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The Effect of Moral Development on Voters' Trust in Politicians

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Aquilus C. N. Ricks

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

The Effect of Moral Development on Voters' Trust in Politicians

by

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MA, DePaul University, 2004

BS, Moody Bible Institute, 2000

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Public Administration

Walden University

May 2021

Abstract

The impact of voters' moral development on trust in politicians is a rarely explored phenomenon among scholars studying why voters trust politicians. It is unknown whether voters' moral development plays an influential role in their decisions to trust those they elect to public office, or if they simply respond to the best political show. The purpose of this study was to examine this phenomenon and determine whether voters' moral development impacted their trust in politicians regardless of age, gender, education, income, and religion. The study surveyed 110 eligible voters in a midwestern city in the United States using two survey instruments: The Defining Issues Test-2 (DIT-2) and the Interpersonal Trust Scale (ITS). The DIT-2 collected data to measure voters' moral development, while ITS collected data on trust. The research was cross-sectional in its approach and quantitative in its design. Stratified sampling ensured voters throughout the city had equal chance of participating in the study. Hierarchical multiple regression was used to import the covariates into the model and analyze the data. The SPSS statistical software version 25 was used to transform the data, create tables, and display the outputs that showed the results. The results of the study showed that voters' moral development and the covariates had no statistically significant impact on trust. Positive social change implications from the study include the knowledge that trust in politicians is predicated upon other attributes such as character, experience, performance, and fitness to serve rather than the moral views of voters.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the Liberian people whose plight has motivated me to study politics to educate and contribute to their future success. The poverty, the misappropriations of funds, the corruption, the poor social environment, and low academic standards have all eaten me up to prepare myself to help in whatever way I can to see Liberia rise.

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I want to acknowledge my family for their tireless effort and support during this journey. My wife Vecia, and my children, Enoch and Nadyne, sacrificed their time and money to see me complete this journey. They were denied fun, vacations, and precious moments to see me reach this goal.

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More importantly, I thank my Lord Jesus Christ for His grace, wisdom, and strength to endure to this end. The blessings of life, wisdom, knowledge, and health that have brought me this far came from Him along.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Scholars have suggested that moral development impacts trust in relationships (Andrew, 1998; Antonio, 1999; Gossling, 2004; Gustafsson, 1998; Letki, 2006; Simpson et al., 2013). This can be seen in politics (Vance & Trani, 2008), business (McCall, 2011), and healthcare (Ehlen & Sprenger, 1998). It is evident as patients trust doctors, the public trusts political leaders, employees trust managers, and customers trust vendors to behave ethically for trust to exist between them. Studies on the impact of moral development on trust in relationships vary. Some researchers suggested that the moral development of the trustee impacts trust in relationships (see James, 2015; Simpson et al., 2013; Yukl, 1981). Others suggested that the moral development of the trustor impacts trust in relationships (see Ricou & Marina, 2020; Simpson et al., 2017).

In this study, the impact of voters' moral development on their trust in politicians was examined. Voters, as trustors, place their trust in politicians with their vote during elections. However, their political choices over the years have brought their moral reasoning under scrutiny. It is unclear whether their trust in politicians is influenced by their moral development or if other factors contribute to their perception, evaluation, and trust in politicians.

Little is known about the impact of voters' moral development on their trust in politicians because studies on the subject are scarce. However, it is suggested that political and religious divisions occur because judgments made by people are impacted by six moral foundations found in them (Haidt, 2012). This suggests that voters'

judgment to trust politicians is impacted by their moral development. Therefore, this study is needed to examine this phenomenon and determine whether the moral development of voters impacts their trust in politicians.

In this study, I used five controlling variables (age, gender, education, income, and religion) to determine whether voters' moral development impacted trust and to reveal the significance of the impact. One hundred and ten eligible voters in a midwestern city in the United States were surveyed using two survey instruments. The Defining Issues Test-2 survey instrument was used to collect data to measure moral development while the Interpersonal Trust Scale was used to collect data to measure trust. Other demographic information was also collected.

The research question was "Do voters' moral development impact their trust in politicians?" Two subquestions relating to the research question were asked: (a) "how much impact on trust can be attributed to moral development?" and (b) "how much impact on trust can be attributed to age, gender, education, income, and religion?" These questions were answered using multiple regression analysis. The results of the analysis provided an assessment of the relationship between voters' moral development and their trust in politicians and the impact their moral development had on their trust.

Positive social change implications for this study include stimulating awareness among voters on the impact of their moral development on their political decisions at the polls. It also includes cultivating an interest in ethics and its relevancy in politics among policymakers. Finally, it includes showing the need for substantive action in ethical training and development for future voters.

In Chapter 1, the background for the study, the problem statement, purpose, research questions, and theoretical framework that guided the study were presented. Also presented were the nature of the study, core definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the study. The chapter concluded with a summary of the content discussed.

Background

Voters, through the ballot box and electoral process, make decisions that give political capital and authority to a group of individuals. They show trust in politicians by electing them to public office in hope of a better life, safer streets, and a well-managed government. However, questionable actions and behaviors among elected officials have led to questions about the role of voters' moral reasoning in their decision to trust politicians. Haidt (2012) argued that people's moral foundations serve as political "taste receptors" and explain their political preferences. Bartels et al. (2015) argued that from the selection of friends to the forging of partnerships, decisions to trust others are affected by the trustor's internal moral judgments. Uslaner (2002) also argued that trust in relationship begins with ethical roots which originate within the trustor.

This perception that the moral development of the trustor impacts trust in relationship is noteworthy. It suggests that voters' moral development impacts their trust in politicians. However, the scarcity of empirical studies on the impact of voters' moral development on their trust in politicians facilitated the need for this research. Therefore, in this study, voters' moral development and their trust in politicians were examined to

determine whether the decisions voters make at the polls is influenced by their moral development.

Problem Statement

The impact of voters' moral development on their trust in politicians is largely unknown because studies on the subject are limited. When the electoral decisions of voters are considered, it is difficult to understand the cognitive process voters go through when they make political decisions. Although, it is generally believed that voters' trust in politicians is influenced by the moral judgments and ethical philosophies of the politician (Groves & LaRocca, 2011; James, 2015; Mitchell, 1999; Simpson et al., 2013), it is argued that the moral development of people influences the way they vote during elections (Enke, 2019). This suggests that voters' moral development impacts their trust in politicians. Therefore, the objective of this research was to study the relationship between voters' moral development and trust to determine whether voters' moral development impacts their trust in politicians.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine whether voters' moral development impacted trust regardless of age, gender, education, income, and religion. The goal of the research was to use the findings to make inferences about the impact of voters' moral development on their trust in politicians. Through cross-sectional design, a one-time collection of data was done from a sample of registered voters in a midwestern city to test the two research hypotheses guiding the study. The first hypothesis claimed the existence of a significant impact of voters' moral development on their trust in

politicians. The second hypothesis claimed the existence of a significant impact of the controlling variables on trust in politicians.

From the study it was discovered that the research hypotheses were rejected. There was no impact of voters' moral development on trust in politicians that was significant. There was also no significant impact of the covariates on trust in politicians.

The benefits of the study include informing politicians of the impact of ethics on voters and how that translates to politics and the electoral process; giving voters a more comprehensive view of themselves in the political arena based on empirical evidence; and providing a view of ethics in politics and its relevancy for future voters.

Research Question(s) and Hypotheses

The research question for this study was: Do voters' moral development impact their trust in politicians? To answer this question, two subquestions were addressed.

RQ1. How much impact on trust can be attributed to moral development?

H_01 : There will be no statistically significant impact of cognitive moral development on trust in politicians.

H_a1 : There will be a statistically significant impact of cognitive moral development on trust in politicians.

RQ2. How much impact on trust can be attributed to age, gender, education, income, and religion?

H_02 : There will be no statistically significant impact of age, gender, education, income, and religion on trust in politicians.

H_{a2}: There will be a statistically significant impact of age, gender, education, income, and religion on trust in politicians.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theoretical framework driving this study was Kohlberg's (2008) theory of cognitive moral development. It is an expansion of Piaget's (1968) argument, which states because adults were once children, the moral development of a child sheds significant light on the moral reasoning of an adult. Kohlberg discussed the relationship between age, cognitive development, and moral development. Kohlberg proposed that moral development takes place through six stages divided into three levels (preconventional, conventional, and postconventional). He claimed that, as people grow in age, they also grow in their moral development which impacts their cognitive development and their relationships. Kohlberg's theory relates to this study by suggesting that adults live according to deeply held moral values. He argued that they determine what is right and wrong due to their personal moral values. This suggests that moral principles in adults are the roots from which they make decisions, including decisions on relationships. In Chapter 2, more detailed explanation on Kohlberg and his theory was provided.

Nature of the Study

I used a quantitative research design to examine whether voters' moral development impacted trust. The quantitative research approach was chosen for this study because it is designed to examine the relationship between two variables to determine association (see Creswell, 2009). Quantitative research design also requires variables that

can be measured numerically to facilitate data analysis (Goertzen, 2017). The results of the data analysis could then be used to make inferences from the sample to the larger population.

The key variables of the study were the predictor variable, the outcome variable, and the covariates. The predictor variable was moral development. The outcome variable was trust. The covariates of the study were five demographic variables: age, gender, education, income, and religion.

Data for the study was collected from 110 eligible voters from four geographic regions in a midwestern city in the United States. Two types of data were collected from the participants. The first was data on moral development. The second was data on trust. The moral development data was collected using the Defining Issues Test-2 survey questionnaire. The data on trust was collected through the Rotter Interpersonal Trust Scale.

The methodology used in the study to analyze the collected data was the hierarchical multiple regression. This is a special form of multiple regression in which variables that predict an outcome variable are added in steps to a model that shows the contribution of each variable to the outcome (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2020). Through the addition of controlling variables to the model, it can be observed if the model's ability to predict the outcome variable is significant.

Definitions

The following definitions provide meaning to critical terms used throughout this research.

Cognition: The terms "cognition," "thought," or "intelligence" refer to adaptive actions upon objects or internalizations of such actions. Mature or adequate cognition is defined by an equilibrium or reciprocity between action and object. Cognition is defined as function (as modes of action) rather than as content (as sets of words, "verbal responses," associations, and memories) or as a faculty or ability (a power of producing words, and memories; Kohlberg, 1968)

Cognitive Development: The "cognitive-developmental" or "interactional" view is based on the premise that the cognitive and affective structures which education should nourish are natural emergent from the interaction between the child and the environment under conditions where such interaction is allowed or fostered (Kohlberg, 1968).

Defining Issues Test-2: A measure of moral judgment development (Center for the Study of Ethical Development, 2019). It consists of a series of five dilemmas that are used to rank and rate the moral development of people.

Moral Development: Moral development refers to the growth of morality in human beings spontaneously alongside physical limbs, and basic mental and social capacities (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2019).

Morality: The term "morality" can be used either (a) descriptively to refer to some codes of conduct put forward by a society or, some other group, such as a religion, or accepted by an individual for her own behavior or (b) normatively to refer to a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational persons (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2020).

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made regarding this study. First, I assumed that voters' moral development and trust were variables that can be observed and measured numerically. Second, I assumed that the survey instruments used in data collection were valid and reliable instruments for objective response from participants. Third, I assumed that the study reflected the postpositivist claim that cause determines effect or outcome (see Creswell, 2009). Fourth, I assumed that the knowledge gained from the study was useful for generalization to a larger population of voters. Fifth, I assumed that participants fully understood the instructions regarding the survey questionnaires and were truthful in their response to each question.

Scope and Delimitations

The study focused on eligible voters within the legally established limits of in a midwestern city in the United States. According to the Board of Elections in the midwestern city, to be eligible to vote an individual must meet five specific requirements: (a) Must be a U.S. citizen, (b) Must be 18 years old and above, (c) Must live in the voting precinct 30 days before the election, (d) Must not be in prison/jail serving time for a conviction, and (e) Must not claim the right to vote elsewhere (Board of Elections, 2021).

Limitations

The study was subject to several limitations. First, the participants surveyed were all from urban communities. Rural and suburban populations were excluded. Second, participants by gender were not normally distributed in the study. This presented potential problems for the reliability of the findings. Third, high standard deviations and

high variance was observed in the data statistics. Fourth, the number of completed surveys were less than the number required for a representative sample of the population. Finally, the scarcity of available resources on the topic impacted how the research problem was understood and presented.

Significance

The study is significant because studies on the impact of voters' moral development on trust in politicians are scarce. Knowing whether voters' trust is impacted by their ethical disposition will bring insight into why voters vote the way they do. This can provide a different perspective than the generally held view that voters' voting habits are largely associated with socio-economic factors such as income and race (see Gelman, 2008; Gilens, 2012; Hersh & Nall, 2013;).

Another significance for the study is to test Kohlberg's theory that moral development impacts trust in relationship with age. Kohlberg's assertion needed to be empirically tested to determine its validity. The conclusion drawn from the study will be used to support or question his claim.

The study is significant because it will add to the existing scientific knowledge on ethics in politics by contributing to the limited scholarly literature on voters' moral development and trust in politicians. It will stimulate interest in future studies on the impact of ethics among voters. Finally, it will also contribute to studies on the dynamics of ethics in decision making.

The research may impact social change by creating awareness in voters of how much influence their moral development has on the decisions they make with their

ballots. It can provide empirical evidence concerning the need for education on ethics for future voters. Finally, may motivate voters to see themselves as active participants in the political process and not passive responders who react to the best political performance of politicians.

The study may also stimulate scholarly dialogue on ethics in politics by challenging researchers to integrate the ethical development of the trustor, and not just the trustee, in their studies on public trust in politicians. Politicians could find this study insightful as they consider political strategies to reach likely voters. Information from the study might challenge them into rethinking how to tailor their message to voters during elections. Political campaigns could find the study intriguing as it challenges them to critically think whether extravagant spending will translate into winning public trust.

Summary

Chapter 1 introduced the study and presented the background of the problem, purpose of the study, and the research question driving the study. The chapter also elaborated on the theoretical framework underlining the study, operational definitions, philosophical assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations of the study, as well as the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature on moral development and trust to provide justification for the study. A detailed discussion into Kohlberg theory of cognitive moral development and the theory of trust was also presented. Chapter 3 is focused on the methodology that was employed in the research. It explained the research design used in the study, the data collection procedures, the data analysis, and sampling.

Chapter 4 shows results of the analysis of the statistical relationship between the variables using tables, figures, and graphs, and the interpretation of the results. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the findings and implications of the results and made recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The impact of voters' moral development on their trust in politicians is mostly unknown. Studies on this subject are scarce. The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between voters' moral development and trust to determine whether voters' moral development impacted trust in politicians regardless of their age, gender, education, income, and religion.

Literature Search Strategy

Multiple sources of information were used for this research. These included academic publications and peer-reviewed sources. Other electronic research databases were used to find sources relating to the study. These databases included ProQuest, SocIndex, PsychIndex, Academic Search Complete/Premier, ScienceDirect, Sage Encyclopedias, as well as Google Scholar. I also used online dictionaries such as APA Dictionary of Psychology, Lexico, and Merriam-Webster to define words and terms. Online encyclopedias such as Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy and the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy were also used for definition of words and terms.

Because studies on the impact of voters' moral development on trust in politicians were scarce, the literature search was expanded beyond the scope of the past 5 years to include older studies. The key terms used in the search were *Kohlberg's theory of cognitive moral development, trust in politicians, trust in relationships, moral psychology, moral development, moral development and trust, moral foundations, ethical decision making, moral judgments, and moral reasoning.*

Theoretical Foundation

Kohlberg's (1968) theory of cognitive moral development provided the theoretical foundation for this study. The theory is an expansion of Piaget's (1965) work on moral development. Because children grow into adulthood, Piaget contended that the development process of ethical reasoning in adults starts in the psychology of a little child (Piaget, 1965). He argued that "all morality consists in a system of rules, and the essence of all morality is to be sought for in the respect which the individual acquires for these rules" (Piaget, 1965, p. 1).

Through this argument Piaget (1965) suggests that there is a linear relationship between moral development, age, and psychological development that is influenced by social interaction and cultural norms. He suggests that through a system of established rules, the moral reasoning of children are framed and, with age, developed into personal morality in adults. By integrating psychological development, age, and moral development in the developmental process Piaget also suggests that moral development impacts the development of interpersonal trust in adults.

As seen in Table 1, Piaget (1965) used four stages to describe the process of cognitive development in a child. Each stage is an extension of the previous. In the first stage, 0-2 years, the child is predominantly influenced by his or her desire to play. There is no awareness of the existence of rules. In the second stage, ages 2-7, the child becomes an imitator. They learn by example and begin to imitate what they see and perceive to be the rules. In the third stage, ages 7-11, the child is more cooperative. Participation is based on a common agreement of what the rules are but not what the rules say exactly. In

the fourth and final stage, age 11 and older, rules are understood and seen as fixed and known to the entire community. The intellectual articulation and the legible communication of the rules prevail in this stage. Lasting memory of the exact rules is strongest here.

Table 1

Piaget's Cognitive Moral Development

Stage	Intellectual Development	Behavior
1	Sensorimotor (ages 0-2)	Senses/Motor Skills
2	Preoperational (ages 2-7)	Use of Symbols
3	Concrete Operational (ages 7-11)	Logical Operations
4	Formal Operational (ages 11-adult)	Systematic Problem Solving

Note: Adapted from Hunt (1993)

Kohlberg (1968) expanded on Piaget's (1965) work with his argument that there was a relationship between age, moral development, and cognitive development. He reported that age, cognitive development, and moral reasoning grew through six stages from infancy through adulthood. These six stages were organized in three unique levels (preconventional, conventional, and postconventional).

The final stage of Kohlberg's (2008) theory suggests that personal ethics determines the guiding principles of a person's life. People at this stage live by their own moral values. They live by their own ethical standards. They behave in accordance with their moral reasoning. Their individuality is connected to their ethics. They are not driven by societal norms and they do not conform to win approval of others. Their decisions are

driven by what seems right to them. Their decisions are based upon their moral preference and they view and enter relationships from the perspective of their moral judgment. Table 2 presents a summary of Kohlberg's moral stages.

Table 2

Summary of Six Stages of Moral Development

Stage	What Is "Right" and Why
Level 1: Pre-conventional	
Stage 1 Heteronomous Morality	Avoiding the breaking of rules that are backed by punishment. Superior power of authority determines "right".
Stage 2 Instrumental purpose and exchange	Following one's own interest and letting others do the same. Following rules only when it is in one's self-interest. "Right" is defined by equal exchange, a fair deal.
Level 2: Conventional	
Stage 3 Mutual Interpersonal expectations, relationship, and interpersonal conformity	Exhibition of stereotypical good behavior. Living up to what is expected in a person's role. Respect for trust, loyalty, gratitude. Belief in the Golden Rule, putting yourself in the other person's shoes.
Stage 4 Social accord and system Maintenance	Making contribution to society, group, or institution. Fulfilling duties to which you have agreed. Point of view of the system is maintained. Avoid breakdown of the system.
Level 3: Post-conventional	
Stage 5 Social contract and individual rights	Rules are upheld because they are a social contract. However, nonrelative values are upheld regardless of majority opinion. Concern for laws and duties is based upon rational determination of overall utility. Welfare and rights are protected.
Stage 6 Universal ethical principles	Self-chosen ethical principles determine right. Laws and social duties are valid only because they are based on such principles. The individual respects the dignity of all human beings in a decision and has personal commitment to beliefs.
Adapted from Kohlberg (1984) and Trevino (1986). Source: Goolsby and Hunt (1992)	

Kohlberg's (2008) theory has been the center of numerous empirical studies on the impact of moral development on various subjects and in various disciplines. For example, Hafeez et al. (2020) used the theory in their analysis of moral reasoning among teachers and students. With a sample size of 60 teachers and 200 students, the Defining Issues Test (DIT) survey instrument was used to gather data and measure the moral development of the participants. The result of the analysis showed no significant difference between the participants in moral reasoning. Both teachers and students reasoned at the conventional level of Kohlberg's moral development.

DeTienne et al. (2019) also used Kohlberg's theory in their research on moral development and business ethics. Of concern was the application of Kohlberg's theory to the moral judgment-action gap concept in business ethics. The concept described the action of people when they know what is right but do what they know is wrong. They concluded that Kohlberg's theory was insufficient when addressing the moral judgment-action gap that is critical to business ethics because it failed to explain the action of those who choose immoral behavior even though they know the morally right thing to do.

The conclusion of the study by DeTienne et al. (2019) showed that Kohlberg's theory had its limitations. There were disagreements between Kohlberg and researchers regarding the scope of his theory. When examined in various contexts, Kohlberg's theory did not always provide sufficient answers to the research problems.

Zhang and Zhao (2017) also used Kohlberg's theory in their research on college moral education in China. They analyzed the theory in the context of the Chinese college education system to find ways to improve college moral education in China. Moral

education in China, they argued, teaches how to obey. They concluded that Kohlberg's theory was appropriate for instruction in moral education in China to guide the education system to transition from a system that teaches how to obey to one that teaches how to choose.

These studies underscored the reliability and validity of Kohlberg's theory. They affirmed Kohlberg's theory as an influential theory guiding empirical research on contemporary issues pertaining to moral development, moral behavior, and moral education. They also showed that Kohlberg's theory is a valid theory for scientific research in all areas of academic and professional disciplines.

Kohlberg's theory was appropriate for this study because the study was concerned with understanding voters' voting practices in the context of their moral development. Voters make their trust in politicians known by their vote during elections. Therefore, by studying the influence of voters' personal morality on their political decisions to trust politicians, a test of Kohlberg's theory is also performed. If people's moral values drive their actions, as Kohlberg alleged, then Kohlberg's theory suggests that voters' action to trust politicians is driven by their personal ethics. This implies that there is a positive relationship between voters' moral development and trust in politicians. By asking the question, do voters' moral development impact their trust in politicians, the study also wants answers on the reliability of Kohlberg's theory in the context of voting and public trust. It, therefore, seeks empirical evidence that accepts or rejects Kohlberg's claim.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables

Government-Subject Relationship

Government-subject relationship is one of the most complex relationships that exist. This complexity goes far beyond the idea of simply leading and following. Strakosch (2009) argued that it is seated in the governance-building dimension which embodies the system of governance in its entirety by being concerned with the building of a system of sociopolitical control that involves an equal participation of both parties for success. Smith and Huntsman (1997) argued that this complexity is rooted in the value-centered perspective in which citizens are not perceived as customers but as intelligent investors who co-invest their resources in the community and government and expect to receive value in return. Ryan (2001) attributed this complexity on the producer-consumer perspective in which people, like consumers, depends on the government, like a producer, to meet their every need. As crisis brews when the producer fails to supply the market, so people's perception of government dwindles and trust in government's efficiency reduces when government fails to meet their needs.

These arguments suggest that the complexity of government-subject relationship is difficult to comprehend. They imply that having a harmonious relationship between government and its citizens require an understanding of factors relevant to interpersonal relationships. They suggest that government-subject relationship is value centered, socially driven, and politically driven.

One major phenomenon associated with the complexities in government-subject relationship is trust. The relationship between government and its citizens depends on

trust (Kozuch & Dobrowolski, 2014). As trust grows, solidarity between government and people grows (Fukuyama, 2001). Trust takes government and people, two polarizing entities, and builds a community out of them.

A sense of comradery develops when trust is present. Teamwork is possible, partnerships develop, and cooperation is attainable. Trust creates the bridge between political and civil societies (Curtis, 2011). Trust facilitates group cohesion and social identity (Acedo-Carmona & Gomila, 2014). Trust reduces competition and allows information sharing and accountability to thrive (Abdullah & Musa, 2013). However, the absence of trust paralyzes progress, impedes cooperation, and impacts productivity.

This description of the impact of trust on government-subject relationships suggests that trust acts like a glue to keep the two in harmony. It also suggests that trust increases public confidence in governmental activities. Finally, it suggests that trust creates the environment that facilitates the exchange of goods and services.

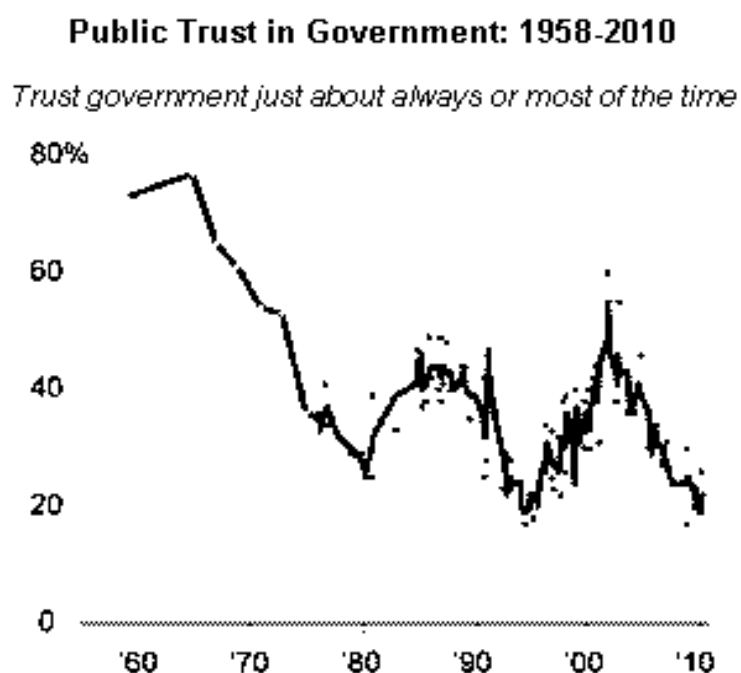
The arguments also suggest that trust in government is influenced by governmental actions rather than the internal feelings of the public. Public opinion and decision to trust government are impacted by governmental policies on the economy, public safety, and the social wellbeing of its citizens. They also suggest that trust in government is impacted by adherence to mutually accepted values of respect and equity rather than the personal values of citizens.

According to Popovski and Cheema (2010), trust in government is on a downward trend while trust in churches, social institutions, charity organizations, academic institutions, and the military appears to grow. As Figure 1 indicated, the percent

of people who trust in government has dropped considerably over the years. This downward trend reflected a public opinion of government that is alarming and concerning.

Figure 1

Public Trust in Government



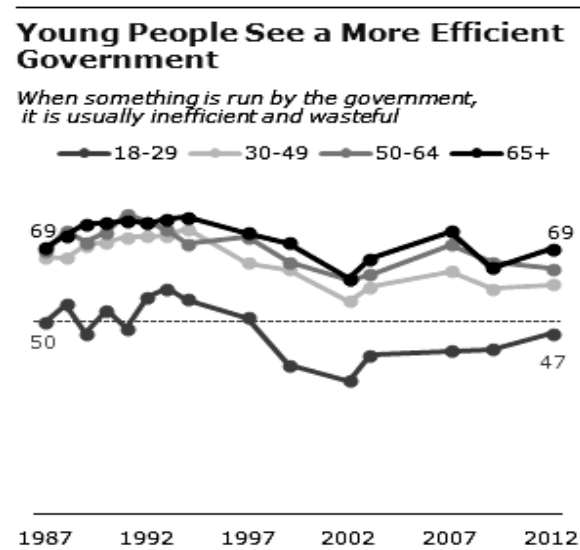
Note. From Pew Research Center (2010)

Generational perception of government also showed a divide between younger and older citizens pertaining to trust. In Figure 2, young people viewed government as being more efficient and less wasteful than older people. Cook and Gronke (2005) suggested that a reason for low trust in government is likely because “trust is easily altered by personal interactions or new social and political conditions” (see Cook & Gronke, 2005, p. 785). Therefore, decades of personal experience with government may have contributed to

the perception of seniors that government is less efficient compared to younger citizens with less experience with government.

Figure 2

Young People See a More Efficient Government

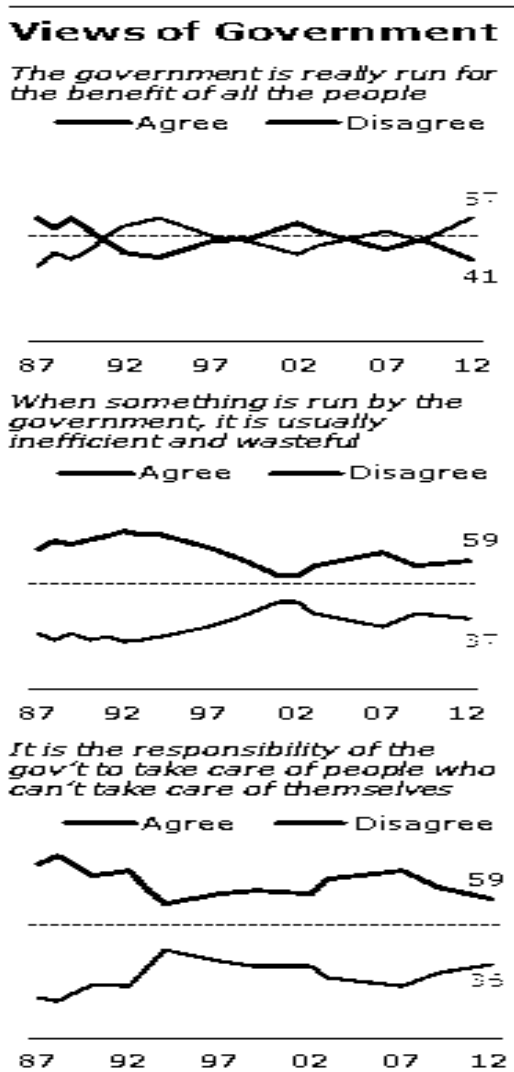


Note. From Pew Research Center (2012)

Additional views of government also showed an overall negative perception of government among citizens. In Figure 3, perception on how government is run, its efficiency, and attitude towards the needy in society showed public dissatisfaction. Majority of the respondents did not see government being run for the benefit of all. They believed government was inefficient and wasteful.

Figure 3

Views of Government



Note. From Pew Research Center (2010).

Citizens' trust in government showed a higher trust in local and state officials than federal officials (Weinschenk & Helpap, 2014). According to Howell and Fagan (1988), blacks were less trusting in government than whites on the national level, though they were more likely to trust local or city governments. The reason for distrust in government among blacks are unknown. However, one likely reason for higher trust in local and state government is because decisions on the federal level appear to be less concerned about local issues but have a wider and larger effect on all citizens (see Kuhlmeier & Lipscomb, 2014). On the contrary, the decisions of state and local officials are more centralized and appear to give more consideration to the needs of the local community.

Table 3
Race and Trust in National and Local Settings

	National (1984)		Local (1985)	
	White	Blac	White	Blacks
-Trust index ^a				
High		1%		14%
	19	12	16	37
	26	24	24	20
	34	30	41	20
Low	19	33	17	9
<i>N</i>	1510	165 ^b	263	249
Gamma		+.2		-.49
Standard		.06		.05
<i>R</i>		.08		.38

Note. Adapted from Howell and Fagan (1988)

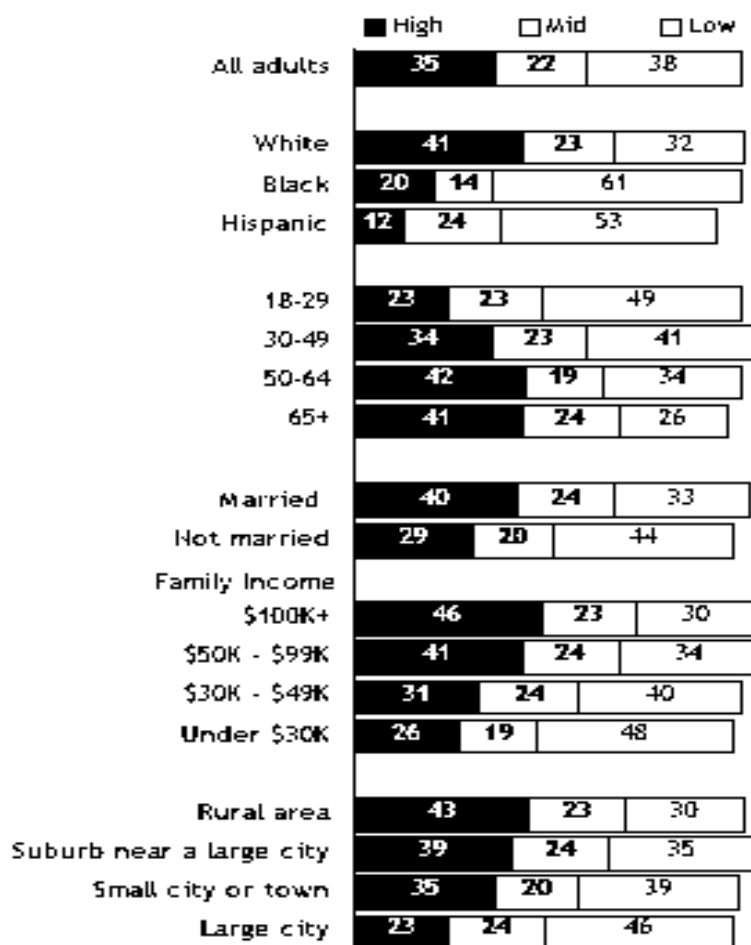
Studies on trust also revealed major discrepancies between the young and elderly, rich and poor, and among the various demographics in America. Figure 4 showed that low income respondents were less trusting than high income respondents. It also showed

that blacks and Hispanics had low social trust than whites. Rural respondents also showed high level of social trust than those in the Suburbs and large cities.

Figure 4

Who's More Trusting?

Social trust index, by demographics



Note. From Pew Research Center (2007)

A survey on broad distrust in government in Table 4 showed majority of the responders had high levels of distrust in government. Middle aged respondents and Seniors trusted government less than millennials. Men also trusted government less than

women. The survey also revealed that trust in the government in Washington was lowest among whites compared to blacks and Hispanics respondents. People with high education had high levels of distrust in government than those with less education. Finally, conservative republicans trusted government less than their democratic counterparts.

Table 4*Broad Distrust in Government*

<i>Trust gov't in Washington to do right thing...</i>	Always/Most of the time %	Only some of the time/ Never (Vol.) %	DK %
Total	26	73	2=100
Men	22	75	2=100
Women	29	70	1=100
White	20	79	1=100
Black	38	59	4=100
Hispanic	44	54	2=100
18-29	35	65	*=100
30-49	24	75	1=100
50-64	23	75	2=100
65+	22	74	4=100
Post Grad	27	73	1=100
College degree	22	78	1=100
Some college	25	73	1=100
HS or less	28	70	2=100
Republican	15	85	*=100
Conservative	12	88	*=100
Mod/Lib	21	78	1=100
Independent	21	78	1=100
Democrat	38	59	2=100
Conserv/Mod	41	56	3=100
Liberal	32	67	1=100

Note: From Pew Research Center (2013)

Theory of Trust

The theory of trust gives insights into why trust between people and politicians are complex. Cho et al. (2017) argued that there are multilayers of dimensions to trust. These dimensions include communication protocols, information exchange, social interactions, and cognitive motivations. They contended that because the existence of trust requires the convergence of these multiple factors, a compromise to any layer will result in distrust.

Trust is also complex because it can be perceived as a psychological and sociological phenomenon. According to Rotenberg (2018), Erikson's Psychosocial Theory on early psychosocial development recognized eight stages of the cognitive developmental process within infants that involves the formation of their social attributes. The first stage of psychosocial development was "Trust vs Mistrust" which occurs from birth to 18 months. In this stage, trust is described as "an emotion within an infant that comprises an experiential stage of confidence" (Rotenberg, 2018, p. 5).

Trust, as a psychosocial phenomenon, was also argued by Lewicki and Bunker (1995). They claimed that "trust is conceptualized as a belief, expectancy, or feeling that is deeply rooted in personality with its origins in the individual early psychosocial development" (Lewicki & Bunker, 1995, p. 135). Through this, trust can be seen an integral part of a child's ability to interact with the world.

The psychological conceptualization of trust makes it a mental construct. This suggests that there is a cognitive process behind trusting behaviors (see Evans & Krueger,

2009). People entering relationships of trust are, therefore, fully engaged in the decisions they make to trust another and cognizant of the perceived risks.

The sociological conceptualization of trust makes it instrumental in facilitating social exchange (Bachmann et al., 2015). Trust is perceived as a major factor that drives a functioning society. It undergirds all exchanges in goods and services and creates an atmosphere of confidence in social interaction.

According to Frederiksen (2014), because interpersonal trust is described as a relational phenomenon which involves interaction, it exists within the confines of a social system that involves people. It binds all units of organization and society together and facilitates relationship building. It removes chaos and facilitates collaboration and cooperation.

Through these arguments, trust is described as a complex phenomenon in the relationship between the public and politicians. It is contingent upon the interplay of multiple factors that are internal and external. It is also influenced by beliefs, values, and social norms.

Moral Development and Trust

According to Haidt (2012), “politics and religion are expressions of our moral psychology” (Haidt, 2012, p.18). He argued that political divisions occur because deep intuition in the minds of people impacts their reasoning and makes it difficult to connect with people in other moral spheres. His moral foundation theory indicates that in each person lies five universal cognitive structures upon which virtues are built to create moralities around the world. The five cognitive structures are care, fairness, loyalty,

authority, and sanctity. The conflicts of these moralities, he argued, explain the differences we see in politics and religion.

Haidt's (2012) theory presents a compelling argument that suggests voters' moral development impacts their trust in politicians. His view that the moral psychology of people is the reason behind their political and religion preference appears to explain why voters vote the way they do. It suggests that politicians within similar moral beliefs as voters are likely to earn voters' trust and vote while those with different moral beliefs are unlikely to be trusted.

Powell and Self (2002) also studied voters' attitudes towards voting. They argued that voters' attitudes were reflective of their personal values, including their religious values. These values seemed fully engaged when voting decisions on matters of policy and social issues were under consideration. In their study on a referendum over the legalization of lottery system in the State of Alabama for raising state funds, they reported that voters in favor of legalization cited financial benefits while voters against legalization viewed the problem from both a financial and a moral perspective. They claimed that voters appeared to have a predetermined moral position on the issue because their attitudes against legalization were based on personal moral values due to religious affiliation.

Like Haidt (2012), Powell and Self (2002) argued that voters' moral development impacted their voting decisions. Their view of policies and their decision to accept or reject policies in a referendum were directly connected to their personal moral

foundations and ethical principles. Whether it involved voting for candidates or voting on policies, voters' moral development played an influential role in driving their decisions.

Uslaner (2002) also examined the relationship between moral development and trust in relationships. He reported that trust has a moral foundation. By moral foundation, he argued that there is an ethical root to trust that originates within the trustor. He argued that "trust in people is based upon a fundamental ethical assumption: that other people share your fundamental values" (Uslaner, 2002, p. 2).

Uslaner (2002) also explained that beyond the strategic view of trusting another person is moralistic trust. He described moralistic trust as a belief that most people share your fundamental moral values and belong to your moral community for civic engagement to take place. He described strategic trust as that which makes people trust each other for cooperation to take place. Because trust in relationship requires engagement, Uslaner (2002) argued that moralistic trust precedes strategic trust. He argued that cooperation among people is possible when there is a foundation of moral values.

Tobin (2011) also agreed that trust in relationship is impacted by the moral development of the trustor. He argued that in trusting others, there must be "shared moral commitment between the parties to support the trust of the trustor" (Tobin, 2011, p. 602). He reported that both parties must agree with the moral values of the trustor for trust to exist. As in a doctor-patient relationship, Tobin (2011) argued that having some shared sense of morally appropriate ideals and values with the trustor is essential for trust to exist.

The arguments of Tobin (2011) and Uslaner (2002) seemed to agree with the view that trust in relationship is impacted by the ethical values inherent in the trustor. Their claims that the establishment of relationship between two parties are contingent upon an agreement with the moral values of the trustor support the argument that the moral foundation of the trustor is the initiator of trust in the trustee.

The relationship between moral development and trust was also studied by Earle and Siegrist (2006). Their argument suggests that moral development is the basis on which trust in others is established. They claimed that decision to trust others is based on similarities in values that are perceived and judged from information that is morally relevant. Therefore, when similarities in values are perceived, trust is likely. The absence of similarities in values will lead to distrust.

The arguments claiming that the moral development of the trustor impacts trust in relationships are not without controversies. Studies suggest that trust in relationships is impacted by other factors in the trustor that is unrelated to moral development and ethical principles. For example, Powell and Heriot (2000) argued that society and culture are instrumental in influencing trust between two or more people. They claimed that people use general assumptions of trust (holistic trust) in societal institutions and culture as a foundation to dyadic trust (interpersonal trust) that is used each day to guide their interactions with other people. Trust, they argued, is formed, not by the moral norms embedded in the mind of the trustor, but, through sociocultural factors that are cognitive in nature.

Hill and O'Hara (2006) also argued that trust is fundamentally cognitive and originates within the cognitive process of an individual. They claimed that trust can develop consciously or subconsciously and be driven and initiated by a person's knowledge, belief, or assessment when social interaction takes place. Elango et al. (2010) also suggested that while values derived from moral development impacts ethical decision making which, in turn, leads to the behaviors that are exhibited at any given time, people with the same values may make different choices when making ethical decisions because of cultural or organizational factors.

Pantic and Wubbels (2011) study on personal moral values and interpersonal relationships also added to the argument that moral development impacts trust in relationships. They considered teachers' moral values in association with the interpersonal relationships they had with their students. They concluded that there was no guarantee that interpersonal relationship will be good or bad because one party possesses moral values.

Ethics and Decision Making

According to Cheney (2006), ethics is concerned with what is right and wrong. It is about that which is morally good or morally right in contrast to what is legal or procedurally right (see Kanungo, 2001). Judeh (2011) argued that the sustainability of all relationships formed is contingent on ethics. Whether internal relationship among employees or external relationship among customers or clients, Judeh (2011) claimed that shared ethical values provide the glue that keeps these relationships together.

Studies on ethics and decision making support the argument that the moral development of the trustor impacts trust in relationships. For example, Lincoln and Holmes' (2010) study of the process of ethical decision making and the extent to which characteristic of the moral situation influence the decision making process suggested that ethics influence decision making through moral awareness, moral judgment, and moral intention of the trustor. In their study, participants' moral awareness was significantly impacted by social consensus, described as the consensus of society on what are acceptable moral norms.

Weiss (1982) also studied the effects of moral reasoning and decision making. His study focused on adolescents' moral reasoning, extent of prudential concerns, and consistency of decision making. The study involved the participation of 89 subjects who were 16-18-year-old that provided moral scores on two dilemmas, one fictitious and the other on self. Results of the study showed that participants with less understanding of the process of decision making were more likely to use moral reasoning in their decisions. One reason for this, according to Weiss (1982), was the existence of "concepts about moral thoughts that mediate moral reasoning and decision making" (Weiss, 1982, p. 859).

The arguments of Weiss (1982) and Lincoln and Holmes (2010) suggest that moral reasoning in the trustor influences decision making. Their arguments showed that decisions by the trustor are the results of ethically filtered thoughts. These thoughts judge the moral relativism of decisions before they are made.

The impact of ethics on decision making were also examined by controlling various demographics characteristics that influenced the process of decision making.

Gupta (2010), studying the relationship between moral judgment and age, considered the moral judgment ability of pre-adolescents by measuring moral judgment among 200 children. He concluded that when controlling for age children ages 10-11 scored higher than children ages 8-9 in making moral judgments. Maturity in age, he argued, is necessary for the development of the ability to make moral judgment. Therefore, the ethics of the trustor had a direct impact of the ethical decisions that were made.

Matarazzo et al. (2008) also studied moral reasoning and behavior among adults. They examined age and gender in moral reasoning and behavior. Their study involved 250 participants equally distributed between males and females. The participants were categorized as being either young people between ages 18-30 or adult between ages 31-58. The results from their study showed that moral reasoning and behaviors were affected by age and gender as young people scored higher on nonmoral thoughts than adults, and women score higher on altruistic thinking and lower scores on selfish thinking than men.

In these studies, the relationship between personal ethics and decision making was presented. Whether it involved decisions to trust others or decisions on the behavior to exhibit at any given time, the process to that decision was argued to be driven by the ethical principles of the trustor.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression

There are three main designs used in scientific research. They are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. The qualitative design is used to gain an understanding of the meaning participants ascribe to a social phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). Through interviews and observations in the participants' natural settings, data are collected from

participants, analyzed, and categorized into trends and themes reflecting the ascribed meaning participants assign to a phenomenon. A theory emerges from the analysis.

Quantitative design is used when researchers want to test a theory (Creswell, 2009). Surveys or Experiments are used to collect data and examine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables from a representative sample of a population. The variables in the quantitative design are quantifiable and measurable. Types of quantitative research include descriptive research, experimental research, correlational research, and quasi-experiment research. Data analysis occurs by analyzing the range of scores, means, and standard deviations associated with the independent and dependent variables (see Creswell, 2009). The results are used to make generalization to the target population.

The mixed methods design employs both the qualitative and quantitative methods in the same study (Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2009) argued that mixed methods design is used to gain a better understanding of an existing problem and provides a deeper insight into complex issues. He claimed that by combining both qualitative and quantitative methods, the result of the study will be stronger than if each method was used in separate studies.

This study was quantitative in approach and correlational in its design. The hierarchical multiple regression approach was used because the relationship between voters' moral development and their trust in politicians was examined using five controlling variables. Through hierarchical multiple regression, the predictor variables were entered into the model in various steps to examine their ability to predict the

outcome. According to Field (2009), the hierarchical regression method is employed in studies to construct a model showing the predictive impact of known predictors from previous research on the outcome variables. A new variable is then entered into the model to create a new model in a hierarchical order. By creating a hierarchical order, the model can control the variables and observe the moderating effect of each variable being added to the model. The predictor that makes a significant contribution to predict the outcome is accepted while those with no significant contribution are removed.

Hierarchical multiple regression has been used in previous research to study the impact of various predictor variables on an outcome variable. For example, Yildirim et al. (2020) used hierarchical multiple regression in their study on the impact of vulnerability, perceived risks, and fear on preventive behavior against Covid-19 from a sample of 4,539 Turkish adults. Model 1 featured demographic data and the dependent variable, preventive behavior. In model 2, vulnerability, perceived risk, and fear were added to the demographic data. The result showed that vulnerability, perceived risk, and fear accounted for a significant amount of variance in preventive behavior than the demographic variables.

Tugsal (2017) also used hierarchical multiple regression to study the effects of socio-demographic factors and work-life balance on employees' emotional exhaustion featuring 261 participants from various public sectors. The first step in the model examined the relationship between emotional exhaustion and socio-demographic variables. The second step added dimensions of work-life balance (neglecting life, life is just working, work-life accordance, taking time for oneself, and carrying work to home)

to the model. The result showed that taking time for oneself highly contributed to the outcome, emotional exhaustion. The variable, life is just working, had the lowest effect on emotional exhaustion.

Therefore, by employing the hierarchical multiple regression in this research, the relationship between voters' moral development and their trust in politicians was revealed. The impact of the controlling variables on the outcome variable was seen and the impact of the addition of moral development on the outcome variable was known. Through the hierarchical multiple regression in the study the significance of the contribution of the predictor variables on the outcome variable was also known.

Summary

Chapter 2 considered the scholarly literature pertaining to the key variables in the research. It reported the research databases and other search strategies used in obtaining information that established the research problem. It presented the theoretical framework driving the study and discussed the rationale for its usage in the study. Discussion centered around what previous researchers had studied about the research problem, and the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments.

One gap in the literature review that supported this research was that studies on the impact of voters' moral development on their trust in politicians were scarce. Little was known about this phenomenon. Therefore, it was important to examine whether voters' moral development impacted trust so that, an inference into the impact of voters' moral development on trust in politicians could be made.

In Chapter 3 the methodology and analytical procedures used in the study were revealed. These included the research design, data analysis, sample size, setting, instrumentation, and data collection procedures. Chapter 3 also discussed how variables in the study were coded and recoded for analysis.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine whether voters' moral development impacted trust regardless of their age, gender, education, income, and religion. The goal of the research was to use the findings to make inferences about the association between voters' moral development and their trust in politicians. The research question was "Do voters' moral development impact their trust in politicians?" Two subquestions addressed in this research were as follows:

RQ1. How much impact on trust can be attributed to moral development?

H_01 : There will be no statistically significant impact of cognitive moral development on trust in politicians.

H_a1 : There will be a statistically significant impact of cognitive moral development on trust in politicians.

RQ2. How much impact on trust can be attributed to age, gender, education, income, and religion?

H_02 : There will be no statistically significant impact of age, gender, education, income, and religion on trust in politicians.

H_a2 : There will be a statistically significant impact of age, gender, education, income, and religion on trust in politicians.

In Chapter 3, the research method and design used in the study were presented. The setting, sampling, and sample size were also reported. The instruments used to measure the data and facilitate statistical analysis were discussed as well as the data

collection procedures. The techniques employed in data analysis and threats to validity were also discussed in Chapter 3. Finally, all confidentiality put in place to protect the participants of the research were discussed.

Research Design and Rationale

A research design is used to describe a plan that incorporates philosophical assumptions about the study, strategy of inquiry and specific methods for analysis (Creswell, 2009). It serves as a blueprint to answer the research question while providing guidance through each stage of the research (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). In it, data collection and procedures used in analyzing the data are revealed. Ethical issues facing the study and information on steps that will be taken to control bias and other practices that may compromise the integrity of the study are also discussed in the research design (Creswell, 2009).

Three approaches to scientific inquiry are considered when designing a research. These approaches are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Creswell, 2009). Each approach guides an empirical research by providing specific direction of the study within the framework of the research question or issue being addressed. According to Mackenzie and Knipe (2006), each design represents an approach to acquiring knowledge as well as a methodology used in data collection, analysis, and reporting. For example, the qualitative method tends to be more descriptive in nature. It gives knowledge by focusing on “exploring and understanding the meaning ascribed to a social phenomenon” (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). The quantitative method is concerned with testing “objective theories by examining the relationship among variables” (Creswell, 2009, p. 4).

Knowledge is obtained by gathering and analyzing data collected through surveys and questionnaires to determine association between the data. The results are generalized to a specific audience. Mixed methods studies combine both qualitative and quantitative approaches so that the “overall strength of the study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research” (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). Knowledge obtained from mixed methods is done by using one method to gain a better understanding of the results of the other method.

The quantitative approach was chosen for this study because of the need to examine the relationship between moral development and trust in politicians while controlling for voters’ age, gender, education, income, and religion. The quantitative approach was also the best approach to test the theoretical foundation of the study and the research hypotheses to determine whether to accept or reject the null hypotheses. Finally, the researcher wanted to use the findings of the study to make generalization to the larger population of voters.

There are four main designs associated with quantitative research: descriptive, correlational, experimental, and quasi-experimental (Ingham-Broomfield, 2014). According to Ingham-Broomfield (2014), the descriptive design is concerned with accurate portrayal of the characteristics of individuals, situations, or groups, and the frequency with which certain phenomena using statistics to describe and summarize the data. The correlational design focuses on interrelationships among variables. The experimental design tests whether a specific treatment influences an outcome by testing a treatment between two groups of participants after subjects are randomly assigned to

groups (Creswell, 2009). Finally, the quasi-experimental design involves research whereby the subjects are not randomly assigned to groups. They are part of a naturally formed groups such as a classroom or family (Creswell, 2009).

The correlational design was chosen for this research because it is a research design that measures the correlation between two variables to determine relationship (see Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). This was a nonexperimental, cross-sectional approach of a one-time test involving a sample of eligible voters in a midwestern city to generalize the findings to the larger population of voters. The experimental and quasi-experimental designs were not chosen for this study because the study did not seek to test the influence of a treatment on a group of people over time.

In the correlational design, multiple regression was selected because it “allows the assessment of the relationship between an interval variable and two or more interval, ordinal, or nominal variables” (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008, p. 523). In multiple regression, the hierarchical regression was chosen because it allows for multiple predictor variables to be included in several steps in a model to show the contribution of each set of variables on the outcome variable.

By employing the multiple regression design to this research, the researcher was able to examine changes in the outcome variable due to changes in the predictor variables. Multiple regression also allowed the researcher to assess the strength of the relationship between the predictor variables and the outcome variable and determine their statistical significance.

The controlling variables used in the study were age, gender, education, income, and religion. They were chosen as controlling variables based on the assumption that they impacted trust by influencing moral development in people. For example, in the six stages of Kohlberg's theory of moral development, trust was described as a cognitive function associated with moral development and influenced by age. Moral development was also stated to be impacted by poverty/income (Parveen et al., 2018), learning/education (Kaur, 2015), and religion (McKay & Whitehouse, 2014). It was also argued that gender roles are influenced by moral development (White, 1999).

Methodology

Population

The target population for this study were eligible voters in a midwestern city in the United States. These were people who legally qualified to vote in elections in the city. They participated in presidential elections, gubernatorial elections, mayoral elections, aldermanic elections, and elections of state senators and state representatives.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

I employed probability stratified sampling for the study. Probability stratified sampling was chosen because recruiting participants from various geographic regions of the city presented a sampling poll that was diversified and protected the study against an unrepresentative sample (see Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). It "ensures that different groups within a given population are represented adequately in the sample so as to increase the level of accuracy when estimating parameters" (Frankfort-Nachmias &

Nachmias, 2008, p. 171). A simple random sample from a large voting poll in the city was too costly and difficult to compile.

The midwestern city was divided into four geographic locations: North, South, West, and Downtown. The participants were recruited from the streets of the city through word of mouth and invitational fliers. Personal contacts such as friends and associates were also invited to participate in the study. A targeted ad on Craigslist was also used to recruit participants for the study.

The participants in this study satisfactorily met the voting criteria as stipulated by the Board of Elections (2021), which includes an age requirement of 18 years and above; being a U.S. citizen; having been born on or before Nov. 4, 1996; living in voting precinct at least 30 days before elections; not in prison or serving time for a conviction; and not eligible to vote elsewhere. Excluded from this population are residents below age 18; international students, tourists, anyone with felony convictions, and visitors to the city (Board of Elections, 2021). According to the Board of Elections (2021), there were 1,334,807 registered voters in the city in 2010.

The sample size for this study was determined by the Raosoft (2004) sample size calculator. Raosoft produces innovative survey software programs for information gathering and analysis. Products of Raosoft include: EZSurvey, InterForm, SurveyWin, EZReport, and Rapid Report.

The research had a margin of error of 5%, a response distribution of 50%, and a level of trust of 80%. This indicated that if half the survey respondents were repeatedly surveyed, then, 80% of the time between 45% and 55% of the respondents will agree that

moral development influences trust in politicians. Therefore, determining the sample size for this research out of a total number of registered voters in the city at 1,334,807 with a trust level of 80%, a margin of error of 5% and a response distribution of 50%, the estimated amount was 165 participants.

A standard power analysis to estimate the sample size for this study was also performed using the formula, $n = [z^2 * p (1-p) / e^2] / [1 + (z^2 * p (1-p) / e^2 * N)]$, where n is the sample size, z is the z -score associated with the level of confidence, p is the sample proportion, e is the margin of error, and N is the population size. The calculated sample size indicated that 163 participants were needed for this study.

The total number of participants ($n=165$) was divided among the four geographic regions of the city with 41 participants expected from the city's north side, 41 expected from the city's south side, 41 expected from the city's west side, and 42 expected from downtown region. However, the actual sample size for the study was 110 participants selected from 120 completed surveys out of a total of 200 recruits. The 120 completed surveys represented 30 participants from each of the four geographical regions of the city. Ten surveys were rejected by the Center for the Study of Ethical Development due to irregularities in their responses.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The study took place in a midwestern city in the United States. The representative sample was recruited by word of mouth on the streets, personal contacts, fliers, and a targeted ad on Craigslist. The participants remained anonymous to protect their identity. No personal information was required or received from those recruited for the study.

Three questions were used to screen the participants for the study. The first question asked whether the participant is a city resident. The second question asked if the participant had a city library card, state identification card, or a state driver license. The third question asked whether the participant was a registered voter in the city. All participants in the study answered the screening questions in the affirmative.

The surveys had to be completed in full to be accepted as data collection material. All incomplete surveys were excluded and not allowed to be among the collected data. Procedures for data collection also involved the completion of the survey by the participant alone. No one was to complete the survey or assist in its completion but the participant.

Instrumentation

Two survey instruments were used in this research for data collection. They were the Defining Issues Test-2 survey instrument and Interpersonal Trust Scale. Additional demographic information was collected from participants. The demographic information was used as covariates in the study.

The instruments were administered to participants in pencil and paper format. It took participants an average of 35 to 45 minutes to complete the surveys. The instruments were administered in two ways. First, it was administered in person. Meeting rooms in public libraries were booked for limited hours to conduct data collection from participants recruited by word of mouth or responding to the research invite. Secondly, the instruments were administered as a take-home survey because of the spread of coronavirus in the city. The restrictions on public gatherings by the State and the

requirement to wear masks and obey social distancing rules changed the approach to data collection. Participants were reluctant to gather and fearful of contact with strangers. They were, however, more comfortable taking the surveys home in prepaid stamped envelopes to complete and return through the mail.

Defining Issues Test-2 (DIT-2) is a standard testing instrument on moral development. Developed by Rest (1999), DIT consisted of a series of moral dilemmas and the DIT issued statements. Participants ranked each dilemma in terms of importance. The original test, the DIT-1, was first published in 1974. It was a paper and pencil test that presented six moral dilemmas with 12 scenarios to resolve each dilemma (Rest & Narvaez, 1999). The DIT-2 is an updated version of the DIT-1. Narrowed down to five dilemmas, Rest argued that the DIT-2 improved the measurement of moral judgment by, not only shortening the test, but also making its instructions clearer (Rest, 1999, p. 1).

The Rotter Interpersonal Trust Scale (ITS) is a scale used for the measurement of interpersonal trust. It was developed by Rotter in 1967. The scale was constructed using a Likert format to sample a variety of social phenomena by which people would be called upon to express their trust in parents, teachers, friends, and politicians. A total of 40 questions are contained in the scale, 25 of which are specific to trust. The questions are answered on a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The DIT-2 and ITS instruments were appropriate for this study because the data they provided was coded numerically to facilitate quantitative analysis so that an accurate assessment of voters' moral development and its impact on trust could be done while

using the controlling variables. Through DIT-2, voters' moral development was measured and numerically scored. Through ITS, voters' interpersonal trust, including their political trust, was also measured numerically. The controlling variables had numeric values as well. Together, these numeric representations allowed quantitative analysis to be performed on the variables and the results of the relationship between them to be statistically observed and reported.

Scoring for the DIT-2 survey instrument was done by the Center for the Study of Ethical Development at the University of Alabama. The University of Alabama owns the rights to DIT-2 for all purchases and scoring (Appendix A). The answer sheets for all participants in the study were mailed to the Center for the Study of Ethical Development where they were scored, and a dataset was created with the scored items. The dataset was sent electronically through Dropbox, an online uploading and file saving service. The dataset was password protected. The dataset was downloaded to my personal computer and saved for analysis.

Moral development was labeled as "Post Conventional (P score)" in the scoring classification for the instrument by the Center for the Study of Ethical Development. It is therefore labeled as "Post Conventional (P score)" in the analysis in this study. The range of scores for participants were between 0 – 95.

The rights to the ITS survey instrument used to measure trust belong to the University of Connecticut (Appendix C). The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert format with responses to choose from. The scoring for all 25 questions ranged from 25 to 125 (Chun & Campbell, 1974). In this, each of the 25 questions had a least score was 1 and

the highest score was 5. The score of 25 assume a participant's answer for all questions was the least allowed, 1. The score of 125 assumed a participant's answer for all questions was the highest allowed, 5. The coding of the 5-point Likert format used in the scale was as follows:

- 1 – Strongly Agree
- 2 – Mildly Agree
- 3 – Agree and Disagree Equally
- 4 – Mildly Disagree
- 5 – Strongly Disagree

The 5-point Likert scale used in the ITS was recoded for this study to indicate response categories that show a progression from lowest to highest. This format was necessary to better interpret the findings. The following scale was used to score the ITS:

- 1 – Strongly Disagree
- 2 – Mildly Disagree
- 3 – Agree and Disagree Equally
- 4 – Mildly Agree
- 5 – Strongly Agree

The scores were imported from each participant's survey as new variables in the dataset in SPSS. The variables were labeled as ITS1, ITS2...ITS25. A new variable called "Trust" was created in SPSS to reflect the sum of all scores for each survey. All 110 cases in the dataset showed the score of each question along with the tabulated total score.

Other variables in the study were also coded for data analysis. For gender, males were coded as 1 (males = 1), while females were coded as 2 (females = 2). Education was also coded as 1 = “grades 1-6”; 2 = “grades 7-9”; 3 = “grades 10-12”; 4 = “Vocational/Tech”; 5 = “Jr. College”; 6 = “Freshman”; 7 = “Sophomore”; 8 = “Junior”; 9 = “Senior”; 10 = “Prof. degree”; 11 = “MS degree”; 12 = “Ph.D/Ed.D”; and 13 = “Other”. Religion was coded into 4 categories. 1 = “Christian”; 2 = “Muslim”; 3 = “Atheist”; 4 = “Other”. Finally, income was coded as 1 = “Less than \$30K”; 2 = “\$30K to <\$50K”; 3 = “\$50K to <\$100K”; 4 = “\$100K to <\$200K”; and 5 = “>\$200K”.

The variables in the instruments were also measured. Measurement of variables is one of the beginning steps in analysis because it justifies the statistical technique used in the analysis (Healey, 2002). These statistical techniques include tests of correlation, comparing of the means, and regression. Measurement of variables is important because, to test the hypothesis of a study, the variables need to be measured accurately (see Field, 2009).

There were two main ways in which variables in the instruments were measured. One was categorical and the other was continuous. According to Field (2009), categorical variables are variables that can be placed into categories. They can be specifically categorized as nominal, ordinal, or ratio. The continuous variables are variables whose values can be measured infinitely such as time and length.

In this study, trust was a continuous variable. Moral development was also a continuous variable. Age was a continuous variable. Gender was a categorical variable.

Education was a categorical variable. Income was measure categorically. Finally, religion was measured as a categorical variable.

The instruments met the validity and reliability tests to justify their usage in empirical studies. The correlation between DIT-1 and DIT-2 was done by Rest by focusing mainly on where they overlap as opposed to their contrast (Rest, 1999, p.8). Correlation from Rest's test showed that DIT-1-P with DIT-2-N2 was .71 (using the standard participant reliability checks, n=154). DIT-1-N2 with DIT-2-N2 was .79 (using N2 index and the new checks, n=178). This showed that although DIT-2-N2 was shorter and with fewer participants, it was better in validity than DIT-1-P.

For reliability, the internal consistency was determined using the ranking data in the P index and part of the N2 index and not by the individual items. By combining both the six stories from DIT-1-P and the five stories from DIT-2-N2, the result showed that the total 11 stories had a Cronbach's alpha of .90 which indicated a high level of internal consistency due to the overlap of DIT-1 and DIT-2.

Rotter (1967) employed the split-half reliability corrected by Spearman Brown formula to measure the internal consistency of ITS. The test of reliability featured a test – retest. The result showed $r=.76$, $p<.001$. The first test was administered to 24 students who were part of the 547 students who took the original test. It consisted of 10 males and 14 females. The time gap between the original test and the second test was about seven months. The correlation was .56, ($p < .01$). The retest was administered to 42 students who were also part of the original 547 students. It consisted of 34 males and eight females. This followed a time gap of about three months from the first test. The

correlation was 68, ($p < .01$). The closeness of the result of both tests demonstrated a reliable test.

Rotter (1967) also tested the validity of ITS using two fraternities ($N = 35$, $N = 38$) and two sororities ($N = 41$, $N = 42$) on the University of Connecticut campus. Individual correlations in the four groups ranged from 23 to 55. The overall correlation at 37 indicated that it was significantly high than those for the controlled variables of humor, popularity, and friendship. The trust scale and the sociometric rating of trust also showed a correlation that was significant with trustworthiness.

Operationalization

The key variables in this research were the predictor variable (moral development), the outcome variable (trust), and the controlling variables (age, gender, education, income, and religion). An operational definition of each variable was done to ensure the intent of the researcher regarding the meaning of each variable was conveyed.

Moral development was described as “the cognitive evaluation and justification of the prescriptive value of right and wrong” (Gibbs, 2013, p. 17). The DIT-2 survey instrument described age as “age in years”; gender as “sex of the participant”; and education as “level of education”. In the additional demographic information collected, income represented “a gain or recurrent benefit usually measured in money that derives from capital or labor” (Merriam-Webster, 2020); and religion represented “commitment or devotion to religious faith or observance” (Merriam-Webster, 2020).

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis for this study was done using the SPSS statistical software version 25. Responses for the variables were scored and analyzed in SPSS to observe changes in moral development in relations to trust. SPSS allowed the importation of data into a data editor and supported the transformation of variables, creation of charts and graphs, and the display of the output that showed the results (see Green & Salkind, 2011). The generated results from SPSS were examined, interpreted, and discussed.

The research question for this study was “Do voters’ moral development impact their trust in politicians?” Multiple regression was used to analyze the data in this research because the outcome variable was a continuous variable. Multiple regression is an extension of linear regression in which the relationship between two variables is examined while controlling for the effects of other variables (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias (2008). The hierarchical multiple regression approach was used to import the predictor variable, the outcome variable, and the controlling variables into the model.

The multiple regression output displayed the descriptive statistics, correlation, model summary, ANOVA, and the coefficients. The descriptive statistics displayed the mean and standard deviation of the variables in the regression, and the number of observations in the study. The correlation matrix was used in the research to show the correlation of all the variables in the study. The correlation of the five controlling variables (age, gender, education, religion, and income) were observed to determine how well they correlated with each other and the dependent variable. The model summary provided information about the overall model and how much variability on trust was

associated with their moral development as well as the impact of the controlling variables on the model.

ANOVA displayed the statistical significance of the results. The need to reject or accept the hypothesis was decided using the ANOVA test (see Tarlow, 2016). Finally, the coefficient table provided the individual contribution of the predictor variables on the outcome. It showed whether there is a positive or negative correlation between each predictor variable on the outcome variable.

Threats to Validity

“There are several threats to validity that raise questions about an experimenter’s ability to conclude that the intervention affects an outcome and not some other factor” (Creswell, 2009, p.162). These threats can be external or internal. Therefore, it is imperative to identify the threats to minimize their impact on the overall quality of the research.

External Threats

External threats are problems the researcher had about inferences. These threats made generalization of the findings of the research to other settings, people, and situations problematic (see Creswell, 2009). Some external threats to validity include “the characteristics of individuals selected for the sample, the uniqueness of the setting, and the timing of the experiments” (Creswell, 2009, p.162).

In this research, external threats to validity occurred because voters surveyed were those within an urban setting. The findings of the study was applicable to an urban environment. Voters in other settings such as suburban and rural were not included.

Therefore, further testing of voters in the suburban, rural, and other settings may be needed to see if the same results will occur as in the urban setting.

Internal Threats

Internal threats are concerns researchers have about procedures, treatments, or participants' experiences that pose a threat to the quality of the data from which the researcher will draw inferences about the population in an experiment (Creswell, 2009). In this research, the discovery that gender was not normally distributed for the study posed a threat to the reliability of the conclusion. It placed one group at a disadvantage and created an unfavorable condition for objective testing. Other internal threats were the high standard deviation and high variance found in the data. These posed a major threat to generalization by making it difficult to know how close the data points were to the sample mean. Future research of voters in the original setting will be necessary to substantiate the findings of the original research.

Another internal threat involved data collection. Covid-19 restrictions in the city changed the data collection setting from being done in-person to being done at home and returned through the mail in prepaid stamped envelopes. Without a controlled environment for data collection, the researcher could not be certain who completed the surveys.

It was also difficult to ensure the truthfulness of the participants' response to the survey questions because of the mental preparation and emotional issues they may have been experiencing due to spread of coronavirus. This could have impacted a participant's honest response to the questions.

Ethical Procedures

Scientific research involving human subjects must be approached with care. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) argued that researchers conducting studies on human subjects must protect the participants. They must also ensure that they comply with all laws and regulations regarding studies involving human subjects. These include all ethical and moral guidelines for working with human subjects.

An agreement among social scientists is that all research involving human subjects must be performed with informed consent (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2008) argued that “informed consent is an absolute necessity when research participants are exposed to substantial risks and asked to forfeit personal rights” (Frankfort-Nachmias, 2008, p. 72). Therefore, participants in this research were given an informed consent form before being surveyed. However, because participants for the study were anonymous, their completion and return of the surveys was evidence of their consent to participate. Obtaining participants’ signatures on consent forms would have violated their privacy and anonymity for this research.

A confidentiality agreement was also provided to participants that protect their rights to remain anonymous. Participants were informed of their right to privacy as a safeguard of their personal information. Participants were also allowed to drop out of the survey anytime they choose to do so. All demographic information such as name and addresses that could potentially identify the participant were not a requirement in this study. Participants were also informed that their completed forms will be protected from

unauthorized persons according to federal law and in compliance with Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) standards.

The confidentiality agreement ensured participants that all collected data and information were protected under federal law and in accordance with IRB guidelines which allow for the safekeeping and storage of all collected data for a period of 5 years. At the end of 5 years, a permanent disposal of all data and information will be enforced.

Summary

In this chapter the methodology used to examine the relationship between the variables was discussed. Information on the research design, setting, sampling, data collection procedures, and the survey instruments employed in the collection of data were provided. Data analysis and the SPSS statistical software used in data analysis were discussed. Also discussed were threats to validity, confidentiality, privacy, and rights of participants. The chapter also revealed ethical expectations that participants were to anticipate from the researcher.

In chapter 4, the results of the analysis of the data collection were revealed. Visual outputs were displayed to show the interactions of the variables relating to the research questions and hypotheses. Descriptive statistics on the variables used in the study was presented. The results also showed whether the null hypotheses were accepted or rejected. Finally, in chapter 5 discussions about the findings ensued. This included interpretation of the results in relations to the literature, recommendation for future research, and conclusions drawn from the findings.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to determine whether voters' moral development impacted trust regardless of age, gender, education, income, and religion. The goal of the research was to use the findings to make inferences about the association between voters' moral development and their trust in politicians. The research question for this study was "Do voters' moral development impact their trust in politicians?" To answer this question, two subquestions were addressed.

RQ1. How much impact on trust can be attributed to moral development?

H_01 : There will be no statistically significant impact of cognitive moral development on trust in politicians.

H_a1 : There will be a statistically significant impact of cognitive moral development on trust in politicians.

RQ2. How much impact on trust can be attributed to age, gender, education, income, and religion?

H_02 : There will be no statistically significant impact of age, gender, education, income, and religion on trust in politicians.

H_a2 : There will be a statistically significant impact of age, gender, education, income, and religion on trust in politicians.

I used two models to explain the relationships between the key variables.

1. Model 1: Controlling variables and Trust
2. Model 2: Moral development, Controlling variables, and Trust

In this chapter the results of the data analysis were reported. The chapter included descriptive statistics of participants in the study. Demographic characteristics of the sample were revealed. Information on data collection including actual recruitment and response rates were provided. The statistical analysis of the data were also reported along with a on the test of the hypotheses. The results on the inclusion of the covariates in the model were also presented.

Data Collection

Data collection for the study was performed over a period of 1 year. Data collection began in July 2019 and ended in August 2020. The study had a response rate of 60% because 200 surveys were administered to participants, but 120 surveys were completed and returned. There was also a completion rate of 91% because 120 surveys were completed and returned though 110 were approved for the study. Ten were rejected because their responses did not pass the reliability test during scoring.

The sample size for the study was 110 registered voters in the city randomly selected from the Southside, Westside, Northside, and Downtown areas. Personal contacts through random engagement by fliers and word of mouth on the streets and an ad in Craigslist were the primary means of recruiting. Majority of those recruited took the surveys home in prepaid stamped envelopes and return them through the mail because of coronavirus outbreak in the city.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics in Table 5 displayed the mean and standard deviation of all the variables used in the study and the number of participants involved in the study. The mean score for the outcome variable (trust) was 84 with a standard deviation at 10.65. The mean for the predictor variable (moral development) was 28.9 with a standard deviation of 13.8. The average age for participants was 47 with a standard deviation of 17.37. Gender had a mean of 1.62 and a standard deviation of .48. Education level was averaged at 8.2 with a standard deviation of 3.0. Income had a mean of 2.4 and a standard deviation of 1.0. Lastly, religion had a mean of 1.5 and a standard deviation of 1.1.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of Participants

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Trust	84.5273	10.65619	110
Age	47.627	17.3728	110
Sex	1.627	.4857	110
Educational Level	8.245	3.0895	110
Income	2.4182	1.08688	110
Religion	1.5364	1.12256	110
Post Conventional (P score)	28.9140	13.89396	110

A more detailed descriptive frequency for participants' age in the sample was displayed in Table 6. The minimum age was 0 while the maximum age was 86. Zero value for minimum age was added to account for a missing age value because one

participant opted to keep their age anonymous. The median age was 48. The participants' age had a high standard deviation (SD=17.37). The variance was also high at 301.81.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Age

N	Valid	110
	Missing	0
Mean		47.627
Median		48.000
Mode		60.0
Std. Deviation		17.3728
Variance		301.814
Minimum		.0
Maximum		86.0
Sum		5239.0

Table 7 displayed the test of normality for age in the sample. The test of normal distribution for age of participants in the sample for the study revealed that age was normally distributed. Both Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk had a significance value that as greater than the alpha, $p > .05$.

Table 7

Test of Normality for Age

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Age	.054	110	.200*	.989	110	.479

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The descriptive frequency of participants by gender was provided in the analysis. In Table 8, the descriptive frequency for gender in the sample of the study displayed that more females participated in the study than males. Males were 37.3% ($n = 41$). Females were 62.7% ($n = 69$).

Table 8

Descriptive Frequency for Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	41	37.3	37.3	37.3
	female	69	62.7	62.7	100.0
Total		110	100.0	100.0	

The test of normal distribution of gender in the sample was done. According to Table 9, both Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk had a significance value that was less than the alpha, $p < .05$. This means the data was statistically different from normal distribution. Therefore, gender was not normally distributed in the sample.

Table 9

Test of Normality for Gender

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Sex	.406	110	.000	.612	110	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Statistical Analysis of the Data

Multiple regression was used to analyze the data and answer the research question in this study. The hierarchical approach allowed the importation of the covariates into the

model to determine whether moral development impacted trust regardless of age, gender, education, income, and religion.

The research question for this study was, “Do voters’ moral development impact their trust in politicians?” To answer this question, two sub-questions were addressed.

RQ1. How much impact on trust can be attributed to moral development?

H_01 : There will be no statistically significant impact of cognitive moral development on trust in politicians.

H_a1 : There will be a statistically significant impact of cognitive moral development on trust in politicians.

RQ2. How much impact on trust can be attributed to age, gender, education, income, and religion?

H_02 : There will be no statistically significant impact of age, gender, education, income, and religion on trust in politicians.

H_a2 : There will be a statistically significant impact of age, gender, education, income, and religion on trust in politicians.

Table 10 showed that the study used two models to explain the association of between voters’ moral development and trust. It revealed how the variables were entered into the analysis. Model 1 consisted of the covariates (age, gender, education, income, and religion). Model 2 consisted of the predictor variable (moral development) and the covariates (age, gender, education, income, and religion). Trust was entered in the

analysis as the outcome/dependent variable. No variable was removed during the analysis.

Table 10

Variables Entered/Removed

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Religion, Educational Level, Income, age, Gender		. Enter
2	Post Conventional (P score)		. Enter

a. Dependent Variable: Trust

b. All requested variables entered.

In Table 11 the association of linearity among the variables used in the study were displayed. The Pearson correlation revealed the strength of the relationship between the variables and the direction of the relationship (see Field, 2009). The results from the Pearson correlation showed that there was no significant positive correlation between trust and age, $r(98) = .122, p > .05$. Trust also had no significant positive correlation with gender, $r(98) = .141, p > .05$. However, the correlation between trust and education was negative and significant, $r(98) = -.191, p < .05$. This weak negative correlation between trust and education indicated that participants with low education reported higher levels of trust.

The Pearson correlation also showed that income had a correlation with trust that was negative and significant, $r(98) = -.170, p < .05$. This weak negative correlation between trust and income indicated that participants with low income reported higher

levels of trust. Trust also had no significant positive correlation with religion, $r(98) = .076, p > .05$. Finally, there was a correlation between trust and moral development that was negative and significant, $r(98) = -.230, p < .05$. This weak negative correlation between trust and moral development indicated that participants with low moral development reported higher levels of trust.

The model summary of the analysis in Table 12 displayed the results of the two models. Model 1 showed that the controlling variables (age, gender, education, income, and religion) were responsible for 7.3% of the variability in trust. However, the significance of the F_{change} showed that the 7.3% variance was not statistically significant.

Model 2 showed that when moral development was added to the model, the R^2 value increased to 10.7%. The new model accounted for an additional 3.4% variance in trust that was closed to significance but not statistically significant, $R^2_{\text{change}} = .034$, $F_{\text{change}}(1,103) = 3.885$, $p=.051$. Although the R^2_{change} value of 3.4% indicated that an increase in the predictive capability of the model occurred when moral development was added, the p-value of .051 showed it was not significant.

Table 12
Model Summary

Model	R	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics						
				R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson	
1	.271 ^a	.073	.029	10.5018	.073	1.647	5	104	.154	
2	.327 ^b	.107	.055	10.3586	.034	3.885	1	103	.051	1.667

a. Predictors: (Constant), Religion, Educational Level, Income, age, sex

b. Predictors: (Constant), Religion, Educational Level, Income, age, sex, Post conventional (P score)

c. Dependent Variable: Trust

The ANOVA result in Table 13 displayed the result of the test of significance of the regression model. ANOVA is used to determine “whether the model, overall, resulted in a significantly good degree of prediction of the outcome variables” (Field, 2009, p.207). The result indicated that in model 1 of the hierarchical regression, age, gender,

education, income, and religion had no statistically significant impact on trust, $R^2 = .073$, $F(5,104) = 1.647$, $p > .05$. When moral development was added to the model in model 2, the results also showed no statistically significant impact on trust, $R^2 = .107$, $F(6,103) = 2.058$, $p > .05$. Therefore, the overall model for this study failed to reject the null hypothesis. Voters' moral development had no statistically significant impact on trust.

Table 13
ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	908.395	5	181.679	1.647	.154 ^b
	Residual	11469.023	104	110.279		
	Total	12377.418	109			
2	Regression	1325.272	6	220.879	2.058	.065 ^c
	Residual	11052.146	103	107.302		
	Total	12377.418	109			

a. Dependent Variable: Trust
b. Predictors: (Constant), Religion, Educational Level, Income, age, gender
c. Predictors: (Constant), Religion, Educational Level, Income, age, gender, Post Conventional (P score)

Summary

In Chapter 4 the results of the data analysis were reported. The chapter contained frequency distributions and descriptive statistics of the participants in the study. Tables and Figures from SPSS version 25 provided statistical outputs and visual displays of the analyzed data.

The chapter revealed that there was no statistically significant impact on trust by moral development. The ANOVA output showed that the overall model failed to reject the null hypothesis. Voters' age, gender, education, income, and religion also did not have any impact on their trust that was statistically significant.

In chapter five the findings of the results were presented. The data was interpreted and discussed. The limitations of the findings were reported, and the conclusion was made about the study. The impact of the findings on generalization, public policy, and education was also revealed. Finally, the implications of the findings of the research were stated.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The hierarchical multiple regression was conducted in this study to examine whether voters' moral development impacted trust while using age, gender, education, income, and religion as controlling variables. The goal of the research was to use the findings to make inferences about the association between voters' moral development and their trust in politicians. The study was conducted because the impact of voters' moral development on their trust in politicians is a rarely explored phenomenon. Studies on trust in politicians were mostly centered around the moral development of the politician, not the voters (see Atkin, 2003; Erickson, 2006; Feldheim & Wang, 2003; Hunsaker, 2009; Mitchell, 1999).

In this chapter, the findings of the data analysis were interpreted. The conclusions drawn from the research questions, hypothesis, and the results were presented. Limitations to generalizations were revealed along with implications and recommendations for future studies.

Interpretation of the Findings

Two models were used in the study to examine the relationship between trust and moral development while controlling for age, gender, education, income, and religion. Model 1 focused on the impact on trust by the controlling variables. Model 2 focused on the impact on trust by the addition of moral development to the controlling variables in Model 1.

The overall findings of the study indicated that voters' moral development had no statistically significant impact on trust. In the model summary, although the controlling variables (Model 1) explained 7.3% of the variance in trust, the p -value, greater than .05, indicated that this variance was not significant. Likewise, Model 2 showed that the addition of moral development did not change the result. There was no statistical significance to the model even though the addition of moral development to the controlling variables increased in variance in trust by 3.4%.

The hypothesis test in the ANOVA results failed to reject the null because the significance values for both models were greater than the alpha, $p > .05$. This meant the null hypothesis for the first question, how much impact on trust can be attributed to moral development, was accepted. It also meant the null hypothesis of the second question, how much impact on trust can be attributed to age, gender, education, income, and religion, was accepted. Therefore, neither the controlling variables nor moral development had any statistically significant impact on trust.

The Pearson's correlation of the variables showed that some of the predictor variables were correlated to voters' trust. Education, income, and moral development had a weak, negative correlation with trust that were significant, $p < .05$. Age, gender, and religion had weak, positive correlation with trust that was not statistically significant, $p > .05$. However, correlation does not mean causation (see Correlation vs Causation, 2021). The presence of correlation showed a pattern between the variables, not necessarily one variable being caused by the other.

The findings of the research showed that voters' trust in politicians was not dependent upon their moral development. This meant moral development was not an exclusive factor to voters' trust in politicians. Their determination to trust politicians and the evaluation process they employ involved other factors than their moral values.

The findings did not support the argument of Kohlberg (2008). Kohlberg's (2008) theory of cognitive moral development had reported that moral development, cognitive development, and age are causally related. He stated that as people age, their moral development grows and influences their cognitive abilities which impacts their trust in others. However, according to the findings of this study, all the predictor variables (age, gender, education, income, religion, and moral development) showed a p -value that was not statistically significant to impact trust, $p > .05$. Therefore, Kohlberg's theory of causation was not accepted. According to the results of my study, trust in relationships is not caused by personal ethics.

The findings of the research also contradicted the arguments of various authors in the literature review that claimed the existence of a relationship between moral development and trust. For example, the findings did not support the argument presented by Uslaner (2002) that moral development impacted trust in the trustor in interpersonal relationships. According to Uslaner (2002), the trustor's trust in interpersonal relationship is initiated by his or her moral foundation. He argued that personal norms on ethics and morality play an influential role in driving decisions to trust others. By stating that the moral development of the trustor initiates trust in relationship, Uslaner's (2002) argument

was also one of causation. He suggested that trust in relationship was caused by the moral development of the trustor. This, however, was not reflected in the results of the study.

The study also contrasted the argument of Haidt (2012) that moral psychology in people was responsible of their political preferences. Haidt's (2012) argument suggested that voters' moral development influenced their political decisions. The study suggested the opposite. It suggested that there were other contributing factors to voters' political preference than their moral psychology.

Limitations of the Study

The finding of the study that voters' moral development had no statistically significant impact on trust made generalization to the larger population of voters difficult to do. Also, there were threats to the validity of the findings of the study that impacted the reliability of the study. According to the results, threats to the validity and reliability of the findings of the study were observed in critical areas of the research. These were sample size, sampling distribution, standard deviation, and variance.

Sample Size

The sample size of 110 participants for the study was below the recommended sample size of 165 that was generated by the sample calculator. This number represented about 66.67% of the recommended sample. Out of the total of 120 participants who completed the surveys from an overall poll of 200 recruits, 10 surveys were subsequently rejected by the Center for the Study of Ethical Development because of irregularities in their responses. The remaining 110 surveys were deemed valid for this study. The reduction in sample size puts limitation on generalization by presenting a less than

accurate representation of the overall sample. The uncertainty of a true representation of the sample in this study made it difficult to make inference to the larger voting population.

Sampling Distribution

According to Field (2009), a normal distribution indicates that the data in a study are distributed symmetrically around the center of all scores. The lack of normal distribution, skewness, among participants indicates a deviation from normality. The skewness impacts the overall shape of the distribution curve.

In the study, the test of normality for gender showed a discrepancy in normal distribution in the sample. Gender was not normally distributed. It reported a p -value that was less than the alpha, $p < .05$. This means that the reported data for gender was statistically different from normal distribution. One likely reason could be the presence of outliers that needed to be removed. Field (2009) stated that an outlier is a score that is far away from the rest of the data which can cause problems in the analysis by skewing the distribution. Outliers, if not removed, can increase the overall dispersion of scores in a data.

The absence of a normal distribution for gender in the sample may explain why generalization to the overall population of voters was difficult to do. Using a data that was not normality distributed can be misleading because the data points in the distribution may not be near the mean. Therefore, the conclusion drawn from the results of a study with a distribution that was not normal would be unreliable.

Standard Deviations

Standard deviation measures the dispersion of the data away from the mean (Field, 2009). It provides strong evidence that makes generalization to the larger population of a research credible. A small standard deviation indicates that the scores are close to the mean while a high standard deviation indicates the scores are away from the mean.

In this study, the descriptive statistics of the sample showed the presence of a large standard deviation in the data. This suggests the data was dispersed away from the mean. It also means that the data was less reliable for this study since it was difficult to know how close the data points were to one another and to the mean. Therefore, the large standard deviation placed a limitation on generalization in this study because the sample mean in this study did not accurately represent the population average.

Variance

The descriptive frequency of the sample also showed a variance value of 301.81. This large variance indicated the existence of a problem. According to Field (2009), variance measures how well the model fits the actual data. It is “the average error between the mean and the observations made” (Field, 2009, p. 37). A small variance indicates the data are close to the mean while a large variance means the data are spread away from the mean.

The variance of 301.81 in this study indicated an extremely high spread of the data from the mean and from one another. This meant the model did not fit well with the

actual data. It also meant making statistical inference to the larger population of voters cannot be a reliable inference.

Recommendations

Future studies on the impact of voters' moral development on trust was recommended from this study because of the identified limitations observed in the findings. Consideration in future studies should be given to different sets of variables that impacts moral development and trust in politicians. Because limited studies on this phenomenon existed, other research approaches such as qualitative design is recommended to understand the research problem in hope to develop ideas for future quantitative research.

Another reason for the need for future study was because the predictor variable, gender, was not normally distributed in this study. This indicated the distribution of the data was skewed to one side. Therefore, a repeat of the study with data that are normally distributed is necessary to arrive at a result that is reliable and valid.

Implications

The findings of the study that voters' moral development had no statistical significance on trust impacted implications for social change. It suggested that voters' trust in politicians is influenced by other factors beyond the predictor variables in this study. Therefore, other internal and external factors that are potential contributors to voters' moral development and trust in politicians need to be considered in future studies. Researchers must also be challenged, from this study, to explore the impact of other psychological and neurological interventions to voters' trust in politicians.

Politicians and Policymakers should use the study as a reminder that the result should not be perceived that voters are not concerned with ethics in public service and public policy. While voters' personal ethics may not influence who they trust politically to fill public office, it may, however, impact how they evaluate politicians' attitudes and public policy towards the environment and other social issues affecting their livelihood, safety, and future.

The study's influence on positive social change is to foster a political climate where public servants are judged, not by the moral standards of voters, but by their character, experience, and fitness to serve. Another positive social change implication is to steer society towards becoming a place governed by shared, universal norms rather than the subjective moral values of voters. Still another positive social change implication from the study is to motivate politicians to focus on personal development and a strong work ethic that will be rewarded with public trust.

The study also influenced positive social change among voters by helping them to focus on holding politicians accountable to more substantive and concrete goals rather than to moral expectations that are subjective. Finally, voters was challenged to look at the actions of politicians to determine their trustworthiness rather than looking in themselves to determine whether politicians are worthy of trust.

Conclusion

Voters' decisions during elections have led to questions about the impact of their moral development on their trust in politicians. This has brought about scrutiny of their personal ethics on their decision to trust politicians for public service. This phenomenon

was examined in the current study using five controlling variables. The purpose was to determine whether voters' moral development impacted trust regardless of age, gender, education, income, and religion.

The results of the study indicated that voters' moral development had no statistically significant impact on their trust in politicians. The p-values of all predictor variables were greater than the alpha, $p > .05$. The ANOVA test of significance indicated that no statistically significant impact existed among the predictor variables on trust. Therefore, the null hypotheses were accepted that there was no statistically significant impact on trust that could be attributed to voters' moral development.

Because the result showed no statistical significance between voters' moral development and trust, the study must be embraced with much caution. The result suggested that other internal or external factors are likely contributors to voters' trust in politicians. Further research was recommended to examine the relationship between voters' moral development and their trust in politicians. The use of other predictor variables to study this phenomenon was also recommended. The qualitative design was also recommended for future studies to better understand the research problem and present ideas that can be used in quantitative studies on the subject.

The need for future studies was due to the presence of high standard deviation, high variance, and a skewed distribution of gender in the research. These threats to validity made generalization of the findings of the research difficult to do because they affected the reliability and validity of the findings. They may be the likely reasons behind

the large dispersion of the data away from the mean. This dispersion indicated that the sample mean did not accurately reflect the mean of the larger population of voters.

Finally, the implication of the findings of the study on positive social change is that, by removing voters' subjective view on morality as an influential factor to trust in politicians, voters can focus on other attributes and traits that are more realistic and relevant to trust. This include carefully evaluating each candidate based on their performance and respect for acceptable social norms and universal values that are consistent for those seeking public office.

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Appendix A: DIT-2

Defining Issues Test
Version 3.0

University of Minnesota

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Center for the Study of Ethical Development

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INSTRUCTIONS

This questionnaire is concerned with how you define the issues in a social problem. Several stories about social problems will be described. After each story, there will be a list of questions. The questions that follow each story represent different issues that might be raised by the problem. In other words, the questionnaire/issues raise different ways of judging what is important in making a decision about the social problem. You will be asked to rate and rank the questions in terms of how important each one seems to you.

This questionnaire is in two parts; one part contains the **INSTRUCTIONS** (this part) and the stories presenting the social problems; the other part contains the questions (issues) and the **ANSWER SHEET** on which to write your responses.

Here is an example of the task:

Presidential Election

Imagine that you are about to vote for a candidate for the Presidency of the United States. Imagine that before you vote, you are given several questions, and asked which issue is the most important to you in making up your mind about which candidate to vote for. In this example, 5 items are given. On a rating scale of 1 to 5 (1=Great, 2=Much, 3=Some, 4=Little, 5=No) please rate the importance of the item (issue) by filling in with a pencil one of the bubbles on the answer sheet by each item.

Assume that you thought that item #1 (below) was of great importance, item #2 had some importance, item #3 had no importance, item #4 had much importance, and item #5 had much importance. Then you would fill in the bubbles on the answer sheet as shown below.

GREAT	MUCH	SOME	LITTLE	NO	
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	1. Financially are you personally better off now than you were four years ago?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2. Does one candidate have a superior personal moral character?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	3. Which candidate stands the tallest?
<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	4. Which candidate would make the best world leader?
<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	5. Which candidate has the best ideas for our country's internal problems, like crime and health care?

Further, the questionnaire will ask you to rank the question in terms of importance. In the space below, the numbers at the top, 1 through 12, represent the item number. From top to bottom, you are asked to fill in the bubble that represents the item in first importance (of those given to you to choose from), then second most important, third most important, and fourth most important. Please indicate your top four choices. You might fill out this part, as follows:

Rank which issue is the most important (item number).

Most important item	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> 7 <input type="radio"/> 8 <input type="radio"/> 8 <input type="radio"/> 9 <input type="radio"/> 10 <input type="radio"/> 11 <input type="radio"/> 12	Third most important
Second most important	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> 7 <input type="radio"/> 8 <input type="radio"/> 8 <input type="radio"/> 9 <input type="radio"/> 10 <input type="radio"/> 11 <input type="radio"/> 12	Fourth most important

Note that some of the items may seem irrelevant to you (as in item #3) or not make sense to you—in that case, **rate** the item as “No” importance and do not **rank** the item. Note that in the stories that follow, there will be 12 items for each story, not five. Please make sure to consider all 12 items (questions) that are printed after each story.

In addition you will be asked to state your preference for what action to take in the story. After the story, you will be asked to indicate the action you favor on a three-point scale (1 = strongly favor some action, 2 = can't decide, 3 = strongly oppose that action).

In short, read the story from this booklet, then fill out your answers on the answer sheet. Please use a #2 pencil. If you change your mind about a response, erase the pencil mark cleanly and enter your new response.

[Notice the second part of this questionnaire, the Answer Sheet. The Identification Number at the top of the answer sheet may already be filled in when you receive your materials. If not, you will receive instructions about how to fill in the number. If you have questions about the procedure, please ask now. Please turn now to the Answer Sheet]

Famine—(Story #1)

The small village in northern India has experienced shortages of food before, but this year's famine is worse than ever. Some families are even trying to feed themselves by making soup from tree bark. Mustaq Singh's family is near starvation. He has heard that a rich man in his village has supplies of food stored away and is hoarding food while its price goes higher so that he can sell the food later at a huge profit. Mustaq is desperate and thinks about stealing some food from the rich man's warehouse. The small amount of food that he needs for his family probably wouldn't even be missed.

[If at any time you would like to reread the story or the instructions, feel free to do so. Now turn to the Answer Sheet, go to the 12 issues and rate and rank them in terms of how important each issue seems to you.]

Reporter—(Story #2)

Molly Dayton has been a news reporter for the Gazette newspaper for over a decade. Almost by accident, she learned that one of the candidates for Lieutenant Governor for her state, Grover Thompson, had been arrested for shop-lifting 20 years earlier. Reporter Dayton found out that early in his life, Candidate Thompson had undergone a confused period and done things he later regretted, actions which would be very out-of-character now. His shop-lifting had been a minor offense and charges had been dropped by the department store. Thompson has not only straightened himself out since then, but built a distinguished record in helping many people and in leading constructive community projects. Now, Reporter Dayton regards Thompson as the best candidate in the field and likely to go on to important leadership positions in the state. Reporter Dayton wonders whether or not she should write the story about Thompson's earlier troubles because in the upcoming close and heated election, she fears that such a news story could wreck Thompson's chance to win.

[Now turn to the Answer Sheet, go to the 12 issues and rate and rank them in terms of how important each issue seems to you.]

School Board—(Story #3)

Mr. Grant has been elected to School Board District 190 and was chosen to be Chairman. The district is bitterly divided over the closing of one of the high schools. One of the high schools has to be closed for financial reasons, but there is no agreement over which school to close. During his election to the School Board, Mr. Grant had proposed a series of “Open Meetings” in which members of the community could voice their opinions. He hoped that the dialogue would make the community realize the necessity of closing one high school. Also he hoped that through open discussions, the difficulty of the decision would be appreciated, and that the community would ultimately support the school board decision. The first Open Meeting was a disaster. Passionate speeches dominated the microphones and threatened violence. The meeting barely closed without fist-fights. Later in the week, school board members received threatening phone calls. Mr. Grant wonders if he ought to call off the next Open Meeting.

[Now turn to the Answer Sheet, go to the 12 issues and rate and rank them in terms of how important each issue seems to you.]

Cancer—(Story #4)

Mrs. Bennett is 62 years old, and in the last phases of colon cancer. She is in terrible pain and asks the doctor to give her more pain -killer medicine. The doctor has given her the maximum safe dose already and is reluctant to increase the dosage because it would probably hasten her death. In a clear and rational mental state, Mrs. Bennett says that she realizes this, but wants to end her suffering even if it means ending her life. Should the doctor give her an increased dosage?

[Now turn to the Answer Sheet, go to the 12 issues and rate and rank them in terms of how important each issue seems to you.]

Demonstration—(Story #5)

Political and economic instability in a South America country prompted the President of the United States to send troops to “police” the area. Students at many campuses in the U.S.A. have protested that the United States is using its military might for economic advantage. There is widespread suspicion that big oil multinational companies are pressuring the President to safeguard a cheap oil supply even if it means loss of life. Students at one campus took to the streets in demonstration, tying up traffic and stopping regular business in the town. The president of the university demanded that the students stop their illegal demonstrations. Students then took over the college’s administration building, completely paralyzing the college. Are the students right to demonstrate in these ways?

[Now turn to the Answer Sheet, go to the 12 issues and rate and rank them in terms of how important each issue seems to you.]

Appendix B: Demographic Information

Please provide these additional demographic information of yourself. Circle one.

1. Income level

- a. Less than \$30K
- b. \$30k to < \$50K
- c. \$50K to < \$100K
- d. \$100K to < \$200K
- e. > \$200K

2. Race

- a. White
- b. Black / African American
- c. Hispanic
- d. Asian /Pacific Islander
- e. Other

3. Religious Beliefs

- a. Christian
- b. Muslim
- c. Atheist
- d. Other

Appendix C: Interpersonal Trust Scale

(paper version)

Instructions

Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement by the following scale. Fill in only one circle for each statement.

1 = strongly agree

2 = mildly agree

3 = agree and disagree equally

4 = mildly disagree

5 = strongly disagree

- | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Hypocrisy is on the increase in our society. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. One is better off being cautious when dealing with strangers until they have provided evidence that they are trustworthy. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. This country has a dark future unless we can attract better people into politics. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Fear and social disgrace or punishment rather than conscience prevents most people from breaking the law. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. An honor system in which teachers would not be present during exams would probably result in increased cheating. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Parents usually can be relied on to keep their promises. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. The United Nations will never be an effective force in keeping world peace. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. The judiciary is a place where we can all get unbiased treatment. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9. Most people would be horrified if they knew how much of the news that the public hears and sees is distorted. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10. It is safe to believe that in spite of what | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

people say most people are primarily interested in their own welfare.

11. Even though we have reports in newspapers, radio, TV, and the Internet, it is hard to get objective accounts of public events.

12. The future seems very promising.

13. If we really knew what was going on in international politics, the public would have reason to be more frightened than they now seem to be.

14. Most elected officials are really sincere in their campaign promises.

15. Many major national sports contests are fixed in one way or another.

16. Most experts can be relied upon to tell the truth about the limits of their knowledge.

17. Most parents can be relied upon to carry out their threats of punishments.

18. Most people can be counted on to do what they say they will do.

19. In these competitive times one has to be alert or someone is likely to take advantage of you.

20. Most idealists are sincere and usually practice what they preach.

21. Most salesmen are honest in describing their products.

22. Most students in school would not cheat even if they were sure they could get away with it.

23. Most repairmen will not overcharge, even if they think you are ignorant of their specialty.

24. A large share of accident claims filed against insurance companies are phony.

25. Most people answer public opinion polls honestly. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

* This scale was published in: Robinson, J. P., Shaver, P. R., & Wrightsman, L. S. (1991). *Measures of personality and social psychological attitudes*. San Diego: Academic Press.

Appendix D: Approval to Use Rotter's Interpersonal Trust Scale

Dear Aquilus:

I understand you are seeking permission to use Jules Rotter's Interpersonal Trust Scale. In your link to the scale, there is a 1991 reference to it, plus the items. Unfortunately, Jules died a few years ago, but you are welcome to use the scale. Just cite the reference at the bottom of the scale as its source. In the unlikely event that an editor asks if you had permission to use it, just tell them you got permission from Jules' department. Best of success in your research.

DF

Deborah Fein, Ph.D.
University of Connecticut

Appendix E: Permission to Order DIT-2 Surveys

Mr. Ricks,

As per our conversation I've included the links to the pages on our website below that provide information about ordering procedure and pricing for the paper and online versions of the DIT.

Paper test administration: <https://ethicaldevelopment.ua.edu/paper--pencil-ordering--administration.html>

Online administration: <https://ethicaldevelopment.ua.edu/online-ordering--administration.html>

I've also attached the sample DIT2 survey.

Let me know if you have any other questions.

Thanks again,
Erin
Center for the Study of Ethical Development