -4.00 | 0.00 | [-0.34, -0.11] |
| Country status × SDO | Political corruption | -0.25** | 0.06 | -4.31 | 0.00 | [-0.36, -0.13] |
| Country status | Political engagement | 0.75 | 0.52 | 1.45 | 0.15 | [-0.26, 1.78] |
| SDO | Political engagement | 0.01 | 0.06 | 0.16 | 0.86 | [-0.11, 0.14] |
| Political self-efficacy | Political engagement | 0.18** | 0.05 | 3.35 | 0.00 | [0.07, 0.29] |
| Political corruption | Political engagement | -0.24** | 0.05 | -4.44 | 0.00 | [-0.35, -0.13] |
| Country status × Self-efficacy | Political engagement | 0.01 | 0.05 | 0.20 | 0.83 | [-0.09, 0.12] |
| Country status × Corruption | Political engagement | -0.13** | 0.05 | -2.45 | 0.01 | [-0.24, -0.03] |

*Note*. Country status is coded 1 for low status and -1 for high status countries.