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The Political is Personal: Daily Politics as a Chronic Stressor

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Abstract

Politics and its controversies have permeated everyday life, but the daily impact of politics is largely unknown. Here, we conceptualize politics as a chronic stressor with important consequences for people's daily lives. We used longitudinal, daily-diary methods to track U.S. participants as they experienced daily political events across two weeks (Study 1: $N=198$, observations=2,167) and, separately, across three weeks (Study 2: $N=811$, observations=12,790) to explore how daily political events permeate people's lives and how they cope with this influence of politics. In both studies, daily political events consistently evoked negative emotions, which corresponded to worse psychological and physical well-being, but also increased motivation to take political action (e.g., volunteer, protest) aimed at changing the political system that evoked these emotions in the first place. Understandably, people frequently tried to regulate their politics-induced emotions; and successfully regulating these emotions using cognitive strategies (reappraisal and distraction) predicted greater well-being, but also weaker motivation to take action. Although people can protect themselves from the emotional impact of politics, frequently-used regulation strategies appear to come with a trade-off between well-being and action. To examine whether an alternative approach to one's emotions could avoid this trade-off, we measured emotional acceptance in Study 2 (i.e., accepting one's emotions without trying to change them) and found that successful acceptance predicted greater daily well-being but no impairment to political action. Overall, this research highlights how politics can be a chronic stressor in people's daily lives, underscoring the far-reaching influence politicians have beyond the formal powers endowed unto them.

Keywords: politics, well-being, emotion, emotion regulation, political action, stress

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The Political is Personal: Daily Politics as a Chronic Stressor

In the 1960s and 1970s, the student and feminist movements adopted the slogan “the personal is political” to highlight how personal matters scale up to be political matters. In the present research, we explore how the reverse may also be true – how everyday political matters might permeate the average person’s life, such that the political is personal. Even though day-to-day political events and controversies often occur far away and revolve around issues that can seem irrelevant to most people’s daily lives, we believe these distant events can have very personal consequences for the average person.

To understand the broad influence politics can have on the general public, we bridge political psychology with affective science by proposing that modern politics can be usefully conceptualized as a chronic stressor (Ford & Feinberg, 2020). Considering politics as a chronic stressor (e.g., prolonged and hard-to-change) can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of politics’ impact by emphasizing several core ideas: This conceptualization acknowledges the highly emotional nature of politics, which suggests we can leverage our empirical knowledge of negative emotions and their outcomes to understand the downstream consequences politics can have. This conceptualization also reinforces the fact that people are not defenseless in the face of chronic stress – people nearly always attempt to manage negative emotions caused by stress (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980), which carries its own downstream consequences, and thus any examination of the stress of politics would be incomplete without considering the strategies people use to manage this stress. Furthermore, this conceptualization also points to the powerful (and accumulative) daily impact that politics can have, which in turn, carries key methodological implications – psychological research needs to move beyond designs that hinge on singular, major events (e.g., presidential elections) and consider how people are responding to politics in daily life.

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By bridging political science with affective science and viewing politics through the lens of a chronic stressor, we make several specific predictions about the role of politics in people's daily lives: We hypothesize that daily political events regularly evoke negative emotional responses (e.g., anger, worry, sadness) in the day-to-day lives of citizens. Although we hypothesize these negative responses will predict worse daily well-being, we also expect these emotional reactions will serve an important motivational function – encouraging citizens to take political action and reshape the political system that evoked the negative emotions in the first place. We further hypothesize that individuals regularly employ a number of emotion regulation strategies to minimize the negative emotions they experience in response to daily political events, which may protect well-being, but also come at a cost to the motivation to take political action. To begin testing these hypotheses, we conducted two studies using daily diary methods: an individualized, longitudinal approach that provides a unique opportunity to capture people's emotional reactions to day-to-day political events, daily well-being, motivation to take political action, and use of emotion regulation.

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There are multiple pathways through which daily politics can regularly evoke negative emotional experiences.¹ Political policies can impede autonomy and cost money, and therefore directly threaten people's livelihood, triggering a host of negative emotions. More abstractly, politics is often intrinsically linked to people's core moral beliefs and convictions (e.g., polarizing "culture war" issues, like abortion and immigration) (Feinberg & Willer, 2013, 2015; Graham et al., 2011; Haidt, 2012; Koleva et al., 2012). Because moral convictions are central to people's sense of self (Strohming & Nichols, 2015), political events that challenge moral convictions are

¹ Emotions can be individual-based or group-based depending on whether the emotion-eliciting appraisal occurs at the individual or group level (Smith, 1993; Van Zomeren et al., 2004). Here we do not distinguish between individual- and group-based emotions because we expect the experience of both to have a similar impact on people's well-being and political action tendencies.

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experienced as a personal affront and met with strong negative emotional responses (Haidt, 2001, 2012; Kovacheff et al., 2018). Additionally, individuals commonly develop a sense of social identification with a political party (Huddy, 2002; West & Iyengar, 2020), which engenders a personal stake in how that group fares – often to the point where people’s self-esteem tracks with the group’s successes and failures (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Thus, whenever one’s political team experiences an insult or a loss, it can be personally painful. Considering the many ways in which politics becomes personal, it is easy to see how the political landscape – its daily controversies, accusations, and discord – can become a chronic stressor for many citizens.

Some research has begun to provide evidence of the emotional impact of politics on the average person. Almost all of this research has focused specifically on the outcomes of presidential elections and has consistently demonstrated that partisans feel strongly negative when their party loses an election (Pierce et al., 2015; Stanton et al., 2009, 2010). In recent years, people also experience negative emotion far in advance of elections. For example, in a 2019 poll, 56% of U.S. voters reported that the upcoming 2020 election was a significant source of stress, a full year before the election (American Psychological Association, 2019). These studies indicate that significant political events such as presidential elections may be internalized by many in the general public, but might day-to-day political happenings also affect the average citizen? Although no research to our knowledge has explored how daily political events affect people, polling data strongly suggest that modern politics poses a regular emotional burden on Americans. For example, across more than ten years of polling starting in 2006, the percentage of Americans who feel frustrated or angry with the government has been consistently high (73%-86%), whereas the percentage who feel ‘basically content’ has been consistently low (11%-22%; (Pew Research Center, 2017)). These polls support a conceptualization of politics as a chronic stressor, a lens which can broaden scientists’ focus beyond singular, major political events, such as election losses, and highlights how even day-to-day

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political happenings (e.g., a politician's recent public statement, a new policy being debated in congress) can have serious consequences for the average citizen's daily emotional lives.

Does Politics Impair Well-Being?

It is well established that experiencing negative emotions, over time, translates into worse well-being (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; S. Cohen, 1996), but very few studies have examined whether negative emotional responses *to politics* predict worse well-being (Simchon et al., 2020; Stanton et al., 2010), and none to our knowledge have examined the impact of politics beyond the influence of presidential elections, leaving many unanswered questions about how politics can affect psychological and physical well-being on a day-to-day basis. Recent research examining presidential elections suggests that major political stressors like election losses do not, in fact, result in durable changes to people's well-being (Roche & Jacobson, 2019). For example, the outcome of the 2016 presidential election in the United States, where Donald Trump unexpectedly beat Hillary Clinton, did not have a prolonged impact on liberal Americans (Simchon et al., 2020). These findings may run contrary to popular belief, but they are quite consistent with the literature examining major stressors – this literature tends to find that people are remarkably adaptable and resilient. In the face of major stressors (e.g., bereavement, divorce, job loss), people tend to recover within a relatively short timespan (Bonanno, 2004). Though it may seem counterintuitive, by focusing primarily on major events like election losses, researchers may have focused on the types of events from which people are most likely to recover.

We propose that it is useful to consider the chronic stress of *daily* political stressors. Indeed, politics is not a single event, but rather a steady stream of events that continues on a daily basis, and its *daily* toll on well-being could be significant. Indeed, research on non-political stressors has demonstrated that the accumulation of daily stressors has a powerful and prolonged impact on people's well-being (Almeida, 2005; Almeida et al., 2002; Kanner et al., 1981; Pillow et al., 1996).

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Thus, unlike single dramatic events, like presidential elections, day-to-day politics may represent a more plausible pathway through which politics shapes people's well-being over time. It is therefore necessary to go beyond the impact of singular political events, and instead assess the day-to-day associations between peoples' daily emotional responses to politics and their daily well-being over time (Almeida, 2005; Roche & Jacobson, 2019) – a novel theoretical and methodological approach we undertake in the present research.

Can People Protect Themselves from Politics?

Although politics can take a daily toll on people's well-being, people are not defenseless in the face of stress. When facing daily stressors, people often manage their emotional responses using emotion regulation strategies (Ford, Karnilowicz, et al., 2017; Gross, 2015; Heiy & Cheavens, 2014). To anticipate which strategies people will likely use when managing emotions about politics, it is again useful to consider politics as a chronic stressor, characterized by hard-to-change systems (Canetti-Nisim et al., 2009; Ford & Feinberg, 2020). When facing hard-to-change stressors, people often turn to methods of coping that involve adapting to the stressor by changing one's emotions (Biggs et al., 2017; Cheng et al., 2014). Because emotion regulation is so common when people face stress in daily life, any analysis of the emotional consequences of politics would be incomplete without also accounting for how people protect themselves from the ill-effects of politics.

People rely on a variety of tools to change their emotions when facing non-political stressors in daily life (Brans et al., 2013; Ford, Karnilowicz, et al., 2017; Heiy & Cheavens, 2014) and these patterns likely extend to political stressors as well. For instance, people often reframe situations in ways that reduce their emotional impact (*cognitive reappraisal*; e.g., reminding oneself that a situation is not as bad as it seems, or that even bad situations can have silver linings). People also direct attention away from emotionally evocative events (*distraction*; e.g., tuning out of distressing conversations, or changing the channel from upsetting news stories). People even commonly hide

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their emotions from others in daily life (*expressive suppression*) (Brans et al., 2013; Ford, Karnilowicz, et al., 2017; Heij & Cheavens, 2014). Although each of these strategies are recruited frequently when people face stress in daily life, the strategies differ in how effective they are at helping people feel better. Cognitive reappraisal appears to be particularly useful at helping individuals reduce negative emotion, even in the face of evocative political events (Feinberg et al., 2014; Ford, Feinberg, et al., 2018; Mehta et al., 2020). Distraction – another cognitive form of emotion regulation – also has been found helpful to manage political stress (Mehta et al., 2020). Expressive suppression has rarely been considered within the political context (Feinberg et al., 2014), but prior results from non-political studies suggest suppression is relatively unhelpful for reducing negative emotional experiences (Webb et al., 2012) or may even backfire (Goldin et al., 2008). These prior results begin to suggest that whereas multiple forms of emotion regulation are likely commonly used when facing the stress of day-to-day politics, only certain forms of regulation are likely to help individuals feel better, including reappraisal and perhaps distraction.

Does Protection Come with a Trade-off?

Although it is natural to want to feel better in the face of stress, feeling better can come with both benefits and costs. On one hand, regularly reducing the unpleasant negative emotions evoked by daily stressors consistently predicts better overall well-being (e.g., greater life satisfaction, less depression; Ford, Lam, et al., 2018) – a pattern that would likely extend to the context of political stressors. This important long-term benefit underscores how vital it is to effectively manage one's emotions. On the other hand, however, reducing negative emotions can also minimize the valuable functions those emotions provide (Feinberg, Ford, & Flynn, 2020). Namely, emotions can serve as a useful guide for behavior (Frijda, 1992). In the realm of politics, the strong emotions that individuals feel in response to political events may inspire them to take political action (Miller et al., 2009; Van Zomeren et al., 2004). These actions – protesting, contacting representatives,

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donating to a cause – can create societal change as individuals strive to improve upon the status-quo (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013; Zomerren & Aarti, 2009). Thus, experiencing heightened negative emotion in response to political events should correspond with greater daily motivation to participate in political action (Ford et al., 2019). However, as individuals reduce this negative emotion through emotion regulation, they should also be less motivated to engage in political actions aimed at building a better society.

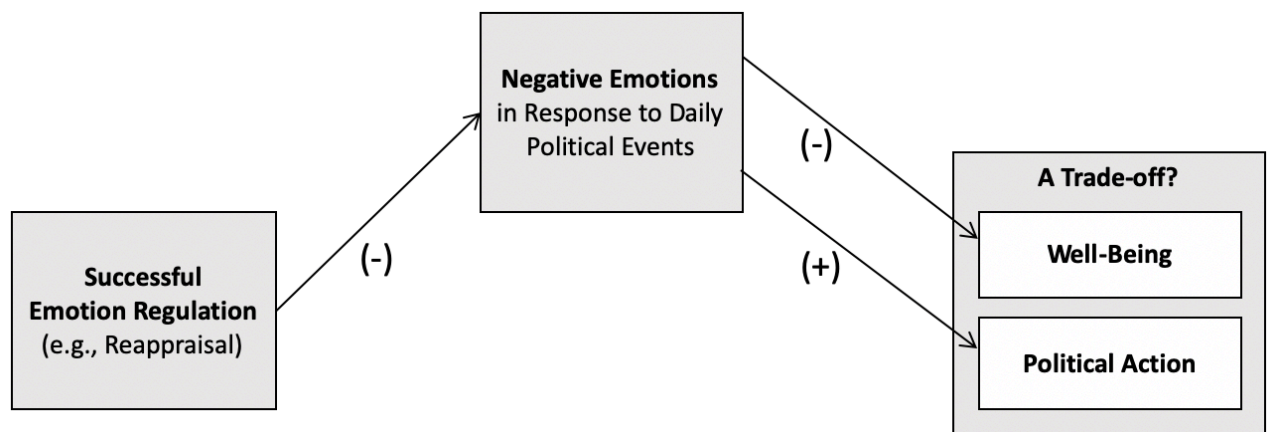


Figure 1. Conceptual figure demonstrating how emotion regulation can be used to reduce negative emotions in response to stressful political events. Although negative emotional responses to politics should accumulate and promote worse well-being, these emotions may also drive political action. As such, emotion regulation can come with a trade-off, whereby people are able to protect their well-being, but coming with a cost to political action.

The Present Research

In viewing politics as a chronic stressor, we hypothesize that daily political events will consistently elicit negative emotions in the day-to-day lives of citizens. These negative emotions should, in turn, predict worse daily well-being. But, at the same time, they should serve the important function of motivating citizens to take political action aimed at altering the political system that evoked the negative emotions in the first place. Furthermore, when facing political stressors, individuals will use a variety of emotion regulation strategies to reduce their negative

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emotional experience, some of which (e.g., reappraisal) should protect their well-being, but also decrease the motivation to take political action. Next, we outline our general measurement approach for both studies, describing the unique benefits of capturing these processes using daily assessments.

General measurement approach. To test our hypotheses, we conducted two studies with geographically, socioeconomically, and politically diverse samples of Americans (Study 1 $N=198$; Study 2 $N=811$). Both studies employed a daily-diary methodology – a well-established and validated technique (Almeida, 2005; Gunthert & Wenzel, 2012) – whereby participants completed daily surveys for two weeks (Study 1 *total observations* = 2,167) or three weeks (Study 2 *total observations* = 12,790). Study 1 was conducted across three separate consecutive two-week waves in late 2017 and early 2018 during which a number of different day-to-day political events occurred (e.g., conflict with another country, brief government shutdown, public statement from the president). Study 2 was conducted over three weeks in late 2019 during which a number of day-to-day political events occurred (e.g., Democratic Primary debates, public statements from politicians; and notably, the impeachment investigation of Donald Trump). Taken together, these two studies and their combined 14,957 observations provide an in-depth perspective on the role that politics plays in people’s day-to-day lives.

To assess people’s daily experiences, participants reported the political event they thought about most that day, the emotions they felt in response, and how they managed those emotions (e.g., reappraisal, distraction, suppression). Participants also reported their daily psychological well-being (e.g., life satisfaction, sense of purpose), physical well-being (e.g., fatigue, illness), and motivation to engage in political action (e.g., donate money, attend a protest). In accordance with best practices for the daily-diary method, reports were made at the end of the day (Almeida, 2005; Almeida et al., 2002), allowing us to target the political event that participants thought most about on a given day,

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whenever it may have occurred. Research indicates that end-of-day ratings (e.g., of daily emotional experiences) are very highly correlated with aggregated ratings made from during the day (e.g., ecological momentary assessment ratings, with r s up to .97 (Neubauer et al., 2020)), suggesting that for the present research question, end-of-day ratings have the benefit of allowing us to validly capture responses to a salient daily event without needing additional sampling that can be intrusive and burdensome for participants.

Our daily measurement approach allowed us to examine both how people differed from each other (between-person effects) and how each person's experiences fluctuated across each day (within-person effects). For example, in the between-person effects, we capture whether people who feel worse about politics *on average* are also more likely to experience worse well-being in daily life; and in the within-person effects, we control for the extent to which some people are more likely to be upset about politics in general and capture whether people's well-being suffers on days when they feel worse about politics than they typically do. These analyses provide a valuable two-fold test of whether political events correspond with people's day-to-day experiences, including both their well-being and their political action. To bring these fluctuations to life, see **Figure 1** for one participant's negative emotion in response to daily political events and their well-being across two weeks in Study 1, and see **Figure 2** for a participant's negative emotion in response to daily political events and their motivation to take political action across three weeks in Study 2.

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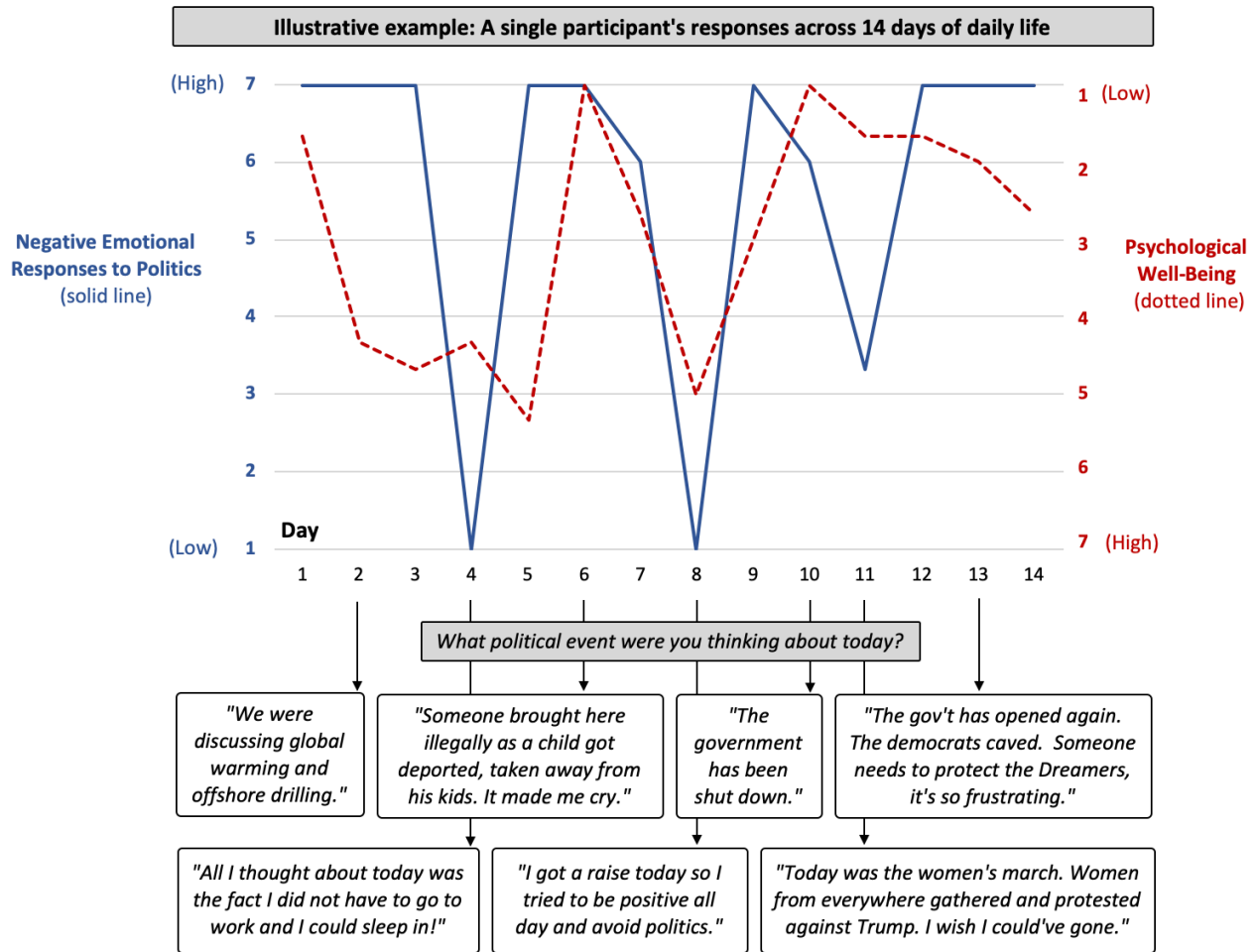


Figure 2. An illustrative example of responses to politics in daily life from Study 1. Responses from one representative participant from Study 1 illustrating daily fluctuations in negative emotional responses to political events (solid line) and psychological well-being (dotted line). The scale for well-being has been reversed to more clearly illustrate the link between higher negative emotion and lower well-being. Several representative daily political events are also included (edited for confidentiality and brevity). This participant experienced several peaks in negative emotion (coupled with lower well-being) corresponding to distressing political events (e.g., a government shut-down), as well as several troughs of negative emotion corresponding to either not thinking about politics that day (Day 4 and 8, which were coupled with higher well-being) or thinking about a positive event (Day 11, the Women's March).

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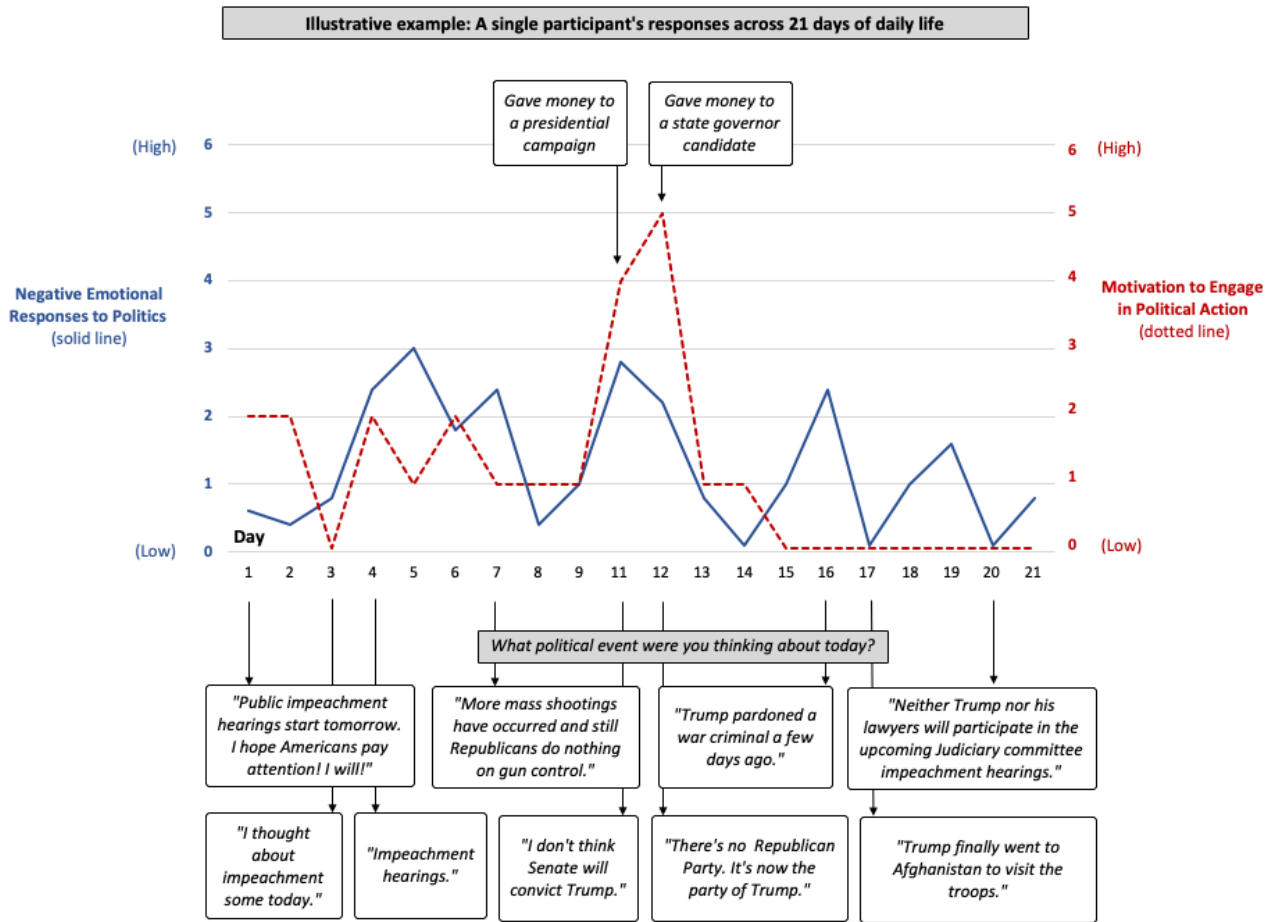


Figure 3. An illustrative example of responses to politics in daily life from Study 2. Responses from one representative participant from Study 2 illustrating daily fluctuations in negative emotional responses to political events (solid line) and motivation to engage in political action (dotted line). We also note the political action behaviors the participant engaged in, which co-occurred with peaks in motivation. Several representative daily political events are also included (edited for confidentiality and brevity). This participant experienced several peaks in negative emotion (coupled with higher motivation for political action), as well as several troughs of negative emotion corresponding to positive political events (Day 17, President Trump visiting the troops for Thanksgiving).

Avoiding the trade-off? We expect to find that people who use effective forms of emotion regulation to manage their emotions about politics (e.g., reappraisal) will experience a trade-off characterized by greater daily well-being but less daily motivation to take political action. But is this trade-off *inevitable*? Identifying plausible approaches that can help individuals avoid the trade-off between well-being and political action represents a crucial step forward in terms of the

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practical applications of this research. To examine whether an alternative approach to one's emotions could avoid this trade-off, we measured emotional acceptance in Study 2 (i.e., accepting one's emotions without judging or trying to change them). Emotional acceptance aims to change one's relationship with negative emotions and is not focused on reducing these emotions in the moment (Teasdale, 1999). In turn, adopting an accepting stance towards one's emotions has been consistently linked with better well-being over time, even in highly stressful situations (Ford, Lam, et al., 2018; Shallcross et al., 2010). Importantly, acceptance is also thought to promote self-awareness by allowing individuals to acknowledge their emotions as they unfold, as well as the underlying reasons for those emotions (Hayes & Wilson, 2003). By increasing awareness, acceptance may also attune individuals to their closely-held values, which gave rise to these emotions in the first place (Hayes et al., 2005). Based on this theorizing, acceptance may promote better well-being and *not* interfere with individuals' motivation to take political action.

Considering political orientation. By recruiting politically-diverse participants in both studies, we were able to also examine whether political orientation (i.e., party or ideology) plays a role in people's daily responses to politics as well as whether any of our hypotheses hinge upon – or are relatively robust across – different political orientations. People from different political orientations are known to differ in personality (Sibley et al., 2012; Xu et al., 2016), worldview (Feinberg et al., 2020; Jost et al., 2003), and morality (Graham et al., 2009, 2011), and it is possible these differences might translate into differences in how individuals experience and respond to daily politics. We explore these possibilities in exploratory analyses of political orientation in both of our studies, considering specifically Democrats and Republicans in Study 1, and broadening our focus to also include independents in Study 2, and also considering political ideology (measured continuously) in both studies.

Study 1

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Study 1 began examining the role of politics as a chronic stressor in the average citizen's life by assessing participants' responses to daily political events (e.g., a new tax reform bill, federal budget disputes, and the President's State of the Union Address). Three consecutive cohorts of two-week diaries were collected. Each day, we assessed participants' emotions about the political events they were thinking about that day, how they managed those emotions, their well-being (psychological and physical), and their motivation to engage in political action. Data and analysis syntax for all results reported in this paper, as well as materials for both diary studies, are provided at [OSF link available upon paper acceptance]. All study procedures were approved by [masked] (protocol #31102).

Study 1 Methods

Participants. We collected sufficient data (i.e., at least 85 observations) to detect a small effect at both levels of our multilevel models (J. Cohen, 1992). Our final sample consisted of 198 American residents recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (67% women, 76% White, $M_{age} = 38$ years; $SD_{age} = 12$ years). Participants were eligible for the study if they thought about politics daily, identified as either Republican (35% of sample) or Democrat (65% of sample), were comfortable using a smartphone app to participate, and were currently in a romantic relationship (this criterion is not relevant to the present investigation).

Participants received up to \$12, depending on the extent to which they participated in the study (\$.50 for background survey, \$.25 for each daily survey, \$4 for completing 10-13 surveys or \$8 for completing all 14 surveys). Response times for each item were recorded in milliseconds. Following published guidelines (McCabe et al., 2012), we excluded from analysis all item-level responses made in 300ms or less (0.36% of items). If more than 50% of items within a nightly survey had response times less than or equal to 300ms, the entire survey was excluded from

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analysis (0.26% of surveys). On average, participants completed 11 of the 14 surveys (median response rate = 86%, or ~12 days); 30% completed all 14 surveys, 44% completed between 10-13 surveys, and 25% completed 9 or fewer surveys. In total, participants provided 2167 surveys.

Measures. During each daily survey, participants reported their psychological and physical well-being, negative emotion, emotion regulation, and political action. For all composites from our daily surveys, we computed internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) for each calendar day (Shrout & Lane, 2012) and averaged across all days. See Table 1 for descriptive statistics.

Psychological and physical well-being. Psychological well-being was measured each day using four items on a scale of 1(*strongly disagree*) to 7(*strongly agree*) and averaged together: “*I felt depressed today,*” “*Today, I felt satisfied with life,*” “*Today, I felt like my life has a clear sense of purpose,*” and “*Today, I felt stressed*” ($\alpha=.84$). Physical well-being was measured each day using two items, rated on a scale of 1(*strongly disagree*) to 7(*strongly agree*), reverse coded, and averaged together: “*I felt tired or fatigued today,*” and “*I felt sick today*” ($r_{\text{within}}=.33, p<.001$).

Negative emotion. Participants were asked to describe a specific political event that they had been thinking about. To encourage participants to report any type of event (e.g., positive or negative), this prompt was intentionally phrased to be neutral (“*what U.S. political event or situation have you been thinking about today? (e.g., a politician's recent public statement, a new policy being debated in congress, the U.S.'s role in international events)...*”). See supplementary materials for more information about the types of events participants described (e.g., State of the Union, conflict with another country, a new law or bill being debated by congress).

Participants then rated the negative emotions they felt in response to the event using six items that each included adjectives describing anger (“*angry, irritated, annoyed*”), fear (“*scared, fearful, afraid*”), disgust (“*disgust, distaste, revulsion*”), sadness (“*sad, downhearted, unhappy*”),

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shame (“*ashamed, humiliated, embarrassed*”), and outrage (“*morally outraged*”). Each item was rated on a scale of 1(*strongly disagree*) to 7(*strongly agree*) and averaged together ($\alpha=.91$).²

Emotion regulation. Participants reported their use of three strategies: reappraisal, distraction, and suppression. Participants completed separate ratings for how hard they tried to use a strategy (regulation attempts) and how successfully they used the strategy (regulation success) on a scale of 1(*strongly disagree*) to 7(*strongly agree*) for reappraisal (“*When thinking about politics today, I tried to make myself think about the situation in a way that would help me feel calmer,*” and “*When thinking about politics today, I was successful at making myself think about the situation in a way that would help me feel calmer*”), distraction (“*Today I tried to distract myself from thinking about politics,*” and “*Today, I was successful at distracting myself from thinking about politics*”), and suppression (“*Today, I tried to hide how I was feeling about politics from others,*” and “*Today, I was successful at hiding how I was feeling about politics from others*”). In all multilevel models, we focus on regulation *success* and hold constant (i.e., control for) emotion regulation *attempts*, given that emotion regulation successes and attempts are conceptually and empirically distinct (Ford, Karnilowicz, et al., 2017), and it is the *successful* use of a given strategy that should impact emotional outcomes, not merely the amount of effort exerted attempting the strategy.

Political action. We assessed motivation to engage in political action with one item (“*Today, I felt motivated to take political action (e.g., donate money, volunteer time, attend a protest, contact my governmental representatives)*”), rated on a scale of 1(*strongly disagree*) to 7(*strongly agree*). We also measured whether participants engaged in any political action behaviors that day using a binary (*yes, no*) variable, with a follow-up question where they could briefly

² As filler items, we also assessed positive emotion items in Study 1 (“*hopeful, optimistic, encouraged*”, “*glad, happy, joyful*”, “*amused, entertained*”) and Study 2 (“*hopeful, optimistic, encouraged*”, “*glad, happy, joyful*”, “*proud*”). In both studies we also assessed compassion and schadenfreude (“*This event made me feel sympathy and compassion for people who are not in my political party*”, “*This event made me feel like people who were not in my political party were getting what they deserve.*”), which were not relevant to the present investigation.

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describe the action they took. We focus on motivation to take action as it represents a reliable and valid predictor of future political action in prior research (e.g., $r > .60$ (Ford, Feinberg, et al., 2018)) and can be validly assessed every day. We did not expect to observe high levels of political action behaviors during any given two-week timeframe given that specific political action behaviors occur relatively infrequently, usually manifesting after the motivation to take action has built up over time, reaching a tipping point where grievances become too much to bear.³

Table 1. Study 1 descriptive statistics for all core study variables (negative emotional responses to politics, emotion regulation strategies, and daily outcomes) for the full sample. Analyses also consider differences by political party (Republicans, Democrats) and political ideology (higher scores indicate more conservative vs. liberal ideology).

	Full Sample Mean (SE)	Political Party Differences			Correlation with Political Ideology
		Republican Mean (SE)	Democrat Mean (SE)	<i>t</i> -test of Party differences	
Negative Emotions	4.11 (0.08)	3.51 (0.12)	4.47 (0.09)	$t = 6.66^{***}$	$r = -.54^{***}$
Emotion Regulation Strategies					
Reappraisal Success	4.28 (0.07)	4.23 (0.12)	4.29 (0.09)	$t = 0.42$	$r = .01$
Distraction Success	4.40 (0.07)	4.34 (0.13)	4.44 (0.09)	$t = 0.59$	$r = -.06$
Suppression Success	4.02 (0.07)	3.98 (0.12)	4.04 (0.09)	$t = 0.39$	$r = .01$
Daily Outcomes					
Psychological Well-being	4.94 (0.08)	4.99 (0.14)	4.90 (0.10)	$t = 0.52$	$r = .19^*$
Physical Well-being	4.84 (0.09)	4.90 (0.15)	4.78 (0.11)	$t = 0.68$	$r = .20^{**}$
Political Action Motivation	2.44 (0.08)	2.05 (0.12)	2.67 (0.09)	$t = 4.06^{***}$	$r = -.38^{***}$

Note. Response scale for all core study variables was 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). Means reflect the intercept values from multilevel models with a random intercept to account for

³ Within Study 1, 17% of the sample ($n=34$) reported engaging in at least one political action behavior during the study. Even with these low base rates, the motivation to take political action still significantly predicted whether or not someone engaged in action during the study, *odds ratio*: 1.50, $p = .011$, thereby validating our measure of motivation. See Study 2 for more discussion of political action behaviors: By quadrupling the sample size (Study 1 $N=198$ vs. Study 2 $N=811$) and increasing the study duration from 14 days to 21 days, Study 2 is better powered and designed to consider specific political action behaviors.

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the nested nature of the data. To calculate the party means, we included a dummy variable in our model that coded the party of interest as the reference group (i.e., coded as 0). Because the intercept is the value of y when x is 0, it represents the mean for the party coded as 0. Links with political ideology are r s, calculated by correlating political ideology with the between-person average of each daily study variable. $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$

Political orientation. During a baseline survey, a single item assessed participants' political party. Additionally, three items asked participants about their social, economic, and general political ideology, assessed on a scale from 1(*very liberal*) to 7(*very conservative*). The composite was highly reliable ($\alpha=.97$), and yielded an average score of 3.34 ($SD=1.92$).

Procedure. After completing a screener questionnaire to determine eligibility for the current study, eligible participants were invited to complete a background survey which included measures of demographics, political party, and political ideology, as well as other trait measures not relevant to the present investigation. Participants then downloaded the smartphone app used to administer the daily surveys (ExperienceSampler; (Thai & Page-Gould, 2018)). Several days later, participants received a notification on their phone at 8PM (local time) that their survey was ready. Each night, participants received a reminder notification at 10PM if they had not completed their survey. After midnight, the survey was no longer available, and was considered missed.

The core study variables were collected in three consecutive waves of data, each lasting for two weeks. This allowed for continuous coverage of political events that occurred across those six weeks, across three sets of participants: Wave 1 started on December 27, 2017 and ended on January 9, 2018; Wave 2 started on January 10, 2018 and ended on January 23, 2018; Wave 3 started on January 24, 2018 and ended on February 6, 2018. Each daily survey began with participants reporting their daily psychological and physical well-being. Participants then reported their emotional responses to the specific political event that they had been thinking about that day, how they regulated those emotional responses, and how motivated they were to engage in political

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action. Importantly, we assessed psychological and physical well-being *prior* to asking participants about the political event to help ensure that participants reported their well-being in a more general context and were not influenced by responding to questions relating to politics. In addition, several other variables not relevant to the present hypotheses were collected in the daily measures (e.g., media consumption, relationship measures) and are not discussed further.

General analytic strategy. We analyzed our data using multilevel models, using an unstructured covariance matrix and Satterthwaite degrees of freedom. We conducted 2-level models with a random intercept for each participant, allowing the average amounts of each daily outcome to vary between individuals. Although there were no apparent time trends, we also included a centered version of day and a random slope of diary day (i.e., time) to allow for different trajectories across the 14 days of the surveys between individuals (Bolger & Laurenceau, 2013), and we controlled for the wave in which the data was collected to account for differences resulting from the political events that occurred during each two-week data collection period. Moreover, in all analyses involving an emotion regulation strategy, we included how much effort people put into a particular strategy as a control variable to isolate the predictive validity of successfully using the strategy on downstream outcomes.

To facilitate interpretation of intercepts in our analyses, we subtracted the mean of our predictor variables across subjects and time points from each score (grand-mean centered). In addition, because our predictors varied both between- and within-participants, we created between-person versions of the predictor variables by centering each individual's daily responses on the grand mean and calculating each individual's mean across all their daily responses, and within-person versions of the predictor variables by centering each individual's daily responses on their own mean. We entered both the between-person predictor and the within-person predictor in all models simultaneously to examine their separate effects. This approach allowed us to examine both

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how people differed from each other (between-person effects) and how each person's experiences fluctuated across each day compared to their own average (within-person effects). These analyses provide a unique, dual test of how political events correspond with people's day-to-day experiences.

Study 1 Results

In the following results, we first consider how people are responding to politics in daily life. We next examine whether negative emotions about politics predicts worse daily well-being. Then, we examine how people use emotion regulation to protect their emotions in daily life, and examine whether successful emotion regulation predicts better daily well-being but also less political action. Lastly, we test the robustness of these patterns and examine the role of political orientation.

How are people responding to politics in daily life? Results indicate that day-to-day political events commonly evoke negative emotional reactions. When thinking about the most salient political event of the day – even though our prompt was designed to be neutral and did *not* specifically ask about negative events – people felt at least some degree of any negative emotion (i.e., above the lowest scale point) on 81% of the days and felt stronger levels of any negative emotion (i.e., at or above the scale midpoint) on 45% of the days.

Do negative emotions about politics predict worse well-being? Negative emotions were associated with worse well-being (Table 2): Between-person effects indicated that feeling more negative emotion in response to political events, on average, was associated with worse daily psychological and physical well-being. Similarly, within-person effects indicated that when participants felt more negative emotion on a given day than they typically felt in response to a political event, they experienced worse psychological well-being and worse physical well-being (for a discussion of lagged analyses, see supplementary materials).

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Table 2. Study 1 multilevel model analyses testing the *between-person* and *within-person* association between negative emotion or emotion regulation success and daily outcomes. The between- and within-person effect for a given predictor was always included in the same model, and each predictor was considered separately. Significant values are bolded.

Predictors	Negative Emotions	Well-being		Political Action Motivation
		Psychological	Physical	
<i>Between-Person Associations:</i>				
Negative Emotions	–	<i>b</i> = -0.30 (0.07) CI_{95%} [-0.44, -0.15] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = -0.29 (0.08) CI_{95%} [-0.45, -0.14] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.33 (0.07) CI_{95%} [0.19, 0.46] <i>p</i> < .001
Reappraisal Success	<i>b</i> = -0.57 (0.11) CI_{95%} [-0.78, -0.37] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.36 (0.12) CI_{95%} [0.12, 0.60] <i>p</i> = .003	<i>b</i> = 0.30 (0.13) CI_{95%} [0.05, 0.57] <i>p</i> = .021	<i>b</i> = -0.13 (0.11) CI _{95%} [-0.35, 0.10] <i>p</i> = .265
Distraction Success	<i>b</i> = -0.27 (0.09) CI_{95%} [-0.45, -0.10] <i>p</i> = .003	<i>b</i> = 0.18 (0.10) CI _{95%} [-0.02, 0.38] <i>p</i> = .087	<i>b</i> = 0.23 (0.11) CI_{95%} [0.02, 0.44] <i>p</i> = .031	<i>b</i> = -0.10 (0.09) CI _{95%} [-0.28, 0.09] <i>p</i> = .295
Suppression Success	<i>b</i> = -0.25 (0.09) CI_{95%} [-0.43, -0.07] <i>p</i> = .007	<i>b</i> = 0.07 (0.10) CI _{95%} [-0.13, 0.27] <i>p</i> = .503	<i>b</i> = 0.09 (0.11) CI _{95%} [-0.12, 0.30] <i>p</i> = .404	<i>b</i> = -0.08 (0.09) CI _{95%} [-0.27, 0.10] <i>p</i> = .405
<i>Within-Person Associations:</i>				
Negative Emotions	–	<i>b</i> = -0.06 (0.02) CI_{95%} [-0.09, -0.03] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = -0.07 (0.02) CI_{95%} [-0.11, -0.03] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.10 (0.02) CI_{95%} [0.05, 0.14] <i>p</i> < .001
Reappraisal Success	<i>b</i> = -0.16 (0.03) CI_{95%} [-0.21, -0.11] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.07 (0.02) CI_{95%} [0.03, 0.11] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.05 (0.02) CI_{95%} [0.01, 0.10] <i>p</i> = .028	<i>b</i> = -0.07 (0.03) CI_{95%} [-0.12, -0.03] <i>p</i> = .004
Distraction Success	<i>b</i> = -0.10 (0.02) CI_{95%} [-0.15, -0.06] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.09 (0.02) CI_{95%} [0.05, 0.12] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.07 (0.02) CI_{95%} [0.03, 0.11] <i>p</i> = .001	<i>b</i> = -0.10 (0.02) CI_{95%} [-0.14, -0.05] <i>p</i> < .001
Suppression Success	<i>b</i> = -0.07 (0.02) CI_{95%} [-0.12, -0.03] <i>p</i> = .002	<i>b</i> = 0.04 (0.02) CI_{95%} [0.004, 0.07] <i>p</i> = .027	<i>b</i> = 0.04 (0.02) CI _{95%} [-0.000, 0.08] <i>p</i> = .058	<i>b</i> = -0.05 (0.02) CI_{95%} [-0.09, -0.002] <i>p</i> = .040

Note. All analyses were run in R. *bs* are unstandardized multilevel modeling coefficients, with standard errors appearing in parentheses. Confidence intervals were bootstrapped with 5000 resamples. For all analyses, we also controlled for diary day and the wave in which the data were collected to account for potential differences due to time or political events. For any analysis with a measure of emotion regulation success (e.g., reappraisal success), the corresponding measure of regulation attempts (e.g., reappraisal attempts) was also included in the model.

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How are people protecting their emotions in daily life? People were commonly motivated to regulate the emotions they felt in response to day-to-day political events. People attempted reappraisal to at least some degree (i.e., ratings above the lowest scale point) on 84% of the days, attempted distraction on 80% of the days, and attempted suppression on 70% of the days.

Using emotion regulation more successfully, in turn, was associated with lower negative emotional responses to politics for all strategies (see Table 2 for statistics): People who more successfully used reappraisal, distraction, or suppression on average experienced less negative emotion (between-person effect), and when participants were more successful at using reappraisal, distraction, or suppression on a given day than they typically were, they experienced less negative emotion (within-person effect).

In spite of people's diverse attempts to regulate their emotions, reappraisal was the only strategy that was *uniquely* associated with lower negative emotion: When all three strategies were entered simultaneously into a multilevel model to predict negative emotion in response to daily political events, only reappraisal success significantly predicted lower negative emotions for both the between-person effect, $b=-0.49$ 95% CI [-0.79, -0.19], $SE=0.15$, $p=.001$, and the within-person effect, $b=-0.14$ 95% CI [-0.19, -0.08], $SE=0.03$, $p<.001$. Successfully using suppression and distraction were no longer significant predictors of negative emotions in this model, $ts<1.74$, $ps>.082$. Thus, in subsequent analyses, we focused on reappraisal success (but see Table 2 for additional findings regarding the other strategies).

Through lower negative emotion, does emotion regulation predict better daily well-being? Successful use of reappraisal carried implications for daily well-being: people who used reappraisal more successfully on average were more likely to experience higher levels of psychological and physical well-being (between-person effects), and when people used reappraisal

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more successfully on a given day than they typically did, they experienced better psychological and physical well-being (within-person effects). Building on these results, we found evidence for a mediational pathway between reappraisal and well-being such that successfully using reappraisal was associated with lower negative emotion and, in turn, greater psychological and physical well-being, both between and within individuals (see Table 3). These analyses were conducted using 1-1 unconfounded multilevel mediation models in MPlus (Preacher et al., 2010).

Table 3. Summary of Study 1 multilevel mediation analyses testing the between-person and within-person mediations whereby reappraisal success predicts negative emotional responses to politics, which in turn statistically accounts for a given daily outcome.

Daily Outcome	Mediation Statistics			
	Reappraisal Success → Negative Emotion (a-path)	Negative Emotion → Outcome (controlling for reappraisal) (b'-path)	Reappraisal Success → Outcome (controlling for negative emotion) (c'-path)	Indirect Effect
<i>Between-Person Mediations:</i>				
Psychological Well-being	$b = -0.57 (0.11)$ CI _{95%} [-0.78, -0.35] $p < .001$	$b = -0.28 (0.09)$ CI _{95%} [-0.44, -0.11] $p = .001$	$b = 0.20 (0.14)$ CI _{95%} [-0.08, 0.47] $p = .160$	$b = 0.16 (0.06)$ CI _{95%} [0.04, 0.27] $p = .006$
Physical Well-being	$b = -0.57 (0.11)$ CI _{95%} [-0.78, -0.35] $p < .001$	$b = -0.24 (0.08)$ CI _{95%} [-0.41, -0.08] $p = .003$	$b = 0.14 (0.14)$ CI _{95%} [-0.13, 0.42] $p = .312$	$b = 0.14 (0.05)$ CI _{95%} [0.03, 0.24] $p = .009$
Political Action Motivation	$b = -0.57 (0.11)$ CI _{95%} [-0.78, -0.35] $p < .001$	$b = 0.31 (0.08)$ CI _{95%} [0.16, 0.47] $p < .001$	$b = 0.03 (0.13)$ CI _{95%} [-0.22, 0.28] $p = .803$	$b = -0.18 (0.06)$ CI _{95%} [-0.29, -0.07] $p = .001$
<i>Within-Person Mediations:</i>				
Psychological Well-being	$b = -0.17 (0.03)$ CI _{95%} [-0.22, -0.12] $p < .001$	$b = -0.06 (0.02)$ CI _{95%} [-0.10, -0.02] $p = .001$	$b = 0.06 (0.02)$ CI _{95%} [0.01, 0.10] $p = .015$	$b = 0.01 (0.004)$ CI _{95%} [0.003, 0.02] $p = .004$
Physical Well-being	$b = -0.17 (0.03)$ CI _{95%} [-0.22, -0.12] $p < .001$	$b = -0.07 (0.02)$ CI _{95%} [-0.12, -0.03] $p = .002$	$b = 0.04 (0.03)$ CI _{95%} [-0.02, 0.09] $p = .208$	$b = 0.01 (0.004)$ CI _{95%} [0.004, 0.02] $p = .005$
Political Action Motivation	$b = -0.17 (0.03)$ CI _{95%} [-0.22, -0.12] $p < .001$	$b = 0.09 (0.03)$ CI _{95%} [0.04, 0.14] $p = .001$	$b = -0.07 (0.03)$ CI _{95%} [-0.12, -0.02] $p = .012$	$b = -0.02 (0.01)$ CI _{95%} [-0.02, -0.01] $p = .001$

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Note. All mediation analyses were conducted using MPlus, which generated unstandardized multilevel modeling *bs*, SEs, and 95% CIs. The between- and within-person effects for reappraisal were always included in the same model. All analyses also controlled for diary day, data collection wave, and reappraisal attempts.

Through lower negative emotion, does emotion regulation predict less political action?

Although negative emotion was linked with worse well-being, it was also linked with greater motivation to engage in political action (Table 2): People who felt more negative about daily political events on average were more motivated to take political action (between-person effect) and when people experienced more negative emotion in response to a political event on a given day than they usually felt, they were also more motivated to take political action (within-person effect). In contrast, successful use of reappraisal was associated with less motivation to take daily political action (Table 2), and we found evidence for a mediational pathway: using reappraisal more successfully was associated with lower negative emotion and, in turn, less motivation to take political action, both between and within individuals (Table 3).

Robustness. The associations between reappraisal success, negative emotion, well-being, and political action held when controlling for various sociocultural variables known to predict both well-being and political action (i.e., age, gender, income, ethnicity; see supplementary materials for statistics).

The role of political orientation. In exploratory analyses, we considered differences by political orientation including political party (Republicans vs. Democrats) and ideology (conservative vs. liberal). As summarized in Table 1, Democrats (vs. Republicans) and liberals (vs. conservatives) experienced higher negative emotions in response to daily political events and were also more strongly motivated to take political action. Although well-being did not differ by political

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party, conservatives (vs. liberals) reported higher psychological and physical well-being. Emotion regulation did not differ by party or ideology.

We also examined whether political orientation moderated any of the associations for the pathway between reappraisal success and negative emotion, or between negative emotion and well-being or political action. We found no consistent evidence for moderations on these pathways across the between and within-person effects, across party and ideology, and across the different outcome measures (see supplementary materials for all statistics). Overall, these analyses suggest that these pathways function similarly for individuals across the political spectrum and could thus reflect more fundamental processes that do not hinge on political perspectives. However, given the relatively small sample of Republicans ($n=69$) in the present sample, the lack of moderation may have been due to a lack of statistical power – a limitation we address in Study 2.

Study 1 Discussion

Using a daily-diary methodology, we demonstrated that daily political events consistently evoke negative emotional reactions in the public. In turn, feeling more negative about politics corresponded to lower levels of psychological and physical well-being. We found evidence for this pattern when considering how people differ from each other (e.g., feeling more upset about politics on average was linked with worse daily well-being) but also when considering how people differ day-to-day (e.g., feeling more upset about politics on a particular day was linked with worse well-being on that day).

Consistent with a conceptualization of daily politics as a form of chronic stress that should evoke protective measures, we also found that people recruited a variety of strategies to regulate their unpleasant politics-induced emotions. Successful cognitive reappraisal, in particular, was the strongest and most consistent predictor of decreased negative emotional experience and subsequent

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well-being. Yet, our results point to a fundamental trade-off that comes with using this emotion regulation strategy: Although reappraisal corresponded to higher levels of well-being, it also corresponded with a decreased likelihood of engaging in action aimed at changing the political system that evoked the negative emotions in the first place. These findings suggest that individuals may disengage from politics not (only) due to apathy or burn-out (Chen & Gorski, 2015), but due to a self-protecting use of emotion regulation.

Study 2

Study 2 was designed to replicate and extend Study 1 in several crucial ways. As in Study 1, each day we assessed participants' politics-induced emotions, psychological and physical well-being, and motivation to take political action, as well as the different emotion regulation strategies they used to cope with the emotions they experienced. However, in Study 2, we substantially increased our sample size ($N=811$) and collected data over three weeks rather than two weeks. All data were collected concurrently over the same three weeks in late 2019 during which a number of day-to-day political events occurred (most notably, the impeachment investigation of Donald Trump). This methodological approach resulted in a significantly greater number of diaries (12,790 in total), affording us more statistical power to explore both the within- and between-person effects of politics on the average American. Furthermore, because the data were collected among a larger, more diverse group of people and over a longer period of time, we increased the likelihood of capturing more political action behaviors – beyond participants' behavioral intentions.

Additionally, in Study 2, we expanded our recruitment to include not just Democrats and Republicans, but also independents. Furthermore, we recruited more broadly by not focusing on people who thought about politics on a daily basis (which was a recruitment criterion for Study 1). As such, this sample was more representative of the American population, helping the study's results to be more generalizable. In a related vein, making our sample more politically diverse while

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also increasing statistical power meant we were better able to explore the possible moderating effects of political orientation.

Lastly, in Study 2, we explored a potential means for overcoming the trade-off between well-being and political action, whereby the use of emotion regulation strategies like reappraisal help people maintain well-being in the face of political stress but also minimize their likelihood of engaging in political action. In particular, we measured an alternative approach to one's emotions about politics: accepting one's emotions. *Emotional acceptance* involves acknowledging and bringing awareness to one's negative emotions as well as treating emotions as normal responses to difficult situations without judging or attempting to avoid or change those emotions (Segal et al., 2004). Acceptance aims to change one's relationship with negative emotions, rather than focusing on reducing the emotions (Teasdale, 1999). Importantly, past research finds that using acceptance promotes better psychological or physical health (Ford, Lam, et al., 2017; Shallcross et al., 2010). As such, we would expect that those who successfully use acceptance in response to the unpleasant emotions of daily politics would experience higher levels of well-being. However, because the aim of acceptance is *not* to reduce the experience of one's emotions, and because acceptance may even help people to act in accordance with their values (Hayes et al., 2005), using acceptance to address one's politics-induced emotions might not weaken the motivations to take action. All study procedures were approved by [masked] (protocol #33962).

Study 2 Methods

Participants. We again collected sufficient data (i.e., at least 85 observations) to detect a small effect at both levels of our multilevel models. Our final sample consisted of 811 adult American residents recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (58% women, 80% White, $M_{\text{age}} = 37$ years; $SD_{\text{age}} = 11$ years). Participants were eligible for the study if they were comfortable using a smartphone app to participate. We specifically aimed to recruit relatively evenly across Republicans

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(30% of sample), Democrats (43% of sample), and those affiliated with another political party or no party, henceforth referred to as ‘independents’ (27% of sample).

Participants received up to \$18.25, depending on the extent to which they participated in the study (\$2.50 for the background survey, \$.25 for each daily survey (but \$.75 for the daily survey on Thanksgiving Day), \$4 for completing 10-14 surveys, \$7 for completing 15-19 surveys, or \$10 for completing 20-21 surveys). We used the same response time-based exclusion criteria as in Study 1: We excluded from analysis all item-level responses made in 300ms or less (2.0% of items) and if more than 50% of items within a survey met this criterion the entire survey was excluded (0.55% of surveys). On average, participants completed 15-16 of the 21 surveys (median response rate = 86%, or ~18 days); 35% completed 20-21 surveys, 38% completed 15-19 surveys, 10% completed 10-14 surveys, and 18% completed 9 or fewer surveys. In total, participants provided 12,790 surveys.

Measures. During each daily survey, participants reported their psychological and physical well-being, negative emotion, emotion regulation, emotional acceptance, and political action. These items are largely identical to the items included in Study 1, and we describe any specific differences below. We also note that we changed the response scale for all daily questionnaire items in Study 2 from the original scale used in Study 1. Instead of Study 1’s scale of 1(*strongly disagree*) to 7(*strongly agree*), we used a response scale of 0(*not at all*) to 6(*extremely*). By equating the lowest point of the scale with an absolute value (i.e., ‘not at all’), this revised scale enhances the interpretability of absolute mean level variables (e.g., being ‘not at all’ successful at using reappraisal). See Table 4 for descriptive statistics.

Psychological and physical well-being. We assessed psychological well-being using the same four items from Study 1 ($\alpha=.83$). Physical well-being was measured each day using the two items from Study 1 (“*I felt tired or fatigued today*,” and “*I felt sick today*”), which were reverse coded, plus a new item (“*How was your health today?*”) which was rated on a scale of 0(*very poor*)

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to 5(*excellent*), recoded to a 0 to 6 scale,⁴ and averaged with the other items to form a composite ($\alpha=.71$).

Negative emotion. Like Study 1, participants were asked to describe a specific political event that they had been thinking about. To encourage participants to report any type of event (e.g., positive or negative), this prompt was intentionally phrased to be neutral (“*what U.S. political event or situation have you been thinking about today? (e.g., the current impeachment investigation of Donald Trump, a politician’s recent public statement, a new policy being debated in congress)...*”). Participants then indicated whether the event they described involved any of the following: *The impeachment, The 2020 election, Donald Trump, U.S.’s relationship with other countries, Governmental policies or laws, and Other*. See supplementary materials for more information about the types of events. It is worth noting that although Study 2 was collected during the impeachment investigation, less than half of participants’ daily events involved the impeachment, indicating that this study also tapped into a broader political context.

Participants then rated the negative emotions they felt in response to the event using five items that each included adjectives describing anger (“*angry, irritated, annoyed*”), fear (“*scared, fearful, afraid*”), disgust (“*disgust, distaste, revulsion*”), sadness (“*sad, downhearted, unhappy*”), and outrage (“*morally outraged*”), which were averaged together ($\alpha=.91$).

Emotion regulation. Participants reported their use of three emotion regulation strategies (reappraisal, distraction, suppression) using the same items as Study 1. Participants completed separate ratings for how hard they tried to use a given strategy and how successfully they used that

⁴ To keep the physical well-being measure on the same 0-6 scale as the other measures from Study 2 and thereby maximize comparability across scales, we applied a linear transformation to this one 0-5 item to put it on a 0-6 scale (i.e., 0=0, 1=1.2, 2=2.4, 3=3.6, 4=4.8, 5= 6).

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strategy. As in Study 1, in all multilevel models, we focus on regulation success and hold constant (i.e., control for) emotion regulation *attempts*.

Emotional acceptance. Participants also reported how hard they tried to engage in acceptance (“*Today I tried to acknowledge and be open to my feelings about politics, without controlling or changing those feelings*”) and how successfully they engaged in acceptance (“*Today, I was successful at acknowledging and being open to my feelings about politics, without controlling or changing those feelings*”).

Political action. We assessed motivation to engage in political action with the same item as Study 1. We also measured whether participants engaged in any political action behaviors that day using a binary (*yes, no*) variable, with a follow-up question where they could briefly describe their action. We again focus primarily on motivation to take action within this investigation, as it represents a reliable and valid predictor of future political action in prior research, can be validly assessed every day, and allows for more direct comparability across our two studies. However, because Study 2 was better designed to capture action (with a much larger sample size and more diaries per person), we also report analyses for political action behaviors.

There are a few noteworthy features about these behaviors: First, although behaviors were assessed on a daily level, the data were highly zero-inflated: On the daily level, action behaviors were reported in 252 diaries (or ~2%) of 12,790 total diaries. On the between-person level, ~79% of people engaged in no political action behaviors, ~15% of people engaged in one behavior, and ~6% of people engaged in two or more behaviors. Based on this highly-skewed distribution (and given that logistic multilevel models and zero-inflated models either did not converge or gave impossible values), we adopted a more parsimonious between-person level of analysis for the political action behavior measures by recoding daily-level political action into a binary between-person variable reflecting whether participants engaged in any action over the study or not.

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Additionally, the base rates for action were somewhat higher in Study 2 than Study 1, likely reflecting the longer study duration: 26% of people reported engaging in action across the 21 days, as compared to 17% across the 14 days in Study 1. In combination with the much larger sample size in Study 2, these base rates translate into a greater number of people who engaged in action during Study 2 ($n=210$) compared to Study 1 ($n=34$). With these larger numbers, we were also able to consider a more stringent criteria for political action based on the open-ended responses participants provided: Of the 210 people who reported political action behaviors, 36 of these people reported behaviors that could be conceptualized as relatively casual (e.g., consuming news media, having conversations with friends). Below, we report results for both the full set of political actions as well as for a more stringent measure of action that does not include the casual behaviors.

Lastly, these data provide a unique opportunity to validate the measure of action motivation. Indeed, greater motivation to take political action significantly predicted whether someone engaged in political action behaviors during the study, both when considering the full set of behaviors, *odds ratio*: 2.45, $p < .001$, or the stringent measure of behaviors, *odds ratio*: 2.16, $p < .001$.

Political orientation. During a baseline survey, a single item assessed participants' political party and a single item assessed their general political ideology on a scale from 1(*very liberal*) to 7(*very conservative*), $M=3.52$ ($SD=1.87$).

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Table 4. Study 2 descriptive statistics for all core study variables (negative emotional responses to politics, emotion regulation strategies, and daily outcomes) for the full sample. Analyses also consider differences by political party (Republicans, Democrats, independents) and political ideology (higher scores indicate more conservative vs. liberal ideology).

	Full Sample <i>Mean (SE)</i>	Political Party Differences			χ^2 test of Party differences	Simple effects	Correlation with Political Ideology
		Republican <i>Mean (SE)</i>	Democrat <i>Mean (SE)</i>	Independent <i>Mean (SE)</i>			
Negative Emotions	1.70 (0.04)	1.62 (0.07)	1.87 (0.06)	1.53 (0.08)	$\chi^2 = 14.03^{***}$	D > R = I	$r = -.07^*$
Emotion Regulation Strategies							
Reappraisal Success	2.38 (0.05)	2.64 (0.10)	2.27 (0.08)	2.27 (0.10)	$\chi^2 = 9.76^{**}$	R > D = I	$r = .08^*$
Distraction Success	2.66 (0.06)	2.83 (0.10)	2.53 (0.09)	2.67 (0.11)	$\chi^2 = 5.06$	N/A	$r = .07$
Suppression Success	2.17 (0.06)	2.32 (0.11)	2.04 (0.10)	2.21 (0.12)	$\chi^2 = 3.70$	N/A	$r = .08^*$
Daily Outcomes							
Psychological Well-being	4.02 (0.04)	4.34 (0.07)	3.89 (0.06)	3.87 (0.08)	$\chi^2 = 27.83^{***}$	R > D = I	$r = .17^{***}$
Physical Well-being	4.30 (0.03)	4.41 (0.06)	4.24 (0.05)	4.25 (0.06)	$\chi^2 = 5.43$	N/A	$r = .07$
Political Action Motivation	0.51 (0.03)	0.42 (0.05)	0.70 (0.05)	0.32 (0.06)	$\chi^2 = 30.04^{***}$	D > R = I	$r = -.15^{***}$

Note. Response scale for all core study variables was 0(*Not at all*) to 6(*Extremely*). Democrats (D); Republicans (R); independents or other (I); Means reflect the intercept values from multilevel models with a random intercept to account for the nested nature of the data. To calculate the party means, we included dummy variables that coded the party of interest as the reference group (i.e., coded with 0's only) in our models. Because the intercept is the value of y when x 's are 0, it represents the mean for the party coded as 0 for both dummy variables. Links with political ideology are r s, calculated by correlating political ideology with the between-person average of each daily study variable. $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$

Procedure. Participants completed the background survey which included measures of demographics, political party, and political ideology, as well as other trait measures not relevant to the present investigation. The background survey was available between November 8, 2019 and November 12, 2019. Participants then downloaded the smartphone app to complete the daily

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surveys (ExperienceSampler; (Thai & Page-Gould, 2018)). On November 12, 2019, participants received a notification on their phone at 8PM (local time) that their first survey was ready and participants had until midnight that same night to complete the survey (a reminder notification was sent at 10PM). Daily surveys were administered nightly for three weeks, beginning on November 12, 2019 and ending on December 2, 2019. Each daily survey began with participants reporting their daily psychological and physical well-being. Participants then reported their emotional responses to the specific political event that they had been thinking about that day, how they regulated those emotional responses, their use of emotional acceptance, and how motivated they were to engage in political action as well as if they engaged in action behaviors. In addition, several other variables not relevant to the present hypotheses were collected in the daily measures (e.g., media consumption, relationship measures) and are not discussed further.

General analytic strategy. The same multilevel modeling strategy as Study 1 was used to test the associations between emotion, emotion regulation, well-being, and political action motivation.

Study 2 Results

How are people responding to politics in daily life? Results again indicated that day-to-day political events commonly evoke negative emotional reactions: People felt at least some degree of any negative emotion (i.e., above the lowest scale point) on 75% of the days and felt stronger levels of any negative emotion (i.e., at or above the scale midpoint) on 53% of the days.

Do negative emotions about politics predict worse well-being? Replicating Study 1, stronger negative emotional responses to politics, in turn, were associated with worse psychological and physical well-being at the between-person and within-person level (Table 5).

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Table 5. Study 2 multilevel model analyses testing the *between-person* and *within-person* association between negative emotion or emotion regulation success and daily outcomes. The between- and within-person effects for a given predictor were always included in the same model. First, each predictor was analyzed separately (top half of table), and then the three emotion regulation strategies were analyzed simultaneously to examine their unique effects.

		Negative Emotions	Well-being		Political Action Motivation
			Psychological	Physical	
Separate Analyses for Each Predictor:					
<i>Between-Person Associations:</i>					
Negative Emotions	–		<i>b</i> = -0.20 (0.03) CI _{95%} [-0.27, -0.13] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = -0.22 (0.03) CI _{95%} [-0.27, -0.16] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.19 (0.03) CI _{95%} [0.14, 0.24] <i>p</i> < .001
Reappraisal Success	<i>b</i> = -0.14 (0.03) CI _{95%} [-0.19, -0.08] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.15 (0.03) CI _{95%} [0.08, 0.21] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.09 (0.03) CI _{95%} [0.04, 0.14] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = -0.03 (0.02) CI _{95%} [-0.08, 0.02] <i>p</i> = .190	
Distraction Success	<i>b</i> = -0.10 (0.03) CI _{95%} [-0.15, -0.05] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.10 (0.03) CI _{95%} [0.04, 0.15] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.03 (0.02) CI _{95%} [-0.01, 0.08] <i>p</i> = .150	<i>b</i> = -0.04 (0.02) CI _{95%} [-0.09, -0.004] <i>p</i> = .037	
Suppression Success	<i>b</i> = -0.07 (0.02) CI _{95%} [-0.12, -0.02] <i>p</i> = .004	<i>b</i> = 0.05 (0.03) CI _{95%} [0.002, 0.11] <i>p</i> = .036	<i>b</i> = 0.03 (0.02) CI _{95%} [-0.01, 0.07] <i>p</i> = .104	<i>b</i> = -0.05 (0.02) CI _{95%} [-0.09, -0.01] <i>p</i> = .007	
<i>Within-Person Associations:</i>					
Negative Emotions	–		<i>b</i> = -0.06 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.07, -0.04] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = -0.03 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.04, -0.02] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.05 (0.01) CI _{95%} [0.04, 0.06] <i>p</i> < .001
Reappraisal Success	<i>b</i> = -0.13 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.14, -0.11] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.04 (0.01) CI _{95%} [0.03, 0.05] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.04 (0.01) CI _{95%} [0.03, 0.05] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = -0.02 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.03, -0.01] <i>p</i> < .001	
Distraction Success	<i>b</i> = -0.12 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.14, -0.10] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.04 (0.01) CI _{95%} [0.03, 0.05] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.03 (0.01) CI _{95%} [0.02, 0.04] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = -0.03 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.04, -0.02] <i>p</i> < .001	
Suppression Success	<i>b</i> = -0.03 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.05, -0.02] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.02 (0.01) CI _{95%} [0.01, 0.03] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.01 (0.01) CI _{95%} [0.002, 0.02] <i>p</i> = .018	<i>b</i> = -0.01 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.03, -0.004] <i>p</i> = .007	
Simultaneous Analysis with All Strategies:					
<i>Between-Person Associations:</i>					

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Reappraisal Success	$b = -0.09 (0.05)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.18, 0.01]$ $p = .082$	$b = 0.15 (0.05)$ $CI_{95\%} [0.05, 0.25]$ $p = .003$	$b = 0.12 (0.04)$ $CI_{95\%} [0.04, 0.21]$ $p = .004$	$b = 0.06 (0.04)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.01, 0.14]$ $p = .108$
Distraction Success	$b = -0.04 (0.05)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.14, 0.06]$ $p = .442$	$b = 0.05 (0.05)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.05, 0.15]$ $p = .341$	$b = -0.06 (0.04)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.14, 0.03]$ $p = .179$	$b = -0.02 (0.04)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.09, 0.06]$ $p = .680$
Suppression Success	$b = 0.0004 (0.04)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.09, 0.09]$ $p = .992$	$b = -0.07 (0.04)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.16, 0.01]$ $p = .095$	$b = 0.0004 (0.04)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.07, 0.07]$ $p = .991$	$b = -0.08 (0.03)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.15, -0.02]$ $p = .013$

Within-Person Associations:

Reappraisal Success	$b = -0.10 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.12, -0.08]$ $p < .001$	$b = 0.03 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [0.02, 0.04]$ $p < .001$	$b = 0.04 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [0.03, 0.05]$ $p < .001$	$b = -0.01 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.03, -0.002]$ $p = .024$
Distraction Success	$b = -0.09 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.11, -0.07]$ $p < .001$	$b = 0.03 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [0.02, 0.05]$ $p < .001$	$b = 0.02 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [0.01, 0.03]$ $p = .002$	$b = -0.02 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.03, -0.01]$ $p < .001$
Suppression Success	$b = 0.02 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [0.005, 0.04]$ $p = .012$	$b = -0.001 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.01, 0.01]$ $p = .876$	$b = -0.002 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.01, 0.01]$ $p = .771$	$b = -0.003 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.01, 0.01]$ $p = .640$

Note. *bs* are unstandardized multilevel modeling coefficients, with standard errors appearing in parentheses. Confidence intervals were bootstrapped with 5000 resamples. All analyses also controlled for diary day. For any analysis with a measure of emotion regulation success (e.g., reappraisal success), the corresponding measure of regulation effort (e.g., reappraisal attempts) was also included in the model.

How are people protecting their emotions in daily life? People were also commonly motivated to regulate the emotions they felt in response to day-to-day political events: People attempted reappraisal to at least some degree on 55% of the days, attempted distraction on 56% of the days, and attempted suppression on 34% of the days.⁵

Replicating Study 1, using emotion regulation more successfully, in turn, was associated with lower negative emotional responses to politics across all strategies, at the between-person and

⁵ These percentages are notably lower than the percentages from Study 1, which is likely due to the change in the response scale in Study 2 (see Study 2 methods for more details), rather than any major substantive difference in people's emotion regulation motives across studies.

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within-person level (see the top-half of Table 5 for statistics). To examine each strategy's *unique* associations with lower negative emotion, all three strategies were entered simultaneously to predict negative emotion in response to daily political events (Table 5, bottom-half). At the between-person level, replicating Study 1, only people who more successfully used reappraisal – but not the other strategies – were less likely to experience negative emotions in response to politics.⁶ At the within-person level, unlike in Study 1 where only reappraisal remained a significant predictor, all three strategies uniquely predicted negative emotion: When participants were particularly successful at using reappraisal or distraction on a given day, they experienced lower negative emotion; and when participants were particularly successful at using suppression on a given day, they experienced somewhat greater negative emotional responses to politics, consistent with the potential backfiring effects of suppression (Goldin et al., 2008). Because each strategy uniquely predicted negative emotional responses to politics, in the following analyses we focus on simultaneously considering each strategy's unique effects (for non-simultaneous models, see Table 5, top-half).

Through lower negative emotion, does emotion regulation predict better daily well-being? Replicating Study 1, successfully using reappraisal was uniquely associated with better psychological and physical well-being at the between-person and within-person levels (Table 5). Additionally, successfully using distraction was also uniquely associated with better psychological and physical well-being, but only at the within-person level. Building on these results, we found evidence for a mediational pathway between reappraisal and well-being such that successfully using reappraisal was associated with lower negative emotion and, in turn, greater psychological and physical well-being, both between and within individuals. A similar mediational pathway was supported for the link between distraction and well-being, at the within-person level (Table 6).

⁶ This link is marginal when negative emotion is the outcome measure (Table 5) and is significant when it is the mediator (i.e., when the between-person and within-person effects for negative emotion are parsed apart; Table 6),

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Table 6. Study 2 multilevel mediation analyses testing the between-person and within-person mediations whereby an emotion regulation (ER) strategy uniquely predicts negative emotional responses to politics, which in turn statistically accounts for a given daily outcome.

Mediation Model		Mediation Statistics			
ER Strategy	Daily Outcome	ER Strategy→ Negative Emotion (a-path)	Negative Emotion→ Outcome (controlling for ER) (b'-path)	ER Strategy→ Outcome (controlling for negative emotion) (c'-path)	Indirect Effect
Between-Person Mediations:					
Reappraisal Success	Psychological Well-being	<i>b</i> = -0.10 (0.05) CI _{95%} [-0.19, -0.01] <i>p</i> = .024	<i>b</i> = -0.19 (0.04) CI _{95%} [-0.27, -0.11] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.13 (0.05) CI _{95%} [0.04, 0.23] <i>p</i> = .007	<i>b</i> = 0.02 (0.01) CI _{95%} [0.000, 0.04] <i>p</i> = .046
	Physical Well-being	<i>b</i> = -0.10 (0.05) CI _{95%} [-0.19, -0.01] <i>p</i> = .024	<i>b</i> = -0.20 (0.03) CI _{95%} [-0.27, -0.14] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.10 (0.04) CI _{95%} [0.03, 0.18] <i>p</i> = .009	<i>b</i> = 0.02 (0.01) CI _{95%} [0.001, 0.04] <i>p</i> = .037
	Political Action Motivation	<i>b</i> = -0.10 (0.05) CI _{95%} [-0.19, -0.01] <i>p</i> = .024	<i>b</i> = 0.13 (0.04) CI _{95%} [0.06, 0.20] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.07 (0.03) CI _{95%} [0.01, 0.14] <i>p</i> = .031	<i>b</i> = -0.01 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.03, 0.001] <i>p</i> = .060
Distraction Success	Psychological Well-being	<i>b</i> = -0.05 (0.05) CI _{95%} [-0.14, 0.05] <i>p</i> = .320	<i>b</i> = -0.19 (0.04) CI _{95%} [-0.27, -0.11] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.04 (0.05) CI _{95%} [-0.06, 0.14] <i>p</i> = .428	<i>b</i> = 0.01 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.01, 0.03] <i>p</i> = .333
	Physical Well- being	<i>b</i> = -0.05 (0.05) CI _{95%} [-0.14, 0.05] <i>p</i> = .320	<i>b</i> = -0.20 (0.03) CI _{95%} [-0.27, -0.14] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = -0.06 (0.04) CI _{95%} [-0.14, 0.02] <i>p</i> = .116	<i>b</i> = 0.01 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.01, 0.03] <i>p</i> = .333
	Political Action Motivation	<i>b</i> = -0.05 (0.05) CI _{95%} [-0.14, 0.05] <i>p</i> = .320	<i>b</i> = 0.13 (0.04) CI _{95%} [0.06, 0.20] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = -0.02 (0.03) CI _{95%} [-0.08, 0.05] <i>p</i> = .667	<i>b</i> = -0.01 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.02, 0.01] <i>p</i> = .328
Suppression Success	Psychological Well-being	<i>b</i> = 0.02 (0.04) CI _{95%} [-0.06, 0.10] <i>p</i> = .607	<i>b</i> = -0.19 (0.04) CI _{95%} [-0.27, -0.11] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = -0.07 (0.04) CI _{95%} [-0.16, 0.01] <i>p</i> = .086	<i>b</i> = -0.004 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.02, 0.01] <i>p</i> = .612
	Physical Well-being	<i>b</i> = 0.02 (0.04) CI _{95%} [-0.06, 0.10] <i>p</i> = .607	<i>b</i> = -0.20 (0.03) CI _{95%} [-0.27, -0.14] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.004 (0.04) CI _{95%} [-0.06, 0.07] <i>p</i> = .908	<i>b</i> = -0.004 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.02, 0.01] <i>p</i> = .612
	Political Action Motivation	<i>b</i> = 0.02 (0.04) CI _{95%} [-0.06, 0.10] <i>p</i> = .607	<i>b</i> = 0.13 (0.04) CI _{95%} [0.06, 0.20] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = -0.08 (0.03) CI _{95%} [-0.14, 0.03] <i>p</i> = .002	<i>b</i> = 0.003 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.01, 0.01] <i>p</i> = .608
Within-Person Mediations:					
Reappraisal Success	Psychological Well-being	<i>b</i> = -0.10 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.12, -0.07] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = -0.05 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.06, -0.04] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.02 (0.01) CI _{95%} [0.01, 0.04] <i>p</i> = .001	<i>b</i> = 0.01 (0.001) CI _{95%} [0.003, 0.01] <i>p</i> < .001
	Physical Well-being	<i>b</i> = -0.10 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.12, -0.07] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = -0.03 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.05, -0.02] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.03 (0.01) CI _{95%} [0.02, 0.05] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.003 (0.01) CI _{95%} [0.001, 0.004] <i>p</i> < .001
	Political Action Motivation	<i>b</i> = -0.10 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.12, -0.07] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = 0.05 (0.01) CI _{95%} [0.03, 0.06] <i>p</i> < .001	<i>b</i> = -0.01 (0.01) CI _{95%} [-0.02, 0.01] <i>p</i> = .002	<i>b</i> = -0.004 (0.001) CI _{95%} [-0.005, -0.003] <i>p</i> < .001

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		$p < .001$	$p < .001$	$p = .329$	$CI_{95\%} [-0.01, -0.002]$ $p < .001$
Distraction Success	Psychological Well-being	$b = -0.09 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.11, -0.07]$ $p < .001$	$b = -0.05 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.06, -0.04]$ $p = .014$	$b = 0.03 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [0.02, 0.04]$ $p < .001$	$b = 0.004 (0.001)$ $CI_{95\%} [0.003, 0.01]$ $p < .001$
	Physical Well-being	$b = -0.09 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.11, -0.07]$ $p < .001$	$b = -0.03 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.05, -0.02]$ $p < .001$	$b = 0.01 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.004, 0.02]$ $p = .162$	$b = 0.003 (0.001)$ $CI_{95\%} [0.001, 0.004]$ $p < .001$
	Political Action Motivation	$b = -0.09 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.11, -0.07]$ $p < .001$	$b = 0.05 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [0.03, 0.06]$ $p < .001$	$b = -0.02 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.03, -0.01]$ $p = .006$	$b = -0.004 (0.001)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.01, -0.002]$ $p < .001$
Suppression Success	Psychological Well-being	$b = 0.02 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [0.003, 0.04]$ $p = .022$	$b = -0.05 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.06, -0.04]$ $p < .001$	$b = 0.00 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.01, 0.01]$ $p = .965$	$b = -0.001 (0.00)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.002, 0.000]$ $p = .031$
	Physical Well-being	$b = 0.02 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [0.003, 0.04]$ $p = .022$	$b = -0.03 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.05, -0.02]$ $p < .001$	$b = 0.00 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.01, 0.01]$ $p = .961$	$b = -0.001 (0.00)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.001, 0.000]$ $p = .043$
	Political Action Motivation	$b = 0.02 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [0.003, 0.04]$ $p = .022$	$b = 0.05 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [0.03, 0.06]$ $p < .001$	$b = -0.01 (0.01)$ $CI_{95\%} [-0.02, 0.01]$ $p = .360$	$b = 0.001 (0.00)$ $CI_{95\%} [0.000, 0.002]$ $p = .037$

Note. All mediation analyses were conducted using MPlus, which generated unstandardized multilevel modeling *bs*, SEs, and 95% CIs. The between- and within-person effects for reappraisal were always included in the same model. All analyses also controlled for diary day and regulation attempts. The unique effects for each ER strategy was assessed by entering the two other ER strategies as covariates in the model examining one particular ER strategy. MPlus provides estimates with 2 decimal places for estimates and 3 decimal places for confidence intervals. There was no option to increase the number of decimal places.

Through lower negative emotion, does emotion regulation predict less political action?

As in Study 1, although negative emotion was linked with worse well-being, it was also linked with greater motivation to engage in political action at the between-person and within-person level (Table 5). In contrast, successful use of reappraisal and distraction was associated with less motivation to take political action: When people used reappraisal or distraction more successfully on a given day than they typically did, they were less motivated to engage in political action. Building on these results, we found evidence for a mediational pathway between reappraisal and political action such that successfully using reappraisal was associated with lower negative emotion and, in turn, less political action, both between-individuals (marginally) and within-individuals

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(significantly). A similar mediational pathway was supported for the link between distraction and lower political action, at the within-person level (Table 6).

Robustness. The associations between emotion regulation, negative emotion, well-being, and motivation to engage in political action held when controlling for various sociocultural variables known to predict both well-being and political action (i.e., age, gender, income, ethnicity; see supplementary materials for statistics).

Political action behaviors. Given that some participants in Study 2 also engaged in behavioral political action during the 3-week span, we were able to validate the measure of motivation to take action and examine the predictors of behavioral action (assessed on the between-person level, see Methods for more details). First, greater motivation to take political action significantly predicted whether someone engaged in political action behaviors in daily life, whether considering the full set of reported action behaviors, *odds ratio*: 2.45, $p < .001$, or a more stringent measure of action behaviors, *odds ratio*: 2.16, $p < .001$, thereby validating the motivational measure. Second, people who experienced greater negative emotional responses to politics in daily life were indeed more likely to engage in political action behavior whether considering the full set of behaviors, *odds ratio*: 1.33, $p < .001$, or the stringent measure of behaviors, *odds ratio*: 1.32, $p < .001$. Third, we again found evidence for the between-person mediational pathway between reappraisal and lower political action such that people who more successfully used reappraisal on average experienced lower negative emotion and, in turn, were less likely to engage in political action behavior, *indirect effect* predicting full set of behaviors = -0.03 [-0.05, -0.01], $SE=0.01$, *indirect effect* predicting stringent measure of behaviors = -0.03 [-0.05, -0.01], $SE=0.01$.

Emotional acceptance. We next explored whether emotional acceptance represents a viable alternative approach to ones' emotions about politics that may help people feel better without

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coming at a cost to political action. We found that acceptance was a commonly-used approach in daily life: Participants attempted to accept their emotional responses to at least some degree on 63% of the days. Consistent with theorizing that accepting one's emotions may not immediately alleviate negative emotion, acceptance did not uniquely predict negative emotion at the between-person level, $b = 0.04$ 95% CI [-0.07, 0.15], $SE = 0.06$, $p = .490$, or the within-person level, $b = 0.01$ 95% CI [-0.01, 0.03], $SE = .01$, $p = .263$, when controlling for the other regulation strategies people used on a given day. However, successfully accepting one's emotions about politics uniquely predicted greater psychological and physical well-being on the between-person level, marginally ($b = 0.11$ 95% [-0.004, 0.23], $SE = .06$, $p = .056$ and $b = 0.08$ 95% CI [-0.02, 0.18], $SE = .05$, $p = .098$) and on the within-person level, significantly ($b = 0.01$ 95% CI [0.001, 0.03], $SE = .01$, $p = .029$ and $b = 0.01$ 95% CI [0.001, 0.03], $SE = .01$, $p = .034$). Moreover, successfully accepting one's emotions about politics did *not* come at a cost to the motivation to engage in political action at either the between-person level ($b = 0.05$ 95% CI [-0.04, 0.14], $SE = .05$, $p = .272$), or the within-person level ($b = 0.004$, 95% CI [-0.01, 0.02], $SE = .01$, $p = .522$), suggesting acceptance may be a useful means for protecting oneself from the stress of daily politics without impairing motivation to take action.

The role of political orientation. In exploratory analyses, we again considered differences by political orientation including political party (Republicans vs. Democrats vs. independents) and ideology (conservative vs. liberal). Replicating Study 1, Democrats (vs. Republicans or independents) and liberals (vs. conservatives) experienced more negative emotional responses to daily political events and were also more strongly motivated to take political action (Table 4). Also replicating Study 1, Republicans (vs. Democrats or independents) and conservatives (vs. liberals) reported higher psychological well-being.

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We also examined whether any of the associations between reappraisal or distraction success and negative emotion, or between negative emotion and well-being or political action differed as a function of political orientation. We found no consistent evidence for moderations on this indirect pathway across the between and within-person effects, across party and ideology, and/or across the different outcome measures (see supplementary materials for all statistics), with one exception: On the between and within-person levels, the association between negative emotion and motivation to engage in political action was stronger for Democrats compared to either Republicans or independents, but the association between negative emotion and political action remained significant for all three groups. Overall, these analyses largely replicate Study 1 and suggest that this indirect pathway functions similarly for individuals across the political spectrum and could thus reflect more fundamental processes that do not hinge on political perspectives.

Study 2 Discussion

In Study 2, in a politically diverse sample of Americans, we once again found that participants consistently experienced politically-induced negative emotions. These negative emotions, in turn, predicted worse well-being, both at the between-person and within-person levels. At the same time, these negative emotions also predicted greater motivation to engage in political action (at the within- and between-person levels) and greater likelihood of actually engaging in action during the three weeks of the study. In addition, to cope with the political emotions they were feeling, people frequently used all three of the emotion regulation strategies we measured, and successfully using these strategies corresponded with greater psychological and physical well-being. Exploration into each strategy's unique role indicated that successfully using both reappraisal and distraction independently predicted greater well-being (at the within-person level for distraction; at the within- and between-person levels for reappraisal). Yet, these two emotion regulation strategies also predicted less motivation to take political action (and engaging in political

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behavior for reappraisal). Thus, these findings once again point to the trade-off that arises between personal well-being and taking action when individuals effectively use emotion regulation to decrease their experience of negative political emotions.

In Study 2, we also measured emotional acceptance as a possible means by which individuals could overcome the trade-off between protecting oneself and engaging in political action. We found that successfully using emotional acceptance predicted higher levels of well-being but did not predict less political action. Although null results should always be interpreted with caution, given the large sample size ($N=811$) and even larger set of within-person assessment points (12,790), these null results are likely informative.⁷ In sum, these results suggest that like reappraisal and distraction, acceptance can promote greater well-being, but unlike reappraisal and distraction, acceptance may not interfere with participants' motivation to engage in political action.

General Discussion

Although most day-to-day political events occur far away in state and national capitals, politics and its controversies have become a salient part of everyday life for many in the general public. The day's political events are a common, if not central, topic of conversation in both online and offline contexts. Political discord and scandal headline the news cycle, are joked about on late-night TV programs, and are debated at the dinner table and around the office water cooler. Yet as central as politics is to people's everyday experience, its impact on people's daily life is largely unknown.

In the present research, we merge together insights from political psychology and affective science literatures, taking the theoretical lens of daily politics as a chronic stressor. We tracked

⁷ As further support for the interpretability of this null result, the Bayes Factor considering whether acceptance adds additional predictive ability for political action above and beyond the three emotion regulation strategies suggests there is extreme evidence that acceptance does *not* predict political motivation above and beyond the other strategies (BF = 169313721988274752).

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diverse samples of Americans (total $N=1,009$) across two longitudinal studies (Study 1 = 14 days, Study 2 = 21 days), examining how daily political events permeate their lives. This paradigm allowed for more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the political climate and each person's concomitant reactions. Specifically, we were able to examine between-person effects to explore the impact that politics has on individuals' overall well-being and motivation to take action over time, as well as within-person effects which traced how reactions to each day's political events corresponded with day-to-day shifts *within* individuals' well-being and political action.

In line with the conceptualization of politics as a chronic stressor, we found that daily political events consistently evoked negative emotions in participants. These negative emotions predicted worse day-to-day psychological and physical health, but also greater motivation to take action aimed at changing the political system that evoked the negative emotions in the first place at both the between-person (interpersonal difference) and within-person (intrapersonal difference) levels. Furthermore, we found that people commonly employed emotion regulation strategies to cope with this chronic stressor. Particularly when successfully using reappraisal, people experienced greater well-being, but less motivation to take political action, pointing to a fundamental trade-off between protecting oneself and taking action that arises when people regulate their politics-related emotions. In Study 2, we found a potential means for overcoming this trade-off: Participants who used emotional acceptance – a coping strategy that involves accepting emotions rather than trying to change them – experienced higher levels of well-being, but showed no signs of decreased motivation to take action. In all, our results highlight the broad impact daily political events have on the average person, revealing the political is quite personal.

Implications

Politics as a chronic stressor. By exploring how day-to-day political events affect people's lives, our research makes several important contributions. Most importantly, we highlight how

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politics can be a chronic stressor for the average citizen. Unlike past work that focused in on the impact presidential elections have on people (e.g., Lench et al., 2019; Stanton et al., 2010), conceptualizing politics as a chronic stressor that unfolds on a daily basis substantially broadens the focus, and points to politics as having an impact on people's lives, not just once every four years, but perpetually. In line with this, we used a methodological approach – daily diaries – that could capture the chronicity of political stress, and found that day-to-day political events take an emotional toll on citizens in daily life, and these negative emotions predict important life outcomes, including worse psychological and physical health.

Our research also highlights how people protect themselves from politics. In both studies we found that participants utilized a variety of emotion regulation strategies when coping with the unpleasantness of each day's politics. Successfully using reappraisal was a particularly consistent predictor of lower negative emotion, and in turn, higher psychological and physical health at both the between and within-person level. These within-person effects indicate that using reappraisal more successfully on a given day than usual corresponds with greater well-being, independent of one's average skill in using reappraisal. This finding suggests that it may be possible to nudge people (e.g., in a brief intervention) to skillfully use reappraisal when facing political stressors in daily life, which could help people protect their daily well-being even if they are not habitually successful with the strategy. However, any such intervention should be deployed with caution, given the trade-offs associated with reappraisal for taking political action.

A trade-off between feeling good and doing good? Our research shows that using certain commonly-used forms of emotion regulation to protect well-being can come at a fundamental cost to taking action – an important trade-off that can occur when individuals successfully down-regulate their negative emotional responses to daily politics. Uncovering this trade-off has important implications for understanding collective action behavior (Cohen-Chen et al., 2020).

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Although collective action researchers have long recognized negative emotion as a key to mobilizing people to take action (Miller et al., 2009; Van Zomeren et al., 2004), few have taken into consideration the central role of emotion regulation as these patterns unfold in daily life (Ford et al., 2019). Our research highlights that individuals often do not passively experience emotions in real life. Rather, people employ emotion regulation strategies to manage their emotions, with critical implications for whether someone will engage in action. For instance, feeling outrage toward an injustice might initially compel people to join a street protest, but if they use reappraisal to convince themselves the justice system will prosecute the perpetrators, their outrage may diminish along with the likelihood of actually joining the protest. Similarly, if they employ distraction, possibly because they find their outrage too intense to reappraise (Sheppes et al., 2014), they may divert their attention from the injustice, thereby minimizing their likelihood of taking to the street. Such insights are important for activists seeking to mobilize widespread collective action. To effectively harness people's negative emotions, activists need people to *not* reduce those emotions. Finding strategies that achieve this end should help activists facilitate greater action. Yet, it may come at the expense of people's well-being, suggesting a complicated ethical trade-off between mobilizing people for a cause and impairing the well-being of those taking action.

The trade-off between well-being and action due to emotion regulation also yields important insights for the emotion regulation literature. This literature typically focuses on the positive health effects of using emotion regulation, especially reappraisal. Our findings balance this perspective by showing a downside of using this and other effective emotion regulation strategies (Ford & Troy, 2019). Minimizing the experience of negative emotions can decrease motivation to take action aimed at addressing what elicited the emotions in the first place. As such, there is a tension between the hedonic value of undoing unpleasant emotions and the utility these emotions have in guiding behavior (Cohen-Chen et al., 2020). From a functionalist perspective, negative emotions direct

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people toward behaviors that are useful for personal or group survival (e.g., Frijda, 1992). When individuals down-regulate their negative emotions, therefore, they are also minimizing the likelihood of engaging in behaviors that can serve an important function. Regarding politics, we found down-regulating negative emotions predicted less motivation toward political action – a fundamental means for shaping and reshaping a healthy democracy. In other contexts, emotion regulation might decrease behaviors that serve other important functions. For instance, recent work found that those who use reappraisal to minimize their unpleasant experience of guilt were less prone to prosocial and ethical behavior (Feinberg, Ford, & Flynn, 2020).

A way to avoid the trade-off? One possible means for overcoming the trade-off may be the use of emotional acceptance. This approach involves coping with one's emotions by accepting them and not aiming to decrease them (Hayes et al., 1999). As such, acceptance may facilitate improved well-being while not affecting the motivational component of the emotional experience. In support of this possibility, in Study 2, the successful use of acceptance predicted better psychological and physical health, but did not impair participants' motivation to take political action. Given that acceptance appears to avoid the trade-off between well-being and action observed with reappraisal and distraction, these findings may point to acceptance as an optimal approach in emotional situations where well-being is on the line, but taking action is also necessary.

Our research also contributes to the burgeoning literature on emotional acceptance more generally. In our research, acceptance was actually the most frequently used approach for dealing with the negative emotions of politics, suggesting that it is a common tool for addressing daily stressors. We also found that successfully using acceptance did not uniquely predict negative emotion in daily life. These findings add to a mixed literature on the emotional outcomes of acceptance, with some findings suggesting that acceptance does not consistently predict lower negative emotion in the short-term (Kohl et al., 2012) and other findings suggesting that it does

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(Ford, Lam, et al., 2018). These inconsistencies may be explained by a unique time course of acceptance: Indeed, acceptance has been linked with *increased* negative emotion during a stress induction but *decreased* negative emotion after a recovery period following the induction (Campbell-Sills et al., 2006). Such a time course could appear to be a ‘wash’ at the end of the day (which is consistent with Study 2’s findings), even as acceptance helped individuals recover more successfully from their daily stress. Aside from its emotional outcomes, emotional acceptance is thought to promote increased self-awareness, self-compassion, and behavioral flexibility (Hayes & Wilson, 2003; Kashdan et al., 2006) – all of which can promote greater well-being, just as we observe in the present studies.

Implications for emotion regulation research. Beyond uncovering the trade-off between well-being and action, our work also contributes to the emotion regulation literature in a number of ways. For instance, the majority of studies examining emotion regulation have occurred in laboratory settings (Webb et al., 2012) or used global questionnaires (Aldao et al., 2010). Examining the emotion regulation people use to cope with daily political events, therefore, provides a novel real-world context for testing and understanding emotion regulation “in the wild” (Brans et al., 2013; Kalokerinos et al., 2017). Our results coincide with a number of key findings from existing studies. For example, cognitive reappraisal predicted lower negative emotions and greater well-being, while suppression had weak, or even deleterious, links with negative emotions and well-being (Gross & John, 2003). Empirical research has rarely considered individual differences in distraction as a form of emotion regulation, but our findings suggest that distraction is used quite commonly in daily life and may even be a relatively helpful approach to take in daily life. Study 2 demonstrated that using distraction more successfully than usual (i.e., the within-person effect) was uniquely linked with lower negative emotional responses to politics, as well as greater well-being.

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Although distracting oneself may not be an adaptive strategy to use habitually, it can have important utility when used in a selective manner (Sheppes et al., 2014).

Our analytic approach in the present research also provides two additional contributions to the literature on emotion regulation. First, we disentangled the successful use of emotion regulation from the effort people put into their regulation attempt. Research typically conflates success with attempts, yet there is no guarantee that those who attempt to use emotion regulation will be successful at doing so. One may try to distract herself from an unpleasant stimulus, but still end up ruminating over it. Likewise, one may try to suppress his anger, but be so enraged that he cannot prevent showing it. Disentangling these constructs is crucial because beneficial downstream outcomes should hinge upon the successful implementation of a given strategy (Ford, Karnilowicz, et al., 2017). The present studies suggest that future research would continue to benefit by parsing apart these empirically and conceptually distinct constructs. Second, we examined the *unique* associations between different emotion regulation strategies and daily outcomes by considering each strategy not only on its own, but also when controlling for the other strategies. People very frequently use multiple forms of emotion regulation to cope with any given stressor (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Ford et al., 2019), indicating that it is important to consider the possible overlap between strategies and statistically account for this to learn which strategies are most likely to drive beneficial – or even harmful – daily outcomes.

Political Orientation

In the present research we also measured political orientation to examine the generalizability of our models for people across the political spectrum. We tested if political orientation might moderate our hypothesized effects, as well as if any mean-level political orientation differences might exist. We found little evidence of moderation, even in Study 2 where we recruited broadly across the political spectrum. The only consistent moderation effect we found was for the

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relationship between negative emotion and motivation to engage in political action, and for this finding the effect was still significant for Democrats, Republicans, and independents, alike. It was just stronger for the Democrats. Overall, we believe, the lack of consistent moderation by political orientation suggests the effects we found were relatively consistent across the political spectrum.

Similarly, when considering mean-level political orientation differences, we found that regardless of one's orientation, people showed signs of daily politics being a chronic stressor (see Table 1 and 4). However, there were some notable differences. For instance, those on the left experienced more negative emotions in response to daily politics and suffered worse well-being than those on the right. Such a finding coincides with past research showing conservatives tend to be happier than liberals (e.g., Napier & Jost, 2008; Schlenker, Chambers, & Le, 2012). This finding could stem from multiple sources. For example, one possibility is that the underdog experiences more negative emotion and worse well-being than the side in power. If so, those on the left being worse-off in our research could be an artifact of a Republican president (i.e., Donald Trump) being in office when we collected data (Jackson, 2019). Although possible, this seems unlikely, given that past research exploring political orientation and well-being finds liberals were less happy even when a Democratic president was in office (Bixter, 2015). Another explanation might be that those on the left and right view each day's political events through different worldview lenses, yielding different levels of emotionality in response. Past research finds that conservatives are happier than liberals overall because they view the world through a system-justifying lens that helps breed optimism (Napier & Jost, 2008), therefore filtering each day's political events through a lens (Schlenker et al, 2012) that mitigates the negative emotions these events engender.

Limitations and Remaining Questions

This research has several limitations and unanswered questions that future research might address. Most importantly, although our longitudinal daily-diary method allowed us to focus on

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both between- and within-person nuances relating to the effects of daily politics, the design did not allow us to directly test causation, which only an experiment could provide. To examine causation, future research might manipulate the salience of political events, and then track emotion, emotion-regulation strategies, well-being, and political action. Experimental research could also more clearly establish directionality of effects, verifying that negative emotional reactions to political events causally impact well-being and political action. It is also worth noting the likely bi-directionality of the observed links in the present studies. For example, political events can evoke negative emotions and impair well-being, but impaired well-being can also lead individuals to focus more intensely on upsetting political events and heighten their negative emotional response.

Although we explored how day-to-day political events impact people's daily well-being and action tendencies, there are likely other ways in which politics, as a chronic stressor, affects people's lives. For example, politics may take a toll on people's close relationships. The negative emotions people feel in response to the day's political occurrences could get projected onto one's romantic partner, relative, or close friend, especially if that person ascribes to a different political ideology (c.f., (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015)). Of course, daily politics might also bring people together as they commiserate over what has transpired. Daily politics might affect people's satisfaction and motivation at work, even impairing employees' ability to perform on the job. These and other downstream consequences of politics are interesting avenues for future research.

Lastly, given that people rarely let their emotions go unregulated in daily life, it is important to identify forms of regulation people can use to protect their own emotional well-being without coming at a cost to collective well-being (e.g., by inhibiting collective action). We highlighted emotional acceptance as an alternative approach, which was linked with greater daily well-being without any costs to action. However, it was not linked with lower daily negative emotions about politics, which may limit its appeal for people striving to feel better in the moment. Two other

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alternatives may represent promising pathways forward. First, reappraisal can take many different forms when it is used in the moment (McRae et al., 2012; Uusberg et al., 2019) and although many often-used forms can be particularly demotivating for taking action (e.g., reframing the situation as less severe or as out of one's hands (Knowles et al., 2014)), other forms of reappraisal may be less demotivating (e.g., reframing the situation as an opportunity to gain efficacy, or to cultivate a sense of collective pride). Targeting more specific forms of reappraisal may thus represent a promising direction for future research. Second, political action was discussed here as an *outcome* of emotion regulation, but for some people, taking action might itself represent a form of emotion regulation (see Ford & Feinberg, 2020). Someone might attend a protest, write to their congressperson, or donate to a political cause to help themselves feel better. This possibility is consistent with research finding that activism correlates with higher levels of psychological well-being (Klar & Kasser, 2009). If action does alleviate negative emotion, it could prove useful for activists trying to mobilize people to take action. They could advertise taking action as an effective means for both advancing the cause and increasing happiness, appealing to both prosocial and hedonic motives – something future research might explore.

Conclusion

In all, our research bridges political psychology and affective science theory and methods, and highlights how these distinct literatures can intersect to answer important, unexplored questions. Our findings show that the political is very much personal – a pattern with powerful consequences for people's daily lives. More generally, by demonstrating how political events personally impact the average citizen, including their psychological and physical health, our study reveals the far-reaching impact politicians have, beyond the formal powers endowed unto them.

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