2020

The Impact of Perceived Stress, Happiness, and Religiosity on Political Orientation

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

The Impact of Perceived Stress, Happiness, and Religiosity on Political Orientation

by

Bryant Owens Daniels

MS, Walden University, 2012

BA, American Military University, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Social Psychology

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Abstract

Increasing stress levels over the past 30 years have reached an all-time high, which has also correlated with an increase in medical insurance costs due to the adverse effects on life expectancy, obesity rates, and non-communicable disease deaths. An additional social problem affecting the U.S. is a 20-year increase in political dichotomy. Research has shown a distinction between liberals and conservatives on a variety of characteristics ranging from sleep patterns, disgust, personality, and even cleanliness. This current study used two other characteristics that correlate with both stress and political orientation, and they are happiness and religiosity. The purpose of this study was to analyze the relationship between perceived stress, happiness, religiosity, and political orientation. Two theories chosen for this study included System Justification Theory (SJT) and Moral Foundations Theory (MFT). Both theories relate to the differences between liberals and conservatives on happiness, religion, and morality. This study had 201 participants recruited via Amazon's MTurk and used a hierarchical multiple regression model, which includes the following psychometric instruments: Perceived Stress Scale-10, Subjective Happiness Scale, Satisfaction With Life Scale, Religious Orientation Scale (Intrinsic and Extrinsic), and the Modified Wilson-Patterson Inventory. There was a significant effect found between intrinsic religiosity and conservative political orientation. In assisting social and behavioral scientists at better understanding stress differences and how humans cope in unique ways, positive social change is made possible by mitigating stress levels and therefore decreasing healthcare costs.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the three ladies in my life: my late mother, Kate, my wife, Pati, and my daughter, Sofia. Firstly, without the decades of my mother's constant assertiveness, my enduring physical and mental resilience would not have been possible. She is the reason for my success with the dissertation research process, as well as my entire academic career.

Lastly, over the past 15 years as I've traveled the globe working halfway around the world away from my family, my mother was always there to help love and protect my wife and daughter. The same holds true in that my wife and daughter cared for and loved my mother until the very last moments of her life on Earth. My mother, wife, and daughter were a magnificent team in that they worked together and sacrificed everything to ensure both my professional and academic success, and for that I will be forever grateful.

Acknowledgments

A special thanks goes to my chairperson, Dr. Carolyn G. King, for firstly taking on my unique research idea, and ultimately for seeing it through to the very end. Her enormous dedication and patience with this process, to include all the ups and downs between my personal and professional life, as well as my academic career, are characteristics that every academic should possess.

Another special thanks goes to my committee member, Dr. Brandon J. Cosley, for his methodological and statistical expertise with this complex research project. Without his patience and motivation regarding all the moving pieces that I included in this research, the final methodological product would not have been possible. With that, I believe only a few academics would have endured this to the end, which I am grateful for Dr. Cosley's resilience.

Additional acknowledgments go to – but are not limited to – those academics and scholars whose previous research helped instill in me the idea for my unique research project in combining both stress and politics together in the same study: the late Dr. John T. Cacioppo (Social Neuroscience), Dr. Robert Sapolsky (baboons, stress, and social hierarchy), Dr. Jonathan Haidt (Moral Foundations Theory), Dr. Avi Tuschman ("Our Political Nature"), Dr. David Buss (Evolutionary Psychology), Dr. John T. Jost (political orientation, happiness, and System Justification Theory), Dr. Barry R. Schlenker (political orientation, happiness, and religiosity), as well as Chris Mooney with his inspiring book, The Republican Brain.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

As the population of the United States has doubled since the 1950s (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015), living in a country occupied by approximately 320 million humans is no easy task. The U.S. has become one of the most developed countries in the world over the past century, but there is no doubt that America can still succumb to political dichotomy and increased stress levels. Considering the adverse effects of global warming and climate change on ecosystems and environmental resources (Hughes et al., 2003; McMichael, Woodruff, & Hales, 2006; Vörösmarty, Green, Salisbury, & Lammers, 2000), one can then fathom how societies become stressed and political dichotomy ensues. For example, the U.S. has currently experienced a 20-year high in political dichotomy for the first time since 1994 (PEW Research Center, 2014), while also succumbing to a 30% increase in stress levels over a 30-year period (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012). These two social problems in the U.S. are complex issues that should raise questions concerning the quality of health and wellbeing of American citizens. Although scientists have researched politics and stress extensively for decades, the two issues have yet to be studied together. Addressing this gap in the literature on political orientation and stress is important because of the impact that stress induces on public health.

In helping to understand the literary gap in political orientation and stress better, this study includes two additional variables known as happiness and religiosity. The reason for using happiness and religiosity is that both have been researched extensively with political orientation and perceived stress. For example, previous studies have found

an inverse correlation between increased happiness (Schiffrin & Nelson, 2010) and religiosity (Clements & Ermakova, 2012; Reutter & Bigatti, 2014) with decreased levels of perceived stress. After researching happiness and religiosity with political orientation, the results revealed a correlation with increased happiness and religiosity with conservative political orientation (Bixter, 2015; Napier & Jost, 2008; Schlenker et al.). Therefore, this current study explores the relationship between perceived stress, happiness, religiosity, and liberal and conservative orientations. If this quantitative study reveals that a particular measurement of political orientation correlates to either low or high levels of stress in daily life, then some demographics of political orientation could be more at risk for health issues from increased stress levels. Furthermore, although correlative effects between perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity may be present, could there be another underlying precursor with political orientation that science has yet to explore in the context of stress differences?

This study focuses on the System Justification Theory (SJT) and Moral Foundations Theory (MFT). As previous studies on SJT have shown, conservatives are happier than liberals, which could suggest contentment with their sociopolitical perspectives of social and economic inequality (Bixter, 2015; Napier & Jost, 2008; Schlenker et al., 2012). While the moral values of liberals and conservatives are also different according to MFT (Graham & Haidt, 2010; Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; Graham et al., 2011), other research has shown that conservatives are happier than liberals because they follow more traditional values that include intrinsic religiosity than liberals do (Schlenker et al., 2012). The overall intent of this unique study is to analyze

whether liberals and conservatives experience perceived stress differently and if the additional factors correlate with happiness and religiosity of this phenomenon.

The following Chapter-1 information provides readers with the necessary language and knowledge of political orientation and perceived stress. The sections included will be scholarly literature on the variables of happiness and religiosity, and how they will play elemental parts of constructing the theoretical foundation between political orientation and perceived stress. Firstly, the Background of the study consists of seminal work on the significant topics, which are political orientation, stress and perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity. The Problem Statement provides a reiteration of the social problems on political orientation and stress, the relationship between these two variables using happiness and religiosity, and highlighting the gap in the literature. The Purpose of the Study describes why this topic is important enough to research, and the potential that the results could have in providing a positive social change in the long-term.

In the sections on Research Questions and Hypotheses, this information highlights the overall relationship between the dependent variable of political orientation and the independent variables of perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity. The Theoretical Foundation provides a more in-depth comprehension of political orientation regarding culture, genetics, sociopolitical ideology, as well as morality. This approach builds on the overall concept by also using happiness and religiosity as that of previous studies for correlating political orientation and perceived stress. The Nature of the Study explains the type of research design, the elemental parts of the design, and why this is the preferred method and approach. The Definitions includes a list of terminology to assist the reader

with unfamiliar language throughout the context of the paper. Lastly, there are the concluding sections on the Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations, as well as the Significance that this unique study has to offer for ameliorating the quality of health and wellbeing of American citizens in a time of increased political divide and high-stress levels.

Background

Several scholarly articles form the basis of this study on political orientation, perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity. To begin, political orientation (Smith et al., 2011) derived from what is known as the Modified Wilson-Patterson Inventory scale – a contemporary version of Wilson and Patterson's (1968) original Conservatism Scale – and measures the degree a person is liberal or conservative on sociopolitical issues. Second, as Napier and Jost (2008) observed political ideology as the primary factor for liberal and conservative happiness, Bixter (2015) focused on religiosity as the factor for happiness, while Schlenker et al. (2012) combined political ideology and religiosity as determining factors. Third, Cohen and Janicki-Deverts (2012) explored some seminal research on perceived stress in the U.S., which revealed the general demographics of sex, education level, and socioeconomic status (SES) as the influential factors for perceived stress. Fourth, Rentfrow et al. (2013) analyzed U.S. geographic regions to determine personality characteristics for health outcomes of political orientation, while Herian, Tay, Hamm, and Diener (2014) focused more on government programs as the influencing factor. Finally, Schiffrin and Nelson (2010) researched both perceived stress and

happiness together in the same study and revealed an inverse relationship between happiness and perceived stress.

Several gaps exist in the current literature with political orientation, perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity. Firstly, some of the most current literature has revealed that while the U.S. is at a 30-year high with increased stress levels (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012), there is also a 20-year high with political divide (PEW Research, 2014). However, a significant gap with these findings is that there is no research on whether there is any correlation between these two issues over the 20 and 30-year time period. Although there is much research on both political orientation and perceived stress, these two variables have yet to be analyzed together within the same study. The first gap this study will address is the relationship between perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity on liberal and conservative political orientation.

Other gaps entail a lack of evidence as to whether conservatives are happier than liberals due to sociopolitical perspectives on social inequality, differences in moral values, or whether religiosity plays a key factor (Bixter, 2015). Another meaningful gap includes a lack of validity in measuring political orientation in that some studies have used self-placement scales (Choma et al., 2009) rather than measuring for attitudes on sociopolitical issues as that of the MWPI - has been in use for approximately 50 years (Smith et al., 2011; Wilson & Patterson, 1968). This current study will address all of these gaps as to whether conservatives are happier than liberals, more religious than liberals, and whether increased measures of happiness and religiosity correlate with

decreased measures of perceived stress. Ultimately, this strategy will help analyze to what extent perceived stress correlates with political orientation.

Thus far, no scholarly literature exists on political orientation and perceived stress together in the same study. Although previous studies have shown that not only do daily events such as finances, relationships, and workplace conflict affect peoples' ability to cope with stress, approximately 44% of people experienced stress just by listening to information on politics alone (NPR, 2014). These findings are a clear indicator of the extent to which one's political orientation can induce additional levels of stress. Therefore, it is imperative to study this topic for the fact the U.S. is not only at a 30-year high with stress (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012), but the political dichotomy is at a 20-year high since 1994 (PEW Research Center, 2014). Since the first gap under analysis shows that no literature exists on political orientation and perceived stress together in the same study, it is essential to explore these two variables to reveal whether there is a relationship. Finally, if there is a correlation between political orientation and perceived stress, it is then possible in the long-term that clinical and health psychologists can develop coping strategies to help mitigate stress levels, while also increasing the quality of health and wellbeing of the American people.

Problem Statement

Politics and stress are two complex social issues that have been observed extensively for decades, but they have yet to be researched together within the same study. A recent survey conducted by the PEW Research Center (2014) revealed that Americans are more politically dichotomized today since 1994. From the approximately

10,000 American citizens have participated in the survey on political orientation, the number of those who are consistently liberal and conservative has doubled from 10% to 21% over the past 20 years (PEW Research Center, 2014). These data include at least 92% of Republicans maintaining a partisan position to the right of the median, while approximately 94% of Democrats are consistent to the left (PEW Research Center, 2014). Furthermore, there is another disconcerting dichotomy of political orientation in the form of health disparities, which different studies have found that although liberals are generally healthier, conservatives are as healthy as liberals when social capital is available (Herian et al., 2014; Rentfrow et al., 2013).

Health disparities in the U.S. are an ongoing concern, and since the 2007-2008 economic recession, stress has contributed to much of the psychological and behavioral disorders in American society (Catalano et al., 2011). Although the U.S. has one of the highest per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ratings in the world (Social Progress Imperative, 2014), it also spends twice as much on healthcare than any other developed country (Davis, Stremikis, Squires, & Schoen, 2014). The U.S. spends approximately $8,505.00 per capita, which is twice as much as the United Kingdom at $3,405.00; but, the U.S. also ranks last on healthcare quality compared to other countries with similar GDP ratings, to include the UK's top ranking on healthcare quality (Davis et al., 2014). More concerning is the fact that the U.S. ranks 70th out of 132 countries on health and wellbeing that includes life expectancy, obesity rates, and non-communicable disease deaths (Social Progress Imperative, 2014), which all are issues directly related to stress

(Boonstra & Fox, 2013; Gouin et al., 2012; Sapolsky, 1988; Sapolsky, 2005; Selye, 1955; Selye, 1973; Stress, n.d.).

Not surprising, stress has increased in the U.S. by 30% over the past 30 years, which has affected mostly women, the unemployed, and young adults (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012). As a variety of studies on stress indicate, many variables can negatively affect the quality of health and wellbeing. Variables range from the death of a loved one, family issues, personal relationships, health, disease, finances, and the workplace environment (NPR, 2014). In the workplace alone, stress has cost the healthcare system approximately $190 billion a year – equating to 8% of national spending on healthcare (Goh, Pfeffer, & Zenios, 2015). Additional stress issues have amounted to approximately 120,000 deaths a year, to include 49,000 deaths for those lacking healthcare, 34,000 deaths from unemployment, and at least 30,000 from the amount of workload (Goh et al., 2015). Another study has revealed that between 2007 and 2012, 80% of Americans felt that their stress had increased, to include at least 20% of Americans have experienced extreme bouts of stress (American Psychological Association, 2012). Disconcertingly over those five years, at least 60% of Americans attempted to decrease their levels of stress, but with little or no success (APA, 2012).

While people strive to develop their strategies for coping with stress, social scientists measure a person's level of perceived or psychological stress to analyze stress levels and coping abilities from daily life experiences (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012). Researched with other variables such as happiness and religiosity, studies on stress assist scientists in understanding an individual's level of stress and coping ability. For example,

previous studies have found an inverse correlation between increased happiness (Schiffrin & Nelson, 2010) and religiosity (Clements & Ermakova, 2012; Reutter & Bigatti, 2014) with decreased levels of perceived stress. Also researched with political orientation is happiness and religiosity, and results have revealed a correlation with increased happiness and religiosity with conservative political orientation (Bixter, 2015; Napier & Jost, 2008; Schlenker et al., 2012).

As some of these studies have shown, the U.S. is not only plagued by a sharp increase in political-partisan dichotomy (PEW Research Center, 2014), but stress has also reached an all-time high (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012). There is a consensus in the scientific community on the increase of both politics and stress in the U.S. (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012; PEW Research Center, 2014), as well as evidence that at least 44% of people experience stress by just the thought of politics (NPR, 2014), these two social problems have yet to be researched together in the same study. Exploring political orientation and perceived stress for the first time will provide new data to the limited body of knowledge. Therefore, the results of this unique study could provide clinical and health psychologists with new information to assist in devising strategies on mitigating stress levels while increasing the quality of health and wellbeing for American citizens.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between perceived stress, happiness, religiosity, and political orientation in the U.S. Using a quantitative design, this methodological strategy uses political orientation as the dependent variable while using perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity as the independent variables. The intent

of using political orientation as the dependent variable is to determine what degree a person's level of liberalism or conservatism correlates with a particular effective outcome of perceived stress. Because many categories on political partisanship exist, which can vary widely on the left-right continuum, this study measures political orientation via a continuous variable rather than a categorical approach. In addition to the independent variables of happiness and religiosity, this study also includes some covariates such as the demographics of sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination. This strategy of controlling for demographic variables can help mitigate unsuspected effects in the form of extraneous or confounding variables.

Furthermore, this unique research study intends to provide transparency on whether other demographics in society – such as political orientation – are uniquely affected by stress. In the case of this study, the results could assist clinical and health psychologists to develop unique coping strategies for people who are different by nature, which can also correlate in the form of political orientation. With that, the long-term goal is to mitigate levels of stress to provide a positive social change in the form of increased health and wellbeing.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following research questions and hypotheses have been designed to analyze the extent perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity correlate with political orientation:

*RQ*1: Is Perceived Stress a predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination?

H_o1: Perceived Stress is not a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination?

H_a1: Perceived Stress is a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination.

*RQ*2: Is Subjective Happiness a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination?

H_o2: Subjective Happiness is not a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination.

H_a2: Subjective Happiness is a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination.

*RQ*3: Is Satisfaction With Life a predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination?

H_o3: Satisfaction With Life is not a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination.

H_a3: Satisfaction With Life is a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination.

*RQ*4: Is Religiosity a predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination?

H_o4: Religiosity is not a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination.

H_a4: Religiosity is a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation derives from the System Justification Theory (SJT) and the Moral Foundations Theory (MFT), which provide information on political orientation and its relationship with happiness and religiosity. Furthermore, another concept of the theoretical foundation includes the relationship between happiness, religiosity, and perceived stress; therefore, presenting the general outlook on the potential impact that perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity have on political orientation.

Beginning with SJT, this theory entails the process in which conservatives are happier than liberals (Bixter, 2015; Kay & Jost, 2003; Moghaddam, 2008; Napier & Jost, 2008; Schlenker et al., 2012; Snoep, 2008; Swinyard, Kau, & Phua, 2001). The basis of this concept is due in part on how conservatives justify social and economic inequality to maintain a moral and political status quo (Bixter, 2015; Napier & Jost, 2008; Schlenker et al., 2012).

The premise of MFT is the idea in which liberals and conservatives are characterized as having unique moral values (Graham & Haidt, 2010; Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011). These values are distinguishing characteristics that represent varietal perspectives of life in general, in which religiosity is relative to this issue (Graham & Haidt, 2010; Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011). This concept serves to build on the transparency of perceived stress and its relationship to happiness and religiosity (Clements & Ermakova, 2012; Moghaddam, 2008; Reutter & Bigatti, 2014; Snoep, 2008; Swinyard, Kau, & Phua, 2001). Technically, political orientation and perceived stress have yet to be researched together within the same study. Therefore, the theoretical foundation will assist in organizing the correlative factors between happiness, religiosity, and perceived stress, and their relationship on political orientation. Combining the two theories of SJT and MFT helps build on the overall concept of whether there is an association between perceived stress and liberal and conservative orientation, as well as to observe any correlating factors on happiness and religiosity.

Nature of the Study

This research study is of quantitative design using a survey methodology, in which the survey is accessible via a PsychData online services account. Participants were recruited using another website known as Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Those participants recruited from MTurk are also known as Workers, while the researchers are known as Requesters. More importantly, Mechanical Turk participants span all 50 states in the U.S., which makes available a large participant pool that differs from the traditional and potentially biased college campus population (Barger, Behrend, Sharek, & Sinar, 2011; Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). For example, participants are average citizens who have an interest in performing specific tasks for either the enjoyment or additional monetary gain (Barger et al., 2011; Buhrmester et al., 2011). Studies have also shown that the MTurk population is not only more diverse than the traditional techniques as that of telephone calls, the Internet (e.g., emails), and college campuses, but the data collected are just as reliable as the traditional samples (Barger et al., 2011; Buhrmester et al., 2011).

More importantly, recruiting participants from Mechanical Turk provides a diverse sample in mitigating bias as opposed to solely using college students, as well as allow for a wide variety of ages ranging from 18-65 across different U.S. regions. The PsychData Surveys account is SPSS compatible, which allows for a more convenient process of analyzing the data. Furthermore, chosen for this study is a hierarchical multiple regression as the appropriate statistical model for this study. Beginning with political orientation, each participant on a left-right continuum will depict their opinion

on a sociopolitical issue, and as a result, revealing their unique level of liberalism or conservatism; then, this measure will be compared to the participant's level of perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity to analyze the extent of correlation. In addressing other potential extraneous effects, this study uses several covariates: sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination.

Definitions

Conservative: The term, conservatism, stems from Wilson & Patterson's (1968) Conservatism Scale, which the authors initially adopted as Authoritarianism. The overall characteristic of a conservative pertains to a person's right-wing attitude on sociopolitical issues such as religious fundamentalism, patriotism, and support of a large military (Wilson & Patterson, 1968). These same characteristics are used in contemporary times to measure one's level of conservatism (Smith et al., 2011).

Extrinsic Religiosity: This form of religiosity describes a person as someone who uses religion for personal gain rather than abiding fully by religious doctrine; also, these people usually attend church less often (Allport & Ross, 1967; Burris, 1999; Schlenker et al., 2012).

Happiness: The term, happiness, is used interchangeably between two different psychometrics scales known as the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) and Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Schiffrin & Nelson, 2010). Technically, this study defines happiness as a person who experiences positive emotions and therefore is generally satisfied with life (Schiffrin & Nelson, 2010).

Health: The term, health, will be used throughout this study to refer to several aspects of health outcomes such as the rates of infant mortality, life expectancy, obesity, suicide, and non-communicable disease deaths (Davis et al., 2014).

Intrinsic Religiosity: A form of religiosity that describes a person as someone who is passionate about practicing religious doctrine, attends church on a consistent basis, and relates to conservative political orientation (Allport & Ross, 1967; Burris, 1999; Schlenker et al., 2012).

Liberal: While referencing Wilson and Patterson's (1968) Conservatism Scale, this term has the opposite characteristics as that of conservative, in which liberal refers to one who measures as being less religious and preferring a smaller military force (Wilson & Patterson, 1968). These same liberal characteristics are also used in contemporary times to measure one's attitude on an array of sociopolitical issues (Smith et al., 2011).

Modified Wilson-Patterson Inventory (MWPI): This is a psychometric scale that measures how liberal or conservative a person is on a left-right continuum, which derived from Wilson and Patterson's (1968) Conservatism Scale. Although the MWPI still uses some of the original sociopolitical issues as the Conservative Scale, the MWPI also uses more contemporary issues such as the Patriot Act and the Iraq War (Smith et al., 2011).

Moral Foundations Theory (MFT): A theory that explains the distinguishing of moral values of a person as being liberal or conservative (Graham et al., 2009).

Perceived Stress Scale-10 (PSS-10): This instrument is used to measure a person’s level of perceived stress (or psychological stress) from the most recent life

experiences over the past month, as well as how well or poorly one has coped with those events (Cohen et al., 1983).

Political Orientation: A term that is used to describe how liberal or conservative a person is on their attitudes of sociopolitical issues (Smith et al., 2011) and moral values (Graham et al., 2009).

Religiosity: This term was used by Allport and Ross (1967) in describing how religious a person is, how or why a person uses religion, and how often one attends church.

Religious Orientation Scale (ROS): Allport and Ross (1967) first used this psychometrics scale to measure how religious a person is, which included church attendance. Additionally, this scale also measures how or why a person uses religion from an intrinsic and extrinsic aspect (Burris, 1999; Schlenker et al., 2012).

Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS): Diener et al. (1985) devised this psychometrics scale for measuring global satisfaction, which is a form of happiness defined as a subjective judgment of one's overall feeling on the current situation in life.

Social Capital: This term is used to describe non-governmental social programs that help assist with health-related issues (Herian et al., 2014; Rentfrow et al., 2013).

Stress: Is a term that is used broadly or interchangeably to refer to either physical stress (Boonstra & Fox, 2013; Gouin et al., 2012a; Sapolsky, 1988; Sapolsky, 2004; Sapolsky, 2005; Stress, n.d.) or psychological stress (Cohen et al., 1983).

Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS): The authors derived the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) to measure how a person feels at that current moment, feelings in

comparison to peers, and feelings about one's current life situation (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999).

System Justification Theory (SJT): Describes the differences between liberal and conservative political orientation regarding happiness in general (e.g., attitudes on social and economic inequality), which also includes subjective wellbeing and satisfaction with life (Bixter, 2015; Napier & Jost, 2008; Schlenker et al., 2012).

Wellbeing: Although broadly defined, this study uses the term, wellbeing, interchangeably to describe a person's feelings on happiness, stress, work, family, finances (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999), education, Internet and technology accessibility, health and wellness, as well as water and food availability (Social Progress Imperative, 2014).

Assumptions

Addressed are several assumptions included in this unique research study on political orientation, perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity. Firstly, while previous studies have shown that liberals and conservatives differ on characteristics as that of personality types (Carney, Jost, Gosling, & Potter, 2008; Rentfrow et al., 2013; Schlenker et al., 2012), moral values (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; Graham et al., 2011), and attitudes on sociopolitical issues (Smith et al., 2011), there is the assumption that these two demographics will also differ on perceived stress. Secondly, since previous data have revealed a correlative effect between increased happiness and religiosity with lower measures of stress (Clements & Ermakova, 2012; Reutter & Bigatti, 2014; Schiffrin & Nelson, 2010), there is the assumption that this study will result with similar correlation.

Thirdly, as happiness and religiosity have correlated with conservative political orientation in previous studies (Bixter, 2015; Napier & Jost, 2008; Schlenker et al., 2012), there is the assumption that the same will occur for this study. Ultimately, as these assumptions highlight the premise of this research study, the underlying theoretical and conceptual ideas presume that the more conservative an individual measures, then the higher the scores for happiness and religiosity, therefore resulting in lower measures of perceived stress.

Scope and Delimitations

While the U.S. has experienced a 20-year high with political dichotomy (PEW Research Center, 2014) and a 30-year high with stress (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012), the scope of this study targets U.S. citizens on political orientation and perceived stress. Previous studies have been conducted on political orientation and perceived stress while using variables of happiness and religiosity; however, no scholarly literature exists on political orientation and perceived stress studied together. This current study is unique in that it includes the variables, political orientation and perceived stress, together for the first time while also following previous research guidelines from the literature. Most studies acquired from the literature pertain specifically to U.S. demographics rather than other countries. This study's sample was acquired using Amazon's Mechanical Turk. Because Mechanical Turk members span the entire 50 states, this strategy helps mitigate any regional biases, as well as provide a better analysis of generalizability across America.

Limitations

There are several limitations to highlight with this research study. One, there is still uncertainty as to whether conservatives are genuinely happier than liberals, which is why further research is required on political orientation, happiness, and religiosity (Bixter, 2015; Schlenker et al., 2012). For example, articles by Moghaddam (2008) and Swinyard et al. (2001) present a correlation between religiosity and happiness without much question on internal validity. Although Snoep (2008) acknowledged that the bivariate correlation between religiosity and happiness resulted in a weak relationship between the U.S., Netherlands, and Denmark, the correlation was ultimately stronger in the U.S. with these two variables. This limitation raises questioning concerns on external validity and generalizability across international borders. Since the U.S. population is the sample under analysis for this research study in addressing the social issues of increased political dichotomy (PEW Research Center, 2014) and increased stress (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012), external validity and generalizability were further analyzed. Other possibilities of future research related to correlative studies on election cycles, which could reveal possible effects on happiness and perceived stress of liberal and conservative attitudes.

Some additional limitations for this study include a lack of control of sample recruitment via online services, in that some participants might not have responded honestly to the survey questions. Furthermore, confounding or extraneous variables could also play a part in affecting the outcome of the responses. Though this research study includes some control of demographic variables, other factors could play a role in

skewing the data. Also, data analysis manipulation is always an underlying bias that can threaten the outcome of the study, which can be mitigated by having second and third persons overseeing the process. Sample biases can also occur when acquiring individual samples for purposes of convenience. Such samples have occurred with previous studies that include having only college students as participants. Using college samples solely could affect validity, reliability, and generalizability across the U.S. population.

A strategy used for this study in mitigating research bias and limitations was using Mechanical Turk. This strategy of using Mechanical Turk allows to choose participants in a random fashion, and also for the researcher to observe the history of the Workers (i.e., participants). If for some reason a participant is not honest with the survey questions, it can be revealed by emplacing specific irrelative questions (e.g., “If you have read this question then select ‘I Agree.'") to see whether the individual is paying attention to the contextual information. Moreover, if not, Mechanical Turk can dispel these individuals from participating any longer in these types of research studies. Finally, certain extraneous or confounding variables could play roles in influencing participant responses. In mitigating this issue, demographic variables were used as control variables to see whether there are any additional or unexpected factors of the outcome from participant responses.

Significance

This unique research study has the potential of helping produce valuable information to the existing gap in the literature on political orientation and perceived stress. As increased happiness and religiosity have been found to correlate with

conservative political orientation (Bixter, 2015; Napier & Jost, 2008; Schlenker et al., 2012) and low levels of perceived stress (Schiffrin & Nelson, 2010), both political orientation and perceived stress have yet to be analyzed together in the same study. Overall, any additional data acquired from this study on political orientation, perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity, will help contribute not only to the limited literary body of knowledge, but also provide awareness for society and the science fields of social, clinical, and health psychology. For example, as recent research data has revealed health disparities between liberal and conservative political orientation (Herian et al., 2014; Rentfrow et al., 2013), this study will help narrow the existing gap of whether there is an additional health disparity disguised as perceived stress that further distinguishes liberal and conservative traits. This concept can help provide positive social change by better understanding the effects of perceived stress on political orientation; therefore, striving to ameliorate conditions of health and wellbeing for the lives of American citizens.

Summary

Based on a 20-year increase of political dichotomy (PEW Research Center, 2014) and a 30-year increase of stress in the U.S. (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012), the primary objective of this current study is to further explore these two social problems by analyzing a person's degree of political orientation and perceived stress. To assist in better understanding these two topics, the variables of happiness and religiosity have been included. The reason of including these two variables is that previous studies have revealed a correlation between increased levels of happiness (Bixter, 2015; Napier & Jost, 2008; Schlenker et al., 2012) and religiosity (Schlenker et al., 2012) with

conservative traits. Furthermore, other studies have shown that while measures of happiness and religiosity increase, levels of perceived stress decrease (Clements & Ermakova, 2012; Moghaddam, 2008; Reutter & Bigatti, 2014; Schiffrin & Nelson, 2010; Snoep, 2008; Swinyard et al., 2001). The findings of these previous data construct the theoretical and conceptual premises of this current study on whether higher measures of conservative political orientation correlate with increased happiness and religiosity, therefore, resulting in decreased levels of perceived stress.

The transition into the Chapter-2 literature review entails a broad but in-depth outlook on politics concerning history, policy, political ideology, and violence. Also included is the varietal characteristics of liberal and conservative political orientation to help understand the complexity of this issue. The literature on political orientation transitions into a complex aggregate on the evolution and history of stress so the reader can better understand the varietal types of stress; what it means to experience the different forms of stress; and, the potentially harmful effects that stress can impose on human beings. Additional literature has also been provided on the topics of health, happiness, and religiosity as they pertain to both political orientations and perceived stress.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between perceived stress, happiness, religiosity, and political orientation. As a reiteration of the two social problems under analysis, this study delves into a variety of aspects on political orientation and stress as to why the U.S. has recently succumbed to a 20-year high in political dichotomy (PEW Research Center, 2014) and a 30% increase in stress levels over a 30-year period (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012). While considering such phenomenal characteristics as that of political violence (Kalmoe, 2012), political stress (Weinburg & Cooper, 2003), and a president's greying hair (Arck, Slominski, Theoharides, Peters, & Paus, 2006; Daulatabad, Singal, Grover, Sharma, & Chhillar, 2015; Krause & Foitzik, 2006; Willingham, 2013), it would appear that politics and stress are mutually inclusive. Although there is little debate as to whether politics contributes to increased stress levels, however, no research thus far has been conducted on political orientation and stress within the same study. Assist in bridging this literary gap on political orientation and stress, included in this study are two additional variables known as happiness and religiosity.

As previous studies have shown, both political orientation and perceived stress have been correlated with happiness and religiosity (Bixter, 2015; Napier & Jost, 2008; Schlenker et al., 2012). The importance of this research is to provide more knowledge on whether there is another demographic in the U.S. that is affected by psychological stress; and in this case, the underlying issue under analysis is political orientation. Due to the

limited body of knowledge in scholarly literature, this study is unique in that it will combine the variables of political orientation and perceived stress in the same study for the first time. Moreover, there is an implication for positive social change in researching political orientation and perceived stress, which could reveal an additional factor in American society that distinguishes stress differences in a newly explored demographic. Information acquired from this study could assist the fields of clinical and health psychology in developing contemporary ideas on how to mitigate stress levels in society, which could potentially help increase the quality of health and wellbeing.

Provided in the following is an in-depth review of the literature on the history of politics, varietal characteristics of political orientation, the evolutionary nature of stress, and information on perceived stress in how it and political orientation are relative with both happiness and religiosity. Chapter-2 comprises of two primary sections, which are the Literature Search Strategy and Theoretical Foundation. The Literature Search Strategy includes specific names of the research domains used for searching and acquiring scholarly, peer-reviewed articles. The Theoretical Foundation entails information that helps bridge the relationship between political orientation and perceived stress, in which happiness, religiosity, as well as morality, play elemental roles of the overall equation. Overall, the premise of the research concept is a complex aggregate of factors between political orientation, perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity that help reveal the differences in perceived stress of liberal and conservative political orientation.

Literature Search Strategy

In acquiring the variety of information on politics and stress, the utilization of several strategies ranged from the type of search engine used to the merging of terminology in uncovering the most relevant and current literature. The primary method used was the EBSCO Boolean search engine within the Walden University Library. A variety of research domains within EBSCO ranged from Academic Search Complete, Political Science Complete, PsycARTICLES, PsycEXTRA, PsycINFO, SociINDEX, and PsycTESTS. When having investigated the literature for relevant articles, I specifically highlighted the domain for Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals. The key terms used in this search strategy included the following: stress, perceived stress, political orientation, happiness, genetics, religiosity, and morality. This process also included the terminological combination between all terms above (e.g., politics and stress; the stress of politics; political orientation and perceived stress; perceived stress of liberals and conservatives; psychological stress, and many other combinations).

The diversity of literature on stress, happiness, religiosity, and political orientation spans over 100 years, which ranges from 1914 to 2017. The following is a collection of authors and related topics about the variables under review. Cannon's (1914; 1916) research on emotions and stress related to the innate responses to hunger, hate, and anger; Selye's (1950; 1953; 1955) research on stress, adaptation, and disease; Sapolsky's (1988) research on baboons in Africa in regard to stress and its relation to social and workplace hierarchy; and, present-day research by Bixter (2015) that includes political orientation, happiness, and religiosity combined within the same study. After having

taken this broad approach toward analyzing varietal aspects of the human condition as it pertains to politics and stress, results from the literature review confirmed that a gap exists in the literature. After solidifying a purpose for conducting this investigation as to whether correlative factors could exist between perceived stress and political orientation, I derived a theoretical foundation that builds on the overall conceptual premise.

Theoretical Foundation

The ideas postulated for this study on political orientation and perceived stress derive from two primary theories: System Justification Theory (SJT) and Moral Foundations Theory (MFT). These two theories were chosen due to the intercorrelation between political orientation, happiness, and religiosity. Beginning with SJT, as Napier and Jost (2008) revealed that conservatives are happier than liberals per the attitudes on sociopolitical issues, Bixter (2015) and Schlenker et al. (2012) showed that conservatives are happier than liberals from a correlational combination of SJT and religiosity. Although there are mixed results with these findings, these studies do suggest that conservatives are happier and more religious than liberals. Regarding MFT and the research on the moral values of political orientation, it has also been suggested that conservatives are more religious than liberals (Graham & Haidt, 2010; Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011).

Furthermore, the essence of choosing these theories is based on other findings that have revealed correlative effects of happiness and religiosity (Moghaddam, 2008; Snoep, 2008; Swinyard et al., 2001) with lower measures of perceived stress (Clements & Ermakova, 2012; Reutter & Bigatti, 2014). For example, while conservative political

orientation correlates with happiness and religiosity (Bixter, 2015; Graham & Haidt, 2010; Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011; Napier & Jost, 2008; Schlenker et al., 2012), and as happiness and religiosity (Moghaddam, 2008; Snoep, 2008; Swinyard et al., 2001) correlate with low measures of perceived stress (Clements & Ermakova, 2012; Reutter & Bigatti, 2014), the theoretical foundation suggest that conservative political orientation could potentially correlate with lower measures of perceived stress. To better explain this theory in more detail, the following sections on SJT and MFT provide a basic understanding of how these two theories build on the premise that political orientation – whether liberal or conservative – may impact measures of perceived stress.

System Justification Theory – SJT

In a study performed by Jost and Banaji (1994) on stereotyping and false consciousness, the authors posited several hypotheses as to why or how people form stereotypes of others. Derived from a number of theories ranging from Festinger's (1954) cognitive dissonance theory, Heider's (2013) attribution theory, to Tajfel's (1982) social identity theory, Jost and Banaji (1994) suggested that people engage in the form of system justification to solidify either the status quo of one's personal or group belonging, or in many cases the solidification of a specific ideology. In contemporary studies, the system justification theory has not changed in its meaning (Kay & Jost, 2003); instead, it has been used to describe a particularly unique character of political orientation in the form of happiness. For example, a 2006 self-report survey on political orientation and happiness revealed that approximately 47% of those who self-described as conservative-Republican, measured as being "Very Happy," while only 28% of liberal-Democrats

measured as being "Very Happy" (Napier & Jost, 2008, p. 565). As the authors reported in their study, the disparity of happiness between liberal and conservative political orientation correlate with the psychological process described in the system justification theory. Specifically, Napier and Jost (2008) credit conservatives as being happier than liberals from their ability of reasoning or justifying social and economic inequality.

Additionally, the Napier and Jost (2008) study also took into consideration a variety of other demographics as to why conservatives are happier than liberals, which included age, education, income, sex, marital status, and religiosity. However, they also acknowledged that the source of the issue was more complicated than just demographics alone. While Napier and Jost (2008) did not include religiosity within this particular study, and according to previous work from social psychologist, Jonathan Haidt (2006), the authors suggested that religiosity was reasonably the most influential of the demographics when taking into consideration the happiness gap between liberals and conservatives (Napier & Jost, 2008). A year later, a similar study conducted by Choma, Busseri, and Sadava (2009) revealed that liberals were equally as happy as conservatives when measuring for life satisfaction; however, the authors failed to include religiosity as part of the study. In a more recent study, Jetten, Haslam, and Barlow (2013) found that conservatives are happier than liberals; though the authors included a measurement of socioeconomic status (SES), they, too, did not use religiosity as part of the study. Finally, researchers, Okulicz-Kozaryn, Holmes, and Avery (2014) used a different approach for analyzing happiness of political orientation by measuring Subjective Well-Being (SWB); again, conservatives were happier than liberals at the individual level.

Some of the most current research on political orientation and happiness have included religiosity, which has resulted in conservatives being happier and more religious than liberals (Bixter, 2015; Schlenker et al., 2012). Furthermore, the Schlenker et al. (2012) study revealed some significant findings in that not only was conservatives happier than liberals, but SJT was also measured and found to have had some impact on levels of happiness. Finally, the Schlenker et al. (2012) study also reported that conservatives were not only happier than liberals per SJT but that moral beliefs and religiosity were even stronger factors for the happiness gap. Taking into consideration all of these above factors on happiness, religiosity, SJT, and morality, this now leads into the following section on the second theory known as the Moral Foundations Theory (MFT).

Moral Foundations Theory – MFT

For millennia, the issues of happiness, religion, and morality have been philosophized and debated by such influential people as that of Plato (McMahon, 2006), Francis Wayland (1856a; 1856b), Charles Darwin (1888), and Thomas Paine (1794). Another influential person by the name of Alexander Bain (1868), excogitated the thought that morality has been instilled in us by either nature, nurture, or/and god:

> Practically, it would seem of little importance in what way the moral faculty originated, except intending to teach us how it may be best strengthened when it happens to be weak. Still, very great importance has been attached to the view, that it is simple and innate; the supposition being! That a higher authority thereby belongs to it. If it arises from little education, it depends on the teacher for the time being; if it exists prior to

> all education, it seems to be the voice of universal nature or of god. (p. 448).

Still debated in contemporary times is the nature-vs-nurture perspective on morality (Hauser, 2008; Hodgson, 2013; Krebs, 2008; Rai & Fiske, 2011). From essential animalistic survival traits such as competition for sexual selection and mating rights, territoriality, and uniquely evolved personality types (Buss, 2009; Buss & Hawley, 2011), there are evolutionary forces that play a role in constructing people the way they are. For example, De Waal and Waal (2009; 2013) in their work, The Bonobo and the Atheist: In Search of Humanism Among the Primates, derived a comparison between humans and apes about being able to distinguish unique communities from one another on differences of moralism or altruism characteristics. Many of these ideas have originated from such evolutionary theories as that of bonobo and chimpanzee traits, in that scientists have theorized that these two species were of a common ancestor. For example, there is the theory that a group of common ancestors became separated by the Congo River; then, and by a consequence of ecological differences, this group separation influenced the traits of these two new species: That is, an evolutionary construct of bonobo docility and chimpanzee aggressiveness (Hare, Wobber, & Wrangham, 2012; White & Chapman, 1994; Wobber, Hare, Maboto, Lipson, Wrangham, & Ellison, 2010).

Analogous to bonobos and chimpanzees, there is little debate in the scientific community that humans have innate wiring for purposes of survivability. Whether a personality trait of docility or aggressiveness, people are very different from one another in an array of characteristics. To the degree in which our brains are wired from childhood

(Akers et al., 2006) for such traits as that of morality, to include cultural teachings, personal experiences, genetically derived traits, or a combination of all these factors (Chao & Moon, 2005), people have different moral values.

In the book called The Happiness Hypothesis, a social psychologist by the name of Jonathan Haidt (2006) described how people claim that their religion is the source of their happiness. He has also stated that all others who strive for happiness should maintain an open mind to help understand the religious-happiness concept, even if they are not particularly religious (Haidt, 2006). While happiness and religiosity are positively correlated (Moghaddam, 2008; Snoep, 2008; Swinyard, Kau, & Phua, 2001), other variables that correlate with happiness and religiosity are political orientation and morality. For example, researchers have found that while conservatives are happier than liberals, this is due to a correlational combination of religiosity and attitudes on particular sociopolitical issues, to include SJT concerning social and economic inequality (Bixter, 2015; Napier & Jost, 2008; Schlenker et al., 2012). As researchers continue to analyze the happiness effect of political orientation, other studies have revealed that liberals and conservatives are also different from one another on moral values (Graham & Haidt, 2010; Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; Graham et al., 2011).

Before Haidt (2007) began exploring the differences of morality and political orientation, he had already distinguished one aspect of morality that revealed differences between liberals and conservatives on sexual morality, which entailed specific issues such as homosexuality and incest (Haidt & Hersh, 2001). By 2007, Haidt and colleague, Jesse Graham, had already discovered more unique characteristics of liberal and

conservative morality based on five moral values: (1) Harm/Care, (2) Fairness/Reciprocity, (3) Ingroup/Loyalty, (4) Authority/Respect, and (5) Purity/Sanctity. Although Haidt and Graham were still researching political orientation and morality, it was not until the assistance of another colleague, Brian Nosek, that Haidt (2012) had finally ameliorated his strategy for better understanding the differences of liberal and conservative morality.

More recently, Haidt (2012) has explained how Graham and Nosek derived what became known as the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ). This psychometrics instrument measures the five sets of moral values previously researched by Haidt and Graham (2007) in 2006 (i.e., harm/care, fairness/reciprocity, ingroup/loyalty, authority/respect, and purity/sanctity). While having focused specifically on liberal and conservative political orientation, once Graham, Haidt, and Nosek (2009) applied the MFQ to a study of approximately 1600 participants, the results revealed further replication of the 2006 study (Haidt & Graham, 2007). These findings resulted in liberals relating more with harm/care and fairness/reciprocity, as conservatives measure more equally across all five sets of moral values. That is, liberals are characterized with protecting the individual and trusting the altruistic traits in people, while conservatives focus more on protecting the whole of the group or institution, in which religion is also a correlative factor of these values (Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011).

The following sections entail additional factors beyond SJT and MFT that delves into the theoretical premise of how perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity can have a correlating effect on political orientation. The following sections begin with the

introduction to political orientation while transitioning into happiness, religiosity, and ending with stress. Some factors include the disparity between liberals and conservatives on the issues of health and wellbeing, and how the process of social capital narrows the health-disparity gap (Herian et al., 2014). While combining the topics of SJT and MFT in the aspects of happiness and religiosity, along with the correlative effects of health, well-being, and perceived stress, the overall concept builds on the research premise of how perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity may have some correlative effect on political orientation.

Literature Review on Key Variables and Concepts

The U.S. is one of the most developed countries in the world, but it also has many social problems that continue to threaten the quality of health and wellbeing of its citizens. Two current issues that have highlighted attention to the U.S. on health and wellbeing are politics and stress. While a PEW Research (2014) study revealed that the U.S. had reached a 20-year high with a political dichotomy, other studies have shown that stress levels are at a 30-year high (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012). Another disconcerting characteristic of the U.S. concerning political orientation is health disparities. Studies have found that although liberals are generally healthier than conservatives, the health disparity gap narrows when social capital is made available for conservative communities (Herian et al., 2014). Other studies have found that liberal governing policies correlate with mitigating levels of inequality, providing welfare programs to include healthcare, which in turn can increase the quality of health (Navarro et al., 2006). Furthermore, though conservative regions of the U.S. are the friendliest,

they are also lower in the quality of health (Rentfrow et al., 2013). However, similar to the research of Herian et al. (2014), Rentfrow et al. (2013) also found that the quality of health of conservatives increases when taking into consideration religiosity and the availability of social capital.

Though the premise of this current study does not focus on the health of liberals and conservatives, it is essential to highlight the health disparity issue while individually analyzing the problem of perceived stress. Another important reason to include the topic of health disparities as part of the narrative of this study is due to the current situation of the U.S. on the quality of health and wellbeing concerning stress. For example, even as the U.S. spends approximately double on healthcare than all other developed countries, it ranks last on quality of health and well-being (Social Progress Index, 2014). More importantly, out of 132 countries researched on the quality of health and wellbeing, the U.S. ranked 70th on health disparities such as life expectancy, obesity rates, and non-communicable disease deaths (Social Progress Index, 2014). Regarding health disparity factors, previous studies have also shown correlation with these variables with stress (Boonstra & Fox, 2013; Gouin et al., 2012a; 2012b; Sapolsky, 1988; Sapolsky, 2005; Selye, 1955; Selye, 1973; Stress, n.d.).

The following literature review is an in-depth analysis of complex issues on political orientation and stress, as well as how the variables of happiness and religiosity are elemental parts of the study. This section is an exhaustive attempt to provide the most accurate, high-quality, and least-biased collection of scholarly work in order to construct the utmost in transparency. Each section begins with a collection of seminal work so the

reader can acquire a basic understanding of how the key variables under analysis relate to one another. A narrative of these sections is as follows: political orientation, current health status in the U.S., happiness, and religiosity, and ending with some of the most up-to-date literature on stress. Overall, the literature review depicts an organized correlational outlook of how the key variables merge, which explains how perceived stress could potentially correlate with political orientation.

Introduction to Political Orientation

In the world of politics, many factors contribute to a political dichotomy, which has existed for millennia on a variety of sociopolitical issues. While matters such as taxes and homosexuality in ancient Greece and Rome were always at the center of social and governing controversy (Hunt, Martin, Rosenwein, Po-chia Hsia, & Smith, 2009), in contemporary times these same topics are still continuously debated. In the U.S., the attitude on taxation has not only varied for decades across states, but people are still divided on what types and how much taxation should be legislated (Pearson, 2014). In 2013, the U.S.'s Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) policy was abolished, which then allowed military personnel to serve openly without obscuring their sexual orientation (Belkin, 2013; Murphy, 2013). However, the debate on homosexuality continues as research further explores this topic on not just sexual orientation itself, but even analyzing the attitudes on homosexuality in the African-American community (Edwards, 2013).

Furthermore, a more ominous aspect of politics from past events that has taken the form of violence is that of political assassinations like those of Abraham Lincoln and

John F. Kennedy (Schwartz, 1991). In contemporary times, political violence has now taken a more dangerous form of dynamics known as terrorism. There are several theories on the primary causes of terroristic acts, which can range from a variety of sociopolitical attitudes and religious ideologies (Stern, 2004; Turk, 2004). Individuals such as Timothy McVeigh (Crothers, 2002) and Eric Robert Rudolph (Schuster & Stone, 2005) were known as lone wolves (Spaaij, 2010), but their tactics were effective in instilling fear and stress within the American society for their own ideological and moral motives. More worrisome are the larger terrorist entities as that of al-Qaeda that continue to use violence on the international stage for political persuasion (Burke, 2004). More disturbingly is an organization now known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS – also known as ISIL or Daesh), which uses a level of violence denounced even by al-Qaeda in order to establish a caliphal state (Weiss & Hassan, 2015).

Although it is common knowledge that people are divided by politics, most laymen and women do not understand the variety of characteristics that distinguish people on unique sociopolitical issues. Also known as a left-right dichotomy in politics, this characterization of political orientation has existed for over 200 years since the French Revolution in 1791 (Mair, 2009). This unique concept of left-right politics during the French Revolution was a seating arrangement of the French Assembly in that those who supported the political status quo of the monarchy sat to the right, while those who opposed sat to the left (Mair, 2009; Tuschman, 2013).

Personality Characteristics and Political Ideology

In contemporary times, there are strategies for delving more in-depth on a person's left-right political orientation as that of liberalism and conservatism. Some examples that distinguish differences between liberals and conservatives are as follows: individualism and collectivism (Vandello & Cohen, 1999), sleep patterns (Bulkeley, 2006), cognitive patterns (Amodio, Jost, Master, & Yee, 2007), and cleanliness (Carney et al., 2008). Furthermore, a variety of research has even confirmed personality differences between liberals and conservatives (Allik & McCrae, 2004; Carney et al., 2008; Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003; Rentfrow et al., 2013; Schlenker, Chambers, & Le, 2012; Tuschman, 2013). More specifically, the two primary personality types that distinguish liberals and conservatives are called Openness and Conscientiousness. Liberals are characterized more with Openness, which relates to extraversion, tolerance, creativeness, open-mindedness, and open to experience. Conservatives are characterized more with Conscientiousness, which also relates to other traits such as fearfulness, obedience, cleanliness, aggressiveness, and closed-mindedness (Carney et al., 2008).

Additionally, liberalism and conservatism are characterized by personality traits. For example, as societies around the world have evolved from unique ecological, space-and-time circumstances, they have also naturally derived a unique cultural foundation for living. Studies have shown that not only do liberals and conservatives possess unique personality types but that geography and climate can have an influence on these two groups (Allik & McCrae, 2004; Hughes et al., 2003; Tuschman, 2013). Previous studies have revealed that cultures of warmer climates are more related to the personality type of

conscientiousness, which is correlated to conservative voting (Allik & McCrae, 2004; Hughes et al., 2003; Tuschman, 2013). More interestingly regarding cultures and personality, studies have also shown that the further away from the Earth's equator, the more that personality types become extroverted - a characterization of liberal voting. Moreover, and inversely, cultures closer to the equator become more conscientious – which characterizes conservative voting (Allik & McCrae, 2004; Tuschman, 2013).

To reiterate the basic personality types of political orientation, as liberals are associated with higher levels of openness, conservatives characterize more with conscientiousness (Allik & McCrae, 2004; Carney et al., 2008; Gosling et al., 2003; Rentfrow et al., 2013; Schlenker et al., 2012; Tuschman, 2013). These personality characteristics of liberals and conservatives have established a benchmark of validity and reliability on distinguishing the differences of this demographic. However, there are other essential factors of liberals and conservatives that begin to reveal a more critical issue as it specifically pertains to this current study, which is the topic of perceived stress.

Previous research on perceived stress and personality types have revealed that while extroversion (liberal traits) and conscientiousness (conservative traits; Allik & McCrae, 2004; Tuschman, 2013) correlate with higher measures of perceived stress, openness (liberal traits; Allik & McCrae, 2004; Tuschman, 2013) measures slightly lower with perceived stress (Ebstrup et al., 2011). So, evidence regarding this aspect of liberal and conservative personality traits and any potential impact on perceived stress is inconclusive. Other research studies on different personality types of political orientation have shown that conservatives measure higher for disgust (Horberg, Oveis, Keltner, &

Cohen, 2009; Smith et al., 2011) and fearfulness more than liberals (Carney et al., 2008). Additionally, current research on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has shown that those who have higher measures of disgust are also more negatively affected with PTSD (Badour, Feldner, Blumenthal, & Bujarski, 2013; Coyle, Karatzias, Summers, & Power, 2014; Olatunji, Armstrong, Fan, & Zhao, 2014). However, there is an important caveat to these findings in that although studies show correlation with PTSD and disgust, this is not the same as measures of perceived stress. Furthermore, there is currently no research that specifically focuses on the personality trait of fearfulness and perceived stress.

There are other traits that this current study will include that provide sufficient evidence of the correlational effects with both political orientation and perceived stress, which are the variables of happiness and religiosity. Provided in the following sections is literature on how to identify liberal and conservative political orientation using the Modified Wilson-Patterson Inventory (MWPI). Then a detailed description of the health disparities between liberals and conservatives is presented, followed by current data on the health disparities of the U.S. in comparison to the international community. There is a basic description of how happiness and religiosity play essential roles with both political orientation and perceived stress. Finally, the final sections conclude with the relevant aspects of the Theoretical Foundation and the overall concept of how perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity could potentially correlate with political orientation.

Identifying Political Orientation Using MWPI

Today, there is little debate in the scientific community that people who measure as being either liberal or conservative possess unique traits that distinguish them from

one another on the left-right sociopolitical continuum. Again, one of the social problems to address for this research is political dichotomy between liberals and conservatives (PEW Research Center, 2014); that is, this study will seek out additional characteristics that make these two groups so different from one another. Whether domestic and foreign sociopolitical issues have contributed to the U.S.'s 20-year high with the political dichotomy, or whether the age of the Internet and social media have contributed a significant portion, the attitudes on sociopolitical issues make this social problem challenging to understand. Due to the complexity of this study, there is a strategy for analyzing a person's level of liberal and conservative political orientation, which is to use a psychometric scale to measure their attitude on sociopolitical issues.

One of the first psychometrics instruments ever used to measure political orientation was known as the F-Scale (F depicting the term, Fascist), which was intended to measure attitudes on unique sociopolitical issues – also known as a measurement of authoritarianism at the time (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). However, by 1969, Robert Altmeyer provided substantial criticism on the many issues that affected the validity and reliability of the F-Scale measurements, and how the results could potentially label people in society, which he called "hazardous" (p. 417). In 1981, he introduced his version of a political orientation scale called the Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale (RWA; Altemeyer, 1981).

Around the same time as Altemeyer's first criticism of the F-Scale in 1969, Wilson and Patterson (1968) derived a psychometric instrument for measuring attitudes on sociopolitical issues called The Conservatism Scale. This instrument includes a list of

50 items mixed with half of the sociopolitical issues defined as conservative or authoritarian, while the other half defined as being liberal (Wilson & Patterson, 1968). The primary question asked of the items was as follows: "Which of the following do you favor or believe in?" (Wilson & Patterson, 1968, p. 266). Some of the items from Wilson and Patterson's (1968) scale included Evolution Theory, Moral Training, Women Judges, Nudist Camps, Coloured Immigration, Bible Truth, and Pajama Parties. Although the authors suggested that The Conservatism Scale was also a measurement of personality, in later studies on art preferences and conservative attitudes, the authors suggested that the perception of complex art was also an ideal measurement of conservative traits on personality (Wilson, 2013; Wilson, Ausman, & Patterson, 1973). The authors concluded that ultra-conservative traits relate to a world of unknown circumstances in that conservatives prefer a sense of order and familiarity (Wilson, 2013; Wilson et al., 1973).

Using only 21 sociopolitical issues included in The Conservatism Scale, a more contemporary version has been derived and implemented in recent years, which is called the Modified Wilson-Patterson Inventory (MWPI – Smith et al., 2011). This modified version of The Conservatism Scale includes similar sociopolitical issues; however, the MWPI entails some of the most current issues as that of the Iraq War, Patriot Act, Gun Control, and Pollution Control (Smith et al., 2011). The instructions entail a statement that has the participants choosing which sociopolitical issue they agree with, disagree, or are uncertain (Smith et al., 2011). Like The Conservatism Scale, the MWPI is constructed in a way that mixes the items so that conservative participants should choose "agree" on those particular items, and choosing "disagree" on the other items (Smith et al., 2011).

The more items participants agree on conservative issues and disagree on non-conservative issues, the more they measure with conservatism – the opposite process occurs for liberals (Smith et al., 2011). When calculating these "agree" and "disagree" responses, conservative responses measure as 1, while liberals measure as 0. As a result, the closer the number is to 21, the more conservative the participant is; and while the results are closer to 0, then the more liberal the participant measures (Smith et al., 2011).

The literature on political orientation entails some seminal work on understanding liberals and conservatives. Today, there is little debate on the many characteristics of liberals and conservatives, which have also been found generalizable around the world within varietal cultures. From The Conservatism Scale to the contemporary version is known as the Modified Wilson-Patterson Inventory (MWPI), thus far this strategy of instrumentation is the most valid and reliable for identifying levels of liberal and conservative political orientation. Therefore, the essence of this current study is to utilize the MWPI by previous studies so that proper measurements and characterizations of liberal and conservative participants can be made possible.

With that, there is another differentiating characteristic of liberals and conservatives, which is a complex issue in the form of health disparities. More importantly, as they pertain to this current study, the following sections will include information on not only the health disparities within political orientation, but also an explanation of the U.S.'s current situation of its poor ranking on quality of healthcare, and poor quality of health and wellbeing. Additionally, other sections explain the correlational effects that perceived stress has on quality of health (Boonstra & Fox, 2013;

Gouin et al., 2012a; 2012b; Sapolsky, 1988; Sapolsky, 2005; Selye, 1955; Selye, 1973; Stress, n.d.), happiness (Kageyama, 2012; Veenhoven, 2008), and religiosity (Clements & Ermakova, 2012; Koenig, 2004; Koenig, 2012; Padela & Curlin, 2013; Park et al., 2013). In the end, this current study will reveal how all of these variables are combined to show the extent to which perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity correlate with political orientation.

Health Disparities Between Liberals and Conservatives

Beyond the personal characteristics of liberals and conservatives, the current status quo of the political climate has become highlighted. As people in the U.S. are divided by politics more than any other period since 1994, favorability ratings show the dichotomy (PEW Research Center, 2014). For example, favorability percentages in U.S. politics have decreased in that 16% of Democrats in 1994 viewed Republicans as a threat to national wellbeing compared to 38% today, while Republicans' decreased favorability of Democrats has almost tripled from 17% in 1994 to 43% today (PEW Research Center, 2014). This study also revealed that political activism has increased with 78% of consistent conservatives voting in every primary, in comparison to 58% of liberals voting consistently (PEW Research Center, 2014). Evidence of this dichotomy relates to aggressive and violent behavior, which studies have revealed that political-partisan conflict can become influenced by a combination of factors such as culture or biology (Kalmoe, 2012).

Delving more into the topic of political orientation concerning health correlates, some evidential signs of how politics can impact a person's wellbeing is that of stress and

the color changes of a U.S. President's hair (Willingham, 2013). A process known as telogen effluvium occurs – but not limited to – when a person experiences extended periods of chronic stress in which the hair falls out and returns with a color of gray (Daulatabad et al., 2015; Thornhill, 2009). Data also reveals that regular citizens experience high levels of stress just by listening to political discussions (NPR, 2014). Other current research has shown that on average liberals are healthier than conservatives, in which some of the issues of concern range from obesity and cigarette smoking (Herian et al., 2014). It has also been suggested that this health disparity is due in part to liberal governments investing more in healthcare and social welfare programs than conservative governments across U.S. states (Herian et al., 2014; Navarro et al., 2006; Rentfrow et al., 2013).

Although research reveals that liberals are healthier than conservatives, other studies suggest that the health disparity gap narrows when conservative communities invest in social capital (Herian et al., 2014; Navarro et al., 2006; Rentfrow et al., 2013). The process of social capital is community programs (e.g., forms of healthcare accessibility and sociability) that are provided by local institutions, which are usually provided by religious organizations (Herian et al., 2014; Navarro et al., 2006; Rentfrow et al., 2013). In all, the concept of social capital in conservative communities is grounded in the idea of relying heavily on the trust factor, in which people come together to form a collective sense of belonging (Herian et al., 2014; Navarro et al., 2006; Rentfrow et al., 2013).

Regarding health disparities of those of different political orientation at the individual and community levels, there is a more disconcerting issue on health disparities that pertains to the U.S. as a whole in that Americans in comparison to the international community rate poorly on health and wellbeing. Many of the issues plaguing America are low life expectancy, high obesity rates, and non-communicable disease deaths (Social Progress Imperative, 2014); all of which have been directly correlated to stress (Boonstra & Fox, 2013; Gouin et al., 2012; Sapolsky, 1988; Sapolsky, 2005; Selye, 1955; Selye, 1973; Stress, n.d.). Stemming from the aforementioned literature on the health disparities and the adverse effects of stress, this study focuses on analyzing the variables of perceived stress (Boonstra & Fox, 2013; Gouin et al., 2012; Sapolsky, 1988; Sapolsky, 2005; Selye, 1955; Selye, 1973; Stress, n.d.), happiness (Kageyama, 2012; Veenhoven, 2008), and religiosity (Clements & Ermakova, 2012; Koenig, 2004; 2012; Padela & Curlin, 2013; Park et al., 2013), to reveal if there exists a difference between liberal and conservative political orientation and stress levels.

Introduction to Happiness

In approximately 380 BCE, the Greek philosopher, Plato, had excogitated the thoughts that those who follow the path of morality will also possess the highest levels of happiness (McMahon, 2006). In 1776, Thomas Jefferson's (1952, p. 85) "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" within the U.S. Constitution was another attempt to philosophize the phenomenon of happiness, but rather from of a sociopolitical and governing aspect about freedom. In contemporary times, the scientific community has derived its perspective of what it means to be happy. These historic perspectives on

happiness as they relate to morality and political orientation can be seen today from some of the most current research on these variables (Graham & Haidt, 2010; Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; Graham et al., 2011; Moghaddam, 2008; Snoep, 2008; Swinyard, Kau, & Phua, 2001).

This current study as it relates to political orientation, perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity, focuses on two other types of happiness scales, and they are called the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, 1985) and the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1997). Beginning with the SWLS, this instrument measures what is called global life satisfaction, in that people rate how they feel about life in general as opposed to finances, marriage, material wealth, or even loneliness (Diener, 1985; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; Pavot & Diener, 1993). Researchers continued to use this instrument on a variety of issues ranging from SWLS and perceived stress (Schiffrin & Nelson, 2010) to SWLS on both political orientation and religiosity (Schlenker et al., 2012).

As the SWLS has been used for at least three decades (Diener et al., 1985), the SHS instrument has been in use in research for approximately 20 years (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). Although both instruments measure for global happiness, they use different wording in their construct (Diener, 1985; Diener et al., 1985; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1997; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). With that, both SWLS and SHS have been used together in several studies and are similar in validity and reliability. Some previous studies included the differences in global happiness of Americans and Russians, (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), as well as the effects of happiness and perceived stress

(Schiffrin & Nelson, 2010). Furthermore, the SHS has been in use in a variety of studies that span different international contexts and languages. For example, researchers used a Spanish version of SHS in Chile to distinguish measures of happiness and a participant's relation with certain foods (Lobos, Mora, Lapo, Caligaria, & Schnettlerd, 2015). Other SHS studies in Arabic have measured levels of happiness of Palestinian children dwelling within refugee camps (Veronese, Castiglioni, Tombolani, & Said, 2012).

Like political orientation and perceived stress, there are a variety of ways to measure happiness. Thus far, this literature review has delved into political orientation, perceived stress, and happiness, while providing a variety of seminal and current work on these topics. Finally, the fourth and final variable, known as religiosity, has also shown correlation with political orientation, happiness, and religiosity. The following section will provide a detailed description of religiosity, and how its role plays an elemental part of the overall theoretical foundation.

Introduction to Religiosity

During the era of the French Revolution, Thomas Paine (1794) in his book, The Age of Reason, spoke of religion as a corrupt institution that had been derived from humans to manipulate and control societies; therefore, having the ability of negatively affecting moral perspectives and behavior. Paine (1794) had also stated that religious institutions easily persuaded humans to believe in superstition, which constructed deceitful façades in the form of government. However, as Paine (1794) displayed little reservation with his perspectives on religion and its potentially harmful effects on society, he did also acknowledge the one good quality that it could provide, which was

that people strive for happiness and equality via their religiosity. This perspective of Paine is similar to scholars and social scientists of today as that of Jonathan Haidt (2012), who derived what he called the Durkheimian model. This Durkheimian concept constituted the idea of Belonging, Believing, and Doing regarding the natural process from when people form a bond per the different ritualistic procedures of their religious denomination (Haidt, 2012).

With such a vast array of religious diversity in the world today, it is difficult to know precisely the extent of which a person is religious, and whether there are ways of measuring what it means to be religious across individuals. Although one could have the basic knowledge of religion and the varietal denominations thereof, however, there is no way of knowing the type and level of religiosity just by categorizing people into religious groups. So, this current study has used one of the most scientific and practical strategies for understanding religiosity, which is by utilizing a psychometrics instrument known as the Religious Orientation Scale (ROS). Derived initially by Allport and Ross (1967; Burris, 1999), much of what they based their ideas on about the ROS and measuring a person's level of religiosity was related to Adorno et al.'s (1950) The Authoritarian Personality concept. The basic concept of Adorno et al. (1950) suggested that people who were the most religious or had the tendency of attending church more often were highly prejudice toward other ethnic groups (Allport & Ross, 1967; Burris, 1999). This argument, however, was not cogent across the scientific community, and eventually, Allport and Ross (1967; Burris, 1999) would put this theory to test.

In testing the concept of Adorno et al. (1950), Allport and Ross (1967; Burris, 1999) used their ROS to measure different aspects of religiosity across individuals. The ROS entails two types of religiosity, known as intrinsic and extrinsic. The intrinsic aspect of religiosity is the type in which a person is more passionate about the spiritual connection of religious engagement as it pertains to practicing scripture and serving God (Allport and Ross, 1967; Burris, 1999). Extrinsic religiosity is the type in which a person views their religion as a process to assist in acquiring specific goals such as enhancing one's social status (Allport and Ross, 1967; Burris, 1999). The results of the study as it pertained to Adorno et al.'s (1950) idea of ethnic prejudices and the authoritarian personality, revealed that there were differences in levels of prejudice by the type of religiosity (Allport & Ross, 1967; Burris, 1999). For example, intrinsic religiosity showed that people who were more passionate about the religion itself (i.e., serving God and practicing scripture), were also more accepting or tolerant of varietal ethnic groups – therefore, less prejudice (Allport and Ross, 1967; Burris, 1999). Extrinsic religiosity (i.e., participation in religious services for gaining personal or social status) resulted in the opposite effect in that it related to people who were more prejudice towards other ethnic groups (Allport and Ross, 1967; Burris, 1999).

Since the Allport and Ross (1967) studies, research has continued with intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity on many issues such as prosocial behavior and the good Samaritan concept (Batson, 1976), as well as compared with other scales such as Personal Values as it pertains to religious commitment (Jackson, 1981). Moreover, critical reviews via meta-analyses confirmed that intrinsic religiosity continued to

measure for one's religious commitment, while extrinsic consistently correlated with prejudices and anxiety (Donahue, 1985). With that, ROS is still currently used today and continues to be found valid and reliable in measuring intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of religiosity. More importantly, one of the essential studies that relate specifically to this current research is one that was performed by Schlenker et al. (2012). Their research included Allport and Ross's (1967) ROS instrument of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity to measure the impact of political orientation on happiness and religiosity. The following sections will explain how the variables of political orientation, perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity all merge in correlational fashion to present the possible impact that perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity altogether may influence political orientation.

SJT and Relationship with Political Orientation, Happiness, and Religiosity

Originally derived from Jost and Banaji (1994), the System Justification Theory (SJT) was an extension of the ego justification and group justification theories, both of which are forms of stereotyping to protect the individual and group (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). As the authors suggested, there was more to this concept of ego- and group justification than stereotyping alone; they proposed an additional aspect in the form of socioeconomic status (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). This idea entails a process of forming stereotypes to justify social and economic inequality (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). For example, a study conducted on social inequality in the African-American community found that this demographic was more accepting of the low-SES status quo than higher SES demographics (Jost, Pelham,

Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003). Eventually, the SJT concept would reveal more about this phenomenon than just stereotyping and socioeconomic status alone. The following sections include literature on the relativeness of SJT, political orientation, happiness, and religiosity.

SJT and Political Orientation

Having taken a meta-analytic approach, Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, and Sulloway (2003) looked in depth at the social cognitive factors of conservative political orientation. Encompassing the idea of several theoretical premises, which included the forming of traits via genetics and the environment, the authors concluded that a variety of traits characterizes conservative political orientation. Some of the traits that Jost et al. (2003) discovered were fearfulness, aggressive behavior, closemindedness (or intolerance of ambiguity), avoiding uncertain situations, living by an orderly or structured lifestyle, and group structure and defense. More importantly, as it pertains to this current study, other conservative traits the authors explored by using SJT was dominance, legitimization, and cognitive dissonance regarding social and economic inequality and injustice.

SJT and Happiness

In the same year as the African-American study on SJT and the status quo of social inequality, Kay and Jost (2003) had begun exploring the variable of happiness with the issue of social inequality. In measuring for happiness, the authors used two sets of stereotypes known as "poor but honest" / "rich but dishonest", and "poor but happy" / "rich but miserable," and are based on the theories of Belief in a Just World (BJW) and Protestant Work Ethics (PWE; Kay & Jost, 2003). The concept of BJW suggested that the

stereotype of the poor and unprivileged deserved the status that they had succumbed to, while PWE focused on the perspective that – regardless of material success or failure – for those who work hard are recognized as moral and honest beings (Kay & Jost, 2003). The results of this study revealed the variables of "poor but happy" and "rich but miserable" were associated with system justification, as well as an association of low SES (i.e., "poor but happy") with honest living and higher measures of system justification, and Higher SES (i.e., "rich but miserable") with less honesty, more greed, and with lower measures of system justification (Kay & Jost, 2003).

SJT and Religiosity

At moments where humans feel vulnerable or threatened at a personal level, they tend to look towards group belonging for support, and usually in the form of government entities or religion (Kay, Blatz, Shepherd, Sook Ning, & Galinsky, 2010). When government instability increases and the level of trust decreases, people tend to seek consolatory support in the form of religion (Kay et al., 2010). These characteristics of the human condition regarding religiosity were suggested from a study conducted on cultures in the U.S. and Malaysia by using what is known as the model of compensatory control (Kay et al., 2010). In exploring this theory on the senses of order and control, the authors revealed that this model was also relative to the system justification theory. As a result, Kay et al. (2010) suggested that like system justification, people continue to justify the status quo of one's sociopolitical issues in correlation to their ideology of social and economic inequality. Additionally, people also tend to turn to god or/and religion for additional consolatory support when there appears a threat to the status quo.

MFT and Relationship with Political Orientation, Happiness, and Religiosity

Social psychologist, Jonathan Haidt, (2001), began delving into the topic of morality while exploring social intuition, moral reasoning, and rationality. After having conducted a meta-analytic study, Haidt (2001) suggested that much of our decision-making processes depend on the consequence of space-and-time events. He used the metaphor of a dog's wagging tail like that of social intuition when it comes to a person's moral reasoning, in that much of what any given environment has to offer can determine a so-called moralistic outcome (Haidt, 2001). In the same year, Haidt and colleague, Matthew Hersh (2001), discovered that there were differences of perspectives on morality while focusing on the topic of homosexuality. They learned that while conservatives, more than liberals, found homosexuality to be immoral, the authors suggested that this was only a single elemental part of the culture war in America (Haidt & Hersh, 2001).

Reverting to The Happiness Hypothesis, Haidt (2006) combined a broad range of scholarly literature to suggest that a person's religious belief and practice contributes to their happiness. After being influenced by his father on the role of religion and morality, Haidt (2006) also suggested that although his father was correct with his perspective, it was due in part of a different aspect than he had initially believed. For example, having used another metaphor known as a beehive analogy, Haidt (2006; 2012) describes how group belonging requires a particular sense of cooperation and cohesion for enhancing the sustainability and survivability of the group. Haidt (2012) provides this philosophical outlook on religion, group belonging, purpose, and the process of coherence as it relates to happiness within his book, The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided By

Politics And Religion. Here he derives another wide range of scholarly literature describing what he called his Durkheimian model of Belonging, Believing, and Doing, in that like the beehive metaphor, people have a natural tendency to find a societal niche for acquiring a sense of belonging (Haidt, 2012). Therefore, the sense of belonging fruitions into believing in the system, and then doing what it takes to protect the status quo of one's group (Haidt, 2012).

Having proposed these perspectives on morality as it pertains to political orientation, happiness, and religiosity, Jonathan Haidt put these claims through additional scientific rigor. From the results of his research studies, he would eventually find that there are five moral values that consistently distinguish liberals and conservatives: (1) Harm/Care, (2) Fairness/Reciprocity, (3) Ingroup/Loyalty, (4) Authority/Respect, and (5) Purity/Sanctity (Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Nosek & Haidt, 2012). Using the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ), it was learned that liberals measure more with harm/care and fairness/reciprocity while conservatives characterize more with ingroup/loyalty, authority/respect, and purity/sanctity (Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Graham, Nosek, & Haidt, 2012). Again, the conservative traits relate to the beehive effect as it pertains to the Durkheimian model of Belonging, Believing, and Doing (Haidt, 2012). The following sections will provide more scholarly insight in revealing the correlative factors between moral values, political orientation, happiness, and religiosity.

MFT, Political Orientation, and Religiosity

With their benchmark study, Graham et al. (2009) further explored the possibility that differences in moral values exist within the demographic of political orientation. Again, the characteristics of moral values include (1) Harm/Care, (2) Fairness/Reciprocity, (3) Ingroup/Loyalty, (4) Authority/Respect, and (5) Purity/Sanctity. Based on previous research on political orientation and sexual morality (Haidt & Hersh, 2001), as well as the amelioration of the five moral values known as the Moral Foundations Theory (MFT; Haidt & Graham, 2007), the authors revealed the validity and reliability of these characteristics. That is, Graham and Haidt confirmed (2009) that while liberals associate more with harm/care and fairness/reciprocity, conservatives relate more with ingroup/loyalty, authority/respect, and purity/sanctity. Some of the most current research has confirmed these effects of moral values of liberal and conservative political orientation (Graham & Haidt, 2010; Graham et al., 2011; Haidt, 2007; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Nørager, 2014; Graham, Nosek, & Haidt, 2012). Furthermore, on how religiosity contributes to the conservative characteristics of happiness and morality, data revealed that the more liberal the participants, the less they measure for purity / sanctity (Graham et al., 2009). That is, the "binding foundations" of conservative values relate to a combination of moral intuition and religion so that communities can maintain group loyalty and duty (Graham et al., 2012, p. 1031; Haidt's (2012). Finally, A more recent study using MFT and ROS revealed that intrinsic religiosity was more strongly related to the conservative moral values of purity/sanctity than for liberal morals (Bulbulia, Osborne, & Sibley, 2013).

MFT, Political Orientation, Happiness, and Religiosity

In a recent study conducted on political orientation and happiness, Schlenker et al. (2012) suspected that because of unique personality types of conservatives – such as fearfulness, defensiveness, and low self-esteem – liberals would possess traits of optimism and happiness. These studies are similar to those of conservative traits of prejudice, fearful of the unknown, and higher measures of authoritarian religious fundamentalism (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992); relative to these traits are previous studies on fear and social anxiety (Weeks, Heimberg, & Rodebaugh, 2008a; 2008b; Weeks, Heimberg, Rodebaugh, Goldin, & Gross, 2012). However, what the authors learned was the opposite effect in that conservatives had higher measures of happiness than liberals (Schlenker et al., 2012). There are several reasons for conservative happiness, which relate to the variables of religiosity and morality. For example, as Schlenker et al. (2012) acknowledged that although SJT was a legitimate correlative factor for conservative happiness (Napier & Jost, 2008; Jost et al., 2014), they also suggested that after having controlled for age, income, marital status, and church attendance, there was more to the happiness gap than the concept of SJT alone.

As a result, what the authors learned was that the happiness gap entailed the differences in moral values, which included conservatives' level of transcendent moral beliefs (e.g., religiosity and moral convictions), personal agency, conscientiousness, and positive outlook in correlation to the group-binding effect found in religious institutions (Schlenker et al., 2012). They used some psychometrics scales to measure the happiness gap, which included the RWA (Right-Wing Authoritarianism), ROS (Religiosity

Orientation Scale – intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity), and the SWLS (Satisfaction With Life Scale). Although a separate study conducted by Jost et al. (2014) used a meta-analytic strategy on political orientation and happiness, they concluded with the same results in that conservatives do associate with higher measures of happiness in correlation to SJT, religiosity, and moral differences (i.e., Protestant Work Ethic). These correlative factors of political orientation, happiness, and religiosity now transition into the following sections on perceived stress and its relationship with happiness and religiosity.

Introduction to Stress

Studied for over a century, the issue of stress is a complex phenomenon. By 1914, an American physiologist by the name of Walter Bradford Cannon (1916) had already explained how the process of stress worked, which entailed a variety of emotional issues ranging from the response to hunger, pain, anger, and fear. Cannon (1914; 1916) was able to explain in detail what occurred at the biological level when experiencing these types of physical responses. From increased blood sugar to the rush of adrenaline, Cannon (1914; 1916) was able to describe the human body's reaction to varietal emotions accurately. He also used an evolutionary expression as that of fight-or-flight in describing the natural response for when the body and mind encounter a particular situation in the environment, in which a person virtually instantly makes a survivability decision (Cannon, 1914; 1916). Within this study, Cannon (1914; 1916) also expounds on Charles Darwin's theory that the sexual responses of men are like animals in that they can jettison any rational thought and behavior to acquire sexual pleasure. This idea of sexual stressors in contemporary times has not changed in that it is a process of sexual selection and

competition for mating privileges, which in theory continues as that of Darwin's idea of natural selection and genetic survival (Nesse & Young, 2000; Buss, 2009).

As Darwin explained, humans have not only evolved their unique animalistic traits of contending with stressful situations as that of sexual selection and mating (Buss, 2009), but humans also contend with personality differences (Buss & Hawley, 2011). Essentially, Darwin's general process of evolution via natural selection is no different from animals regarding stress as it relates to emotions and behavioral reactions. Like humans, not only do animals differ in personality, but they also have group hierarchy. One example derives from primatology studies that have shown an increase in stress levels for baboons and macaque monkeys with social hierarchy (Sapolsky, 1988; Sapolsky, 2004; Sapolsky, 2005; Virgin & Sapolsky, 1997).

Over the past few decades with his neuroendocrinology research on baboons in the African Serengeti, Robert Sapolsky (1988; 2004; 2005; Uno, Tarara, Else, Suleman, & Sapolsky, 1989; Virgin & Sapolsky, 1997) learned that alpha males have fewer glucocorticoids (GCs – stress hormone) in their blood than their subordinates. Juxtaposed with human society, later studies revealed that like baboon communities, humans also appeared to have this same hierarchical effect on stress levels. That is, the workplace environment (Judge, Ilies, & Zhang, 2012; Kaur, Chodagiri, & Reddi, 2013) produces higher stress levels for subordinates than those ranked higher on the corporate ladder, which also pertains to socioeconomic status (Marmot & Shipley, 1996; Marmot, 2004; Sapolsky, 1988; 2004; 2005; Virgin & Sapolsky, 1997). One contemporary case of this issue on workplace hierarchy and stress relates to the 2008 U.S. recession, in which

workplace stress alone had cost the U.S. approximately $190 billion (Goh, Pfeffer, & Zenios, 2015). Some of the health risks related to this phenomenon include cardiovascular disease, issues with the respiratory system, rheumatoid arthritis, psychological diseases, as well as increased infant mortality rates and low birth rates (Sapolsky, 2005).

Stress and Disease

Expounding on stress from the aspect of evolution (Goldstein & Kopin, 2007), there are two primary forms of stress known as acute and chronic (American Psychological Association, 2012). From a theoretical perspective over the past century, acute and chronic stress were adopted by an endocrinologist by the name of Hans Selye (Boonstra & Fox, 2013; Selye, 1950; 1953; 1955; 1973). Selye would eventually derive the theory called the General Adaptation Syndrome-GAS, which is a process of stages that can range from a level of resistance to a level of exhaustion. For example, while acute stress is the first stage of resistance that is a short-term necessity for daily living (Boonstra & Fox, 2013; Selye, 1950; 1953; 1955; 1973), it can also be described as the fight-or-flight instinct as described by Cannon (1914; 1916). However, once acute stress becomes constant over an extended period, it transforms into an unhealthy stage of exhaustion in the form of chronic stress (Boonstra & Fox, 2013; Gouin et al., 2012a; 2012b; Selye, 1950; 1953; 1955; 1973; Stress, n.d.).

As the body succumbs to chronic stress, some debilitating health issues can arise over the long term and produce a deadly outcome (Blanchard et al., 1998; Boonstra & Fox, 2013; Gouin et al., 2012a; Goldstein & Kopin, 2007; Hanson & Chen, 2010;

Lundberg, 2006; McEwen, 2008; Nesse & Young, 2000; Stress, n.d.; Yuen, 2011). Examples of harmful effects of stress are as follows: negatively affected cognitive function (McEwen & Sapolsky, 2008); increased levels of cortisol, which damages the hippocampus in inducing memory loss or deficits (Lupien et al., 1998); increased levels of glucocorticoids found in primates and corticosterone in rodents (Sapolsky, 1988; Sapolsky, 2004; Sapolsky, 2005; Virgin & Sapolsky, 1997); and, cerebral inflammation, which can induce levels of dementia (Gouin et al., 2012a, 2012b). Once the general effects of varietal health conditions and disease perpetuate without proper forms of intervention (Selye, 1955; Selye, 1973; Shively, Register, & Clarkson, 2009; Szabo, Tache, & Somogyi, 2012; Taché & Brunnhuber, 2008), damage can occur at the cellular level. This form of cell damage is better known as telomere shortening, which is essential for protecting chromosomes (Epel, McEwen, & Ickovics, 1998; Epel, Daubenmier, Moskowitz, & Blackburn, 2009; Epel et al., 2004).

Thus far, this section has entailed some essential seminal work on the evolution of stress, differences between acute and chronic stress, the biological damage that occurs under chronic stress conditions, a number of diseases caused by constant exposure to high stress levels, and the similarities of stress between primates and humans that pertain to socioeconomic status and workplace hierarchy. Explained in the following section is another type of stress known as perceived stress, and pertains to this study on happiness, religiosity, and the possible correlation with political orientation. The primary strategy for this study in measuring stress differences of political orientation is to measure a person's perceived stress – also known as psychological stress – by using a

psychometrics instrument called the Perceived Stress Scale-10 (PSS-10). The history of perceived stress and the PSS-10 scales explained in further detail in the following section.

Perceived Stress Explained

Once known as psychological stress, perceived stress is a term used to describe a person's unique experience and inability to cope with any variety of stress factors (Eriksen, Lazarus, & Strange, 1952; Lazarus, Baker, Broverman, & Mayer, 1957). Beginning in the 19th century, social or psychological stress was described as such: "The atmosphere which the Englishman and the Frenchman breathe is full of psychological germs calculated to infect his nervous system with disease, whether arising from the commercial, the political, or the religious world" (Tuke, 1878, p. 95). During this period of industrialization, scientists and physicians such as Daniel Tuke (1878a; 1878b) were theorizing all possibilities of what multitude of variables within the social environment was primarily responsible for people's inability to maintain sanity. In his work on analyzing particular demographics in any given society that were affected the most, Tuke (1878a; 1878b) believed that upper-class citizens suffered from insanity just as much, if not more than the lower class. As he also theorized his perspective on societal stressors in how to prevent such psychological problems, he suggested that potential variables such as alcohol abuse, domestic stress, business stressors, and excessive competition, could all be associated with both lower and upper socioeconomic class citizens (Tuke, 1878a; 1878b).

By the turn of the 20th century, there was the belief that to prevent or treat psychological stress and fatigue, unique methods needed to be applied. Some methods

ranged from seclusion, massage therapy, and even electric shock (Waterman, 1909). By the time research had begun to delve into the causation and treatment of psychological stress, new theoretical forms of thought began focusing on personality. One previous study conducted on adolescents for stress management and level of resilience revealed a couple of issues. For example, those who had the most trouble adjusting to stress were the recipients of not only poor upbringing in childhood, but also a personality type that required individual attention to help prevent adjustment difficulties (Frank, 1928). Still in its infancy at the time, researchers and their studies on psychological stress and its correlation to personality types made some ground-breaking discoveries (Eriksen, Lazarus, & Strange, 1952; Lazarus, Baker, Broverman, & Mayer, 1957). In contemporary times, research on perceived stress and personality types is still an ongoing process (Ebstrup, Eplov, Pisinger, & Jørgensen, 2011; Mohamadi Hasel, Besharat, Abdolhoseini, Alaei Nasab, & Niknam, 2013; Moate, Gnilka, West, & Bruns, 2016; Mróz, 2015).

Measuring for levels of psychological stress (Kiecolt-Glaser, McGuire, Robles, & Glaser, 2002; McEwen & Saplosky, 1995), or perceived stress (Cohen et al., 1983), has slowly evolved over the past century. In the 1960s, a three-hypothesis model was derived by Margaret Hermann (1966) that associated a form of psychological stress with feelings of a threat when striving to achieve specific goals. Today, there are psychometrics scales that measure perceived stress beyond feelings of threat. Some measurements range from Perceived Stress Reduction Measure (Leung, 2015), Postnatal Perceived Stress Inventory (Razureal et al., 2013), Antenatal Perceived Stress Inventory (Razurel et al., 2014), and the Perceived Stress Reactivity Scale (Schlotz, Yim, Zoccola, Jansen, & Schulz, 2011).

Although an array of psychometrics instruments is being used today to measure perceived stress, one instrument used widely today is called the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and has been reliable and valid since 1983 (Cohen et al., 1983).

Originally named PSS-14 (Cohen et al., 1983; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Oman, Hedberg, Thoresen, 2006), the PSS-10 analyzes a person's perception of stress in daily life over the past month, as well as the degree of ability to cope with those stressors (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012; Cohen, Janicki-Deverts, & Miller, 2007; Cohen, Kamarck, & Marmelstein, 1983). Previous studies using the PSS-10 have correlated adverse health conditions with increased levels of perceived stress (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012; Cohen, Janicki-Deverts, & Miller, 2007; Cohen, Kamarck, & Marmelstein, 1983; Oman et al., 2006). As a result, data have revealed a relationship between perceived stress and the increase of chronic stress levels, which adversely affects one's immune system and increased disease risks (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012; Cohen, Janicki-Deverts, & Miller, 2007; Cohen et al., 1983). Other studies on perceived stress have included variables such as cigarette smoking and relapsing (Cohen & Lichtenstein, 1990), the common cold (Cohen, Tyrell, & Smith, 1993), and the association of chronic stress and damage down to the cellular level (Cohen, Kaplan, Cunnick, Manuck, & Rabin, 1992; Cohen et al., 2012). The demographics of stress differences are limited to race, sex, socioeconomic status, and education level. Therefore, this limitation has allowed for an existing gap in the literature on the possibility that other demographics as that of political orientation may be affected by perceived stress.

As a reiteration of the social problem under analysis for this study, over the past few years, the U.S. has succumbed to a 30-year high with increased stress levels (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012). Elevated levels of chronic stress are correlated with a weakened immune system, decreased rates of life expectancy, increased rates of obesity, and non-communicable disease deaths (Boonstra & Fox, 2013; Gouin et al., 2012; McEwen & Sapolsky, 1995; Social Progress Index, 2014; Sapolsky, 1988; Sapolsky, 2005; Selye, 1955; Selye, 1973; Stress, n.d.). While studies have shown that the U.S. is at a 30-year high with increased stress levels, some of the demographics that are affected the most are women, the unemployed, and young adults (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012). The premise of this study is to explore whether other demographics in the U.S. identify as having unique characteristics of stress and coping ability (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000), and one such demographic is political orientation.

To reiterate the second social problem under analysis for the study, the U.S. has also succumbed to a 20-year high with political dichotomy (PEW Research Center, 2014). There are a variety of studies that have distinguished characteristics of liberal and conservative political orientation, which can range from differences in personality types (Carney, Jost, Gosling, & Potter, 2008; Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003; Hirsh et al., 2010; Rentfrow et al., 2013; Schlenker et al., 2012), moral values (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; Graham et al., 2011), and degrees of cleanliness (Carney et al., 2008). Although the topics of perceived stress and political orientation are better understood today than ever before, however, these two variables have yet to be researched together in the same study.

Furthermore, and as a reiteration on happiness and religiosity, previous studies have shown correlations between increased happiness and religiosity with increased levels of conservative political orientation (Bixter, 2015; Napier & Jost, 2008; Schlenker et al., 2012); while other studies have revealed increased levels of happiness and religiosity (Moghaddam, 2008; Snoep, 2008; Swinyard, Kau, & Phua, 2001) with decreased levels of perceived stress (Clements & Ermakova, 2012; Reutter & Bigatti, 2014). With that, the general outlook would appear that the more conservative a person measures, there will be a correlation with increased happiness and religiosity, therefore correlating with decreased levels of perceived stress. Additionally, it is essential to highlight previous research that has revealed the correlation between happiness and religiosity with lower measures of perceived stress (Clements & Ermakova, 2012; Reutter & Bigatti, 2014; Schiffrin & Nelson, 2010). After considering the results of these previous studies on how happiness and religiosity correlate with political orientation, it would appear as though perceived stress also has a correlative effect with political orientation.

Perceived Stress and Relationship with Happiness and Religiosity

Scientists have studied the evolutionary trait known as stress for over a century (Cannon, 1914; 1916). Including such evolutionary responses as that of hunger, pain, anger, and fear (Cannon, 1914; 1916), stress can have its benefits for survival purposes as that of acute stress levels; however, chronic levels can induce the potentiality of disease and death (Goldstein & Kopin, 2007). Although there is much understanding on the topic of stress in contemporary research, the fundamental factors remain the same. One

strategy for measuring stress levels is by using a psychometrics scale known as the Perceived Stress Scale-10 (PSS-10). Before the etymologization of the term perceived stress, researchers explored what they termed at the time as psychological stress (Eriksen et al., 1952; Lazarus et al., 1957; Tuke, 1878a; 1878b). Today, researchers now refer to the terms of psychological stress as that of perceived stress.

When using the PSS-10 instrument in contemporary research, one defines perceived stress as a person's ability to cope with daily stressors, and to what extent one is affected by specific stressors over the past month (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012; Cohen et al., 2007; Cohen et al., 1983). In using this strategy for measuring stress, recent studies have correlated high measures of perceived stress with chronic levels, which are also associated with the inducement of the common cold and other diseases (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012; Cohen et al., 2007; Cohen et al., 1983; Oman et al., 2006). Some of these studies have also revealed that the U.S. has succumbed to a 30-year high with increased stress levels, which include the demographics of race, sex, socioeconomic status, and educational attainment (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012). Regarding the effects of perceived stress, other societal demographics appear to help reduce measures of perceived stress, and they are the variables of happiness and religiosity. The following sections entail some of the most current research on perceived stress, and its relationship with happiness and religiosity.

Perceived Stress and Happiness

In striving for happiness, people can perceive the emotion of happiness differently across a variety of contextual circumstances. Whether a person's level of happiness is

negated in correlation to such issues as that of loneliness (Cacioppo et al., 2006) and marital status (Lucas et al., 2003), much of this happiness-negation effect is an inducement of increased stress levels. For example, some current research studies have revealed a correlation between increased measures of religiosity with increased happiness while using the Subjective Well-Being (SWB) psychometrics instrument (Diener & Chan, 2011). Measuring Satisfaction With Life (SWLS) and Subjective Happiness (SHS), researchers learned that while using the PSS-10, people who measure for having less perceived stress also measure for having higher levels of happiness with both the SWLS and SHS (Ruiz et al., 2014; Schiffrin & Nelson, 2010).

Perceived Stress and Religiosity

Previous studies that have focused on people with physical ailments have found a positive association between religiosity and stress reduction (Siegel et al., 2001). While a variety of stressful life events can adversely affect one's health in correlation to increased stress levels, current research has revealed correlational effects of intrinsic religiosity with decreased stress levels. For example, as Clements and Ermakova (2012) researched intrinsic religiosity and its impact on stress, the authors learned that there is a positive association with this form of religiosity with lower measures of stress. In a different study for measuring stress, Hunter and Merrill (2013) used a strategy that entailed analyzing the differences in intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity while detecting the differences in blood pressure. The research resulted in those who measure higher for intrinsic religiosity also measure for having lower levels of blood pressure reactivity (Hunter & Merrill, 2013). Finally, in a study that used the PSS-10 to measure stress levels and religiosity, Reutter

and Bigatti (2014) learned that people who participate more in religiosity do have lower measures of perceived stress.

Summary

This unique study entails several themes that highlight the possibility that perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity may predict measures of political orientation. The primary theme of this study is two social problems in the U.S. under analysis, which are an increase of stress levels (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012) and political dichotomy (PEW Research Center, 2014). Although an array of research exists on both political orientation and stress, these two variables have yet to be researched together in the same study. This gap between liberal and conservative political orientation and stress types makes this current study the first of its kind.

A second theme of this study that relates to political orientation and stress are health disparities, which research has shown that although liberals are generally healthier, conservatives are as healthy as liberals when social capital is made available (Herian et al., 2014; Navarro et al., 2006; Rentfrow et al., 2013). The essence of including this theme of health disparities is in part due to the U.S.'s present status quo on the quality of health and wellbeing, which is one of the worse ratings in comparison to all other developed countries in the world (Social Progress Index, 2014). More importantly, some of the health disparities include life expectancy, obesity rates, and non-communicable disease deaths (Social Progress Index, 2014), which all have been directly related to the effects of chronic stress levels (Boonstra & Fox, 2013; Gouin et al., 2012; Sapolsky, 1988; Sapolsky, 2005; Selye, 1955; Selye, 1973; Stress, n.d.). In learning more about the

demographics of liberal and conservative political orientation and whether stress differences exist, unique strategies can then be derived in the fields of clinical and health psychology to help mitigate stress levels per individual demographics.

The third theme of this current study entails two theories that distinguish the differences of liberal and conservative political orientation, happiness, and religiosity, and they are the System Justification Theory (SJT) and The Moral Foundations Theory (MFT). The concept of SJT proposes that conservatives are happier than liberals in correlation to the acceptance of social and economic inequality (Napier & Jost, 2008; Schlenker et al., 2012). The MFT concept proposes a correlational effect from unique moral values of conservatives with their tendency of being more religious than liberals (Graham & Haidt, 2010; Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011). Based on this conceptual outlook, a fourth and final theme entails a variety of literature on the relationship between high measures of happiness and religiosity, and an inverse effect of low measures of perceived stress (Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005; Clements & Ermakova, 2012; Reutter & Bigatti, 2014; Schriffrin & Nelson, 2010).

In all, some uncertainties still exist as to what extent left-right political orientation correlates with perceived stress levels. As an array of literature has shown thus far, there is little debate that liberals and conservatives possess many unique traits that distinguish this demographic from one another – however, there are still some gaps and unanswered questions left to address. One such gap includes the mixed reviews of whether SJT alone can thoroughly explain the phenomenon of conservative happiness. Some researchers suggest that the sociopolitical attitude on social and economic inequality does not fully

explain conservative happiness (Bixter, 2015; Choma et al., 2009; Jetten et al., 2013; Schlenker et al., 2012). Another gap to address is whether the concept of MFT is accurate on the association of conservative moral values with the potential for religiosity and happiness characteristics (Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011; Haidt, 2006; 2012; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt, 2012). Finally, the first gap to address is whether the combination of perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity will reveal any measurement differences of political orientation on the liberal and conservative continuum.

In dealing with these gaps, Chapter-3 entails information that explains in depth the rationale on this study's research design and methodology, which includes the sample size calculation, sample acquisition, as well as any possible threats to validity. Firstly, this current study uses a quantitative model via a survey methodology. Using a quantitive model is the preferred strategy due in part to how previous studies researched political orientation, perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity. Therefore, by replicating previous research designs and methodology, this strategy will help narrow the research gap as to whether there is any correlating effect on varying levels of political orientation and perceived stress.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The literature review provided an in-depth analysis on the two U.S. social problems under observation: a 20-year high in political dichotomy (PEW Research Center, 2014) and 30 years of increased stress levels (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012). The current research problem entails the fact that political orientation and perceived stress have yet to be researched together within the same study. Using the variables happiness and religiosity assist in addressing the research gap between political orientation and perceived stress. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between perceived stress, happiness, religiosity and political orientation in the U.S.

Chapter-3 includes several sections: Research Design, Methodology, Threats to Validity, and Ethical Procedures. The research design includes the variables under analysis, which are political orientation, perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity, which analyzes the possible connections between variables per the research questions and hypotheses. The section on methodology includes several sources of information that explain the population under analysis, sampling procedures, as well as the justification of sample size via the power analysis. Also included in this section is information on the instrumentation and how this current study calculated statistical testing procedures, to include any possible threats to the validity. Finally, Chapter-3 concludes with the section on ethical issues as it pertains to maintaining ethical standards in protecting the rights and privacy of participants.

Research Design

This study explored the relationship between perceived stress and political orientation, and to what extent happiness and religiosity play a role. While based on a hierarchical multiple regression model, political orientation has been designated as the dependent variable, while the independent variables are perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity. Additional covariates include race, sex, age, marital status, number of children, cigarette smoking, education level, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination. The mitigation of time and resource constraints have been made possible due to the strategy of sample recruitment and the process of data collection. For example, as this research study entails a survey methodology, participants accessed the survey via an online medium. This strategy allowed for easy survey accessibility for the participants, as well as an expeditious process for me to analyze the data using SPSS.

Additionally, and while based on previous studies, this current research encompasses similar strategies that have analyzed varietal aspects of liberal and conservative political orientation, perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity. The design of this study allows for participants to categorize themselves on a liberal-conservative continuum, and then to identify whether there are stress differences along varietal measures of political orientation. Also based on previous studies is the methodology of using a survey; but rather than limiting data to a university sample, this current study diversifies across the entire U.S. population to help acquire a more generalizable account of whether an effect exists between political orientation and perceived stress. More importantly, what makes this current research unique from all other previous studies is

the fact that political orientation and perceived stress are studied together for the first time. Therefore, this research could help advance the knowledge of the subject matter in order to learn more about the demographics of political orientation, as well as the health concerns of psychological stress.

Methodology

Population

In choosing a sample of the U.S. population to research, this study focuses on people who are at least of voting age, but who are not necessarily registered voters or have a history of voting. For example, with the size of the U.S. population being approximately 320 million, a PEW Research study calculated that in 2012 around 241 million (75%) Americans were of voting age, however, only about 129 million (53.6%) voted (DeSilver, 2016). Four years later in 2016, and despite high voter registration, the U.S. was still near a 20-year low for voter turnout at 55% (Wallace, 2016). Because of low levels of voter turnout, it would appear that Americans are not heavily engaged in the political process; however, a calculation in 2012 revealed that about 202 million Americans were registered to vote – approximately 84% of the population (DeSilver, 2016). These registration percentages reveal that the U.S. has one of the highest voter registration processes in the world (DeSilver, 2016), therefore, allowing the availability of choosing from a larger population.

Sampling Procedures and Data Collection

A contemporary strategy for acquiring a sample is by utilizing the Internet. A Pew Research study conducted on Internet usage in the U.S. found that approximately 84% of

Americans by 2015 use the Internet, which has been a steady increase every year since the year 2000 – to include all levels of socioeconomic class (Perrin & Duggan, 2015). Having acquired a sample for this study entailed using Amazon's Mechanical Turk. More researchers in the social sciences are conducting this procedure and have also been found to have a high-quality validity rating compared to traditional procedures as that of door-to-door, and telephonic strategies. (Barger et al., 2011; Buhrmester et al., 2011).

More importantly, Amazon's Mechanical Turk included approximately 750,000 people worldwide in 2015 who either participated or accessed the survey research website (Hitlin, 2016). In comparison to several decades of research studies conducted in the college campus domain, the Mechanical Turk strategy expands beyond the typical 18 to 22-year-old university population by exploring varietal age groups and demographics. This strategy also allows for better analysis of generalizability across the entire U.S. population, to include a less biased sample as that of university convenience samples (Barger et al., 2011; Buhrmester et al., 2011).

In determining an effect and sample size, Cohen (1992) recommended that using a power of .80 via F-test is the proper strategy for calculating an 80% chance of acquiring an effect (Field, 2013). For this study, a power of .80 was used, with an alpha level of .05 and an effect size of .15. While including 12 predictors, and after using the G*Power 3.1.9.2 version, the sample size calculation was 127 participants required to determine a statistically significant effect. However, in case surveys were incomplete, to include other discrepancies as that of any potential outliers, 201 participants were selected for the final sample size.

Recruiting procedures required a two-step online process that allows for anonymity. For example, I created both Amazon (i.e., Mechanical Turk, or MTurk) and PsychData accounts. These two websites provide technological advancements for recruitment, survey participation, data collection, as well as compatibility with SPSS for data analyses. In the first step of the recruiting process, I submitted information about the survey on Amazon's MTurk recruitment webpage. Once an MTurk participant – also known as a Worker (Barger et al., 2011; Buhrmester et al., 2011) – chose to take the survey, the webpage address redirected the person to the PsychData website. Upon entering PsychData, potential participants were then instructed to complete the Informed Consent form, which included information on any number of ethical concerns. Such ethical concerns included potential risks and benefits, confidentiality and anonymity, and the option to discontinue participating without any repercussions (except no payment occurred for those who withdraw from the survey). After completion of the survey, the data was downloaded and collected by using the SPSS tab within the PsychData survey domain, which are compatible with one another.

To perform a task, the participants gain access to surveys that they are interested in, also known as Human Intelligence Tasks (HITS). Once participants choose a survey of interest, the PsychData webpage address redirects them to the survey site. After completion of the survey, the researcher compensates the participant with money for their full cooperation. For example, studies have shown that while a researcher can gain the required number of participants for only 5 or 10 cents for a 30-minute survey, the same number of participants were acquired in half the time for only 50 cents (Barger et al.,

2011; Buhrmester et al., 2011). Since the survey for this research study could take approximately 30 to 45 minutes, participants were paid $1.00 in compensation.

Furthermore, if a participant was not entirely cooperative in the aspect of not answering questions correctly, or not completing the survey in its entirety, I discarded the survey while also choosing not to pay the participant. Some additional questions were added to the survey that required the participant to identify and answer the correct choice (e.g., If you have read this question thoroughly, you must answer "I Agree."). This process helps ensure the participant is paying attention to the context and not randomly choosing answers to finish a task in order to collect money. Amazon Mechanical Turk also assists the researcher in identifying people who have a history of being reliable participants, which means appropriately completing surveys. For participants to maintain a highly reliable rating with MTurk, they must consistently complete tasks, or else MTurk will be able to identify whether a participant is just randomly selecting answers to finish a task strictly for monetary gain—for example. In cases such as these, MTurk has a participant or Worker category known as master's level rating. This rating entails the researcher paying the Worker more money for participating; however, and more importantly, the degree of reliability is higher in that the Worker will correctly complete the survey (The Mechanical Turk Blog, n.d.).

The inclusion criteria of participants entail all ages of 18 and older, all races, sex, religious affiliations, and socioeconomic status. Although there is generalizability across international boundaries on the validity and reliability aspects of political orientation, perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity, this study focused specifically on American

citizens. Exclusion criteria entailed non-American citizens and those who did not meet the voting-age requirement of 18 years; I also discarded results if participants did not acknowledge one's age, or fully complete the survey questionnaire.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

There are five psychometrics instruments used for this study, which are as follows: Modified Wilson-Patterson Inventory (MWPI), Perceived Stress Scale-10 (PSS-10), Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS), Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS), and Religious Orientation Scale (ROS). I chose MWPI, PSS-10, SWLS, SHS, and ROS due to the instruments' historical measures of validity and reliability, as well as continued usage from current research in the social sciences.

MWPI. Beginning with the Modified Wilson-Patterson Inventory (MWPI), this instrument was developed by Smith et al. (2011) as a contemporary version of Wilson and Patterson's (1968) original Conservatism Scale. The MWPI is a more compatible version given today's American sociopolitical issues (Smith et al., 2011). Having taken a sample of 200 American participants, Smith et al. (2011) used a scale to measure responses of *agree, disagree,* or *uncertain* on 21 sociopolitical issues. Examples: 1. School Prayer, 2. Pornography, 3. Illegal Immigration, 4. Death Penalty. In measuring across the left-right sociopolitical continuum, the MWPI uses 0 to represent extreme liberals to 21 in representing extreme conservatives. The statistical data entailed a mean of 10.65 (SD 3.85) with a range from 2 to 18.5, a Cronbach's alpha of .74 and a split-half correlation coefficient of .74, and with an overall normal distribution (Smith et al., 2011).

Smith et al. (2011) used a self-report Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly liberal) to 7 (strongly conservative) in conjunction with the MWPI, in which the mean score was 4.12 (SD 1.77). The MWPI and self-report instruments analyzed an array of political ideological principles for two separate scales (i.e., Appendixes A: Society Works Best Instrument, and B: Implicit Associations Test). Having used a Bivariate correlation (Pearson's *r*), the results of Appendix A were a .66 correlation with the MWPI and a .56 correlation with the self-report scale (both measures were $p < .01$, 2-tailed *t*-test). Appendix B (IAT) resulted in a .66 correlation with the MWPI and .59 with the self-report scale.

PSS-10. Originally developed by Sheldon Cohen in 1983, the Perceived Stress Scale-14 (PSS-14) was designed to study psychological stress from events in one's life. The PSS-10 is a 5-point scale that is scored by the following representation: 0 = never, 1 = almost never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = fairly often, 4 = very often. Example: 1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly? The PSS-14 was first used to analyze three groups: two of the groups were college students from the University of Oregon, and the third was for smoking-cessation treatment. As a result, the PSS-14 across all three sample groups had coefficient alpha reliability scores of .84, .85, and .86. The data also revealed concurrent and predictive validity of the PSS-14 with the smokers group. After several follow-up studies, a shorter four-item version of the PSS-14 resulted in a coefficient alpha reliability score of .72. Also, the PSS-14 after a one-month treatment (.31, $p < .01$) was able to predict smoking rates after a three-month treatment (.39, $p < .001$). Overall, the higher the scores from the

PSS-14, the higher the smoking rates of the smoking cessation group (Cohen et al., 1983).

In a more recent study, Cohen and Janicki-Deverts (2012) included three separate surveys that used the PSS-10. As a result, the Harris Poll Survey from 1983 had a Cronbach's alpha of .78, while the other two eNation surveys from 2006 and 2009 had a Cronbach's alpha of .91. Overall results that include variables of race, gender, education level, and socioeconomic status are provided as follows: "stress levels increased in Whites, F (1, 3394) = 5.73, $p < .02$; men, F (1, 1883) = 5.63, $p < .02$; those aged 45 to 54 years, F (1, 933) = 19.89, $p < .001$; those aged 55 to 64 years, F (1, 693) = 6.96, $p < .01$; those with 4-year college degrees, F (1, 860) = 3.30, $p < .06$; those with advanced degrees, F (1, 402) = 3.77, $p < .07$; and those with full-time employment, F (1, 2106) = 10.44, $p < .001$" (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012, p. 1328).

SWLS. Diener et al. (1985) developed the original Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS). This instrument measures for global life satisfaction, and defined as a person's perspective of life in general, but not events. Diener et al. (1985) initially used their SWLS instrument in 1985 with a sample of college students from the University of Illinois. The authors had first devised 48 items on the SWLS instrument but then narrowed it down to only five items due to the similar meaning of terminology. The 5-item scale included a measurement from 1 through 7 but scored in 5-point increments ranging from 5 = *low satisfaction* to 35 = *high satisfaction*. The authors used a sample of 176 in the first study, and a sample of 76 from the original sample two months later to compare the retest data.

As a result, the first study had a mean of 23.5 (SD = 6.43) and resulted in a correlation coefficient of .82, and a .87 coefficient alpha from the two-month retest. In the second study, the authors compared the SWLS with 11 other psychometrics instruments designed to measure Subjective Well-Being. The results revealed moderately strong correlation with 10 of the instruments for Samples 1 and 2, to include Fordyce I (.58 and .57), Fordyce (percent – .58 and .62), DPQ (.68), Cantril (.62 and .66), Gurin (.59 and .47), Andrews and Withey (.68 and .62), Campbell (.75 and .59), Bradburn – PAS (.50 and .51), Bradburn – NAS (-.37 and -.32), and Summed Domain Satisfaction (.57). Approximately eight years later, Pavot and Diener (1993) performed follow-up studies and investigated the SWLS used in other studies and found that this instrument remained valid and reliable, as well as generalizability across other cultures and languages that include France, Netherlands, Russia, China, and Korea.

In a more recent study conducted on political orientation and happiness, Schlenker et al. (2012) used approximately 27 different scales to analyze differences of happiness of liberals and conservatives, which included the SWLS. In measuring happiness, Schlenker et al. (2012) combined two measures of happiness, which included the SWLS and a single-item instrument asking overall life satisfaction in general. As a result, both the SWLS and single-item scale revealed strong correlation between the two (r = .63, p < .001), and with significant correlation with conservative values (rs =.16 and .17, p < .001). Overall, after controlling for gender, age, and socioeconomic status (r = .16, p < .001), conservative values were correlated with life satisfaction (r = .18, p < .001).

SHS. Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) developed the original Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS). The overall samples used for the study included approximately 2732 participants in 14 different studies (i.e., 14 separate samples), which ranged from U.S. college students, city and town communities, to Russian college students and communities. The measurement uses a scale of 1 through 7, with 1 = least happiness to 7 = greatest happiness, with the fourth item as reversed scored. There were five other scales used to analyze the validation of SHS, which included Diener et al.'s (1985) SWLS instrument, along with the Affect Balance Scale, Delighted-Terrible Scale, Global Happiness Item, and the Recent Happiness Item. In 13 of the 14 samples used, the results revealed a Cronbach's alpha between .79 to .94 (M = .86) of high internal consistency across varietal ages, cultures, and languages in displaying generalizability.

ROS. Developed by Allport and Ross (1967), the Religious Orientation Scale (ROS) measures what is called intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. As intrinsic religiosity is a person who uses religion to give life meaning and direction, extrinsic is that of using religion for personal gain regarding material wealth or enhancing social status (Allport & Ross, 1967). The ROS instrument for both the 9 items of intrinsic religiosity and the 13 items of extrinsic religiosity is the same scoring process. For example, the intrinsic and extrinsic subscales are measured by a 5-point scale from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

Allport and Ross (1967) first used their ROS around 1967 with a sample of varietal religions to analyze measures of prejudice. A sample of 309 Americans was used that ranged from Roman Catholic (Massachusetts), Lutheran (New York), Nazarene

(South Carolina), Presbyterian (Pennsylvania), Methodists (Tennessee), and Baptists (Massachusetts). As a result, intrinsic religiosity correlated more with tolerance (e.g., Anti-Negro: 28.7 and Anti-Jewish: 22.6) as extrinsic religiosity correlated with higher measures of prejudice (Anti-Negro: 33.0 and Anti-Jewish: 24.6; Allport & Ross, 1967). Results also revealed that those who scored higher with intrinsic religiosity had a higher level of education than those of extrinsic religiosity ($p > .10$, $F = 2.45$).

In a more recent study on political orientation and happiness, Schlenker et al. (2012) used an array of psychometric instruments - including the ROS and SWLS - revealing that conservatives are more characterized with traditional religious values and intrinsic religiosity. Having used the Authoritarianism Scale to measure for levels of political orientation (e.g., the higher the measure of authoritarianism represents conservatism, and vice versa for liberalism), the results showed that higher measures of authoritarianism correlate with religiosity ($r = .65$, $p < .001$). Results in the Schlenker et al. (2012) study also revealed a significant prediction when combining authoritarianism and traditional religiosity (including intrinsic religiosity) with happiness ($B = .20$, $p < .002$). In all, results revealed strong correlation with Traditional Religious Beliefs and Intrinsic Religiosity ($r = .61$, $p < .001$).

Data Analysis Plan

The software used for data analyses was SPSS. After participants completed the online survey at PsychData, the results automatically transferred into SPSS due to compatibility purposes. The data-cleaning process occurred immediately upon the participant's completion of the survey to have ensured proper survey responding in such a

manner as that of Straight-Lining or Christmas-Tree Behavior. For example, straight-lining is the process in which the participant will not read the options in that each answer is the same throughout the survey (i.e., a straight-line pattern); while Christmas-Tree behavior is also where the participant does not read the questions and therefore chooses the answers in an ascending and descending manner (Zapin, 2013). As such fallacious responses could appear as outliers, they were omitted from the overall data analysis to mitigate inaccurate results (Zapin, 2013).

The following research questions and hypotheses have been designed to analyze the extent to which perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity, are predictors of political orientation:

*RQ*1: Is Perceived Stress a predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination?

H_o1: Perceived Stress is not a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination?

H_a1: Perceived Stress is a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination.

*RQ*2: Is Subjective Happiness a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination?

*Ho*2: Subjective Happiness is not a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination.

*Ha*2: Subjective Happiness is a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination.

*RQ*3: Is Satisfaction With Life a predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination?

*Ho*3: Satisfaction With Life is not a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination.

*Ha*3: Satisfaction With Life is a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination.

*RQ*4: Is Religiosity a predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination?

*Ho*4: Religiosity is not a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination.

H_a4: Religiosity is a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination.

There are several reasons for using a hierarchical multiple regression: One, political orientation (DV) will be used separately for each IV in four different models. Two, each model measures the variables on a continuous scale rather than categorical. Three, each of the four models entailed several covariates, or controlled variables (CVs) to assist in accounting for possible confounding effects. These covariates included sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination.

In having performed a power analysis using the G*Power 3.1.9.2 version for a medium effect size of .15 and a .80 probability correlational effect (Cohen, 1992; Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009; Field, 2013; Pallant, 2013), this resulted in a sample size of 127 participants required to determine a statistically significant effect. However, in recruiting a sufficient number of participants if some surveys were incomplete – to include other discrepancies such as outliers – 201 participants were acquired. Per previous research, this study will include descriptive statistics (e.g., mean and standard deviation), correlations (e.g., Pearson correlations), model summary (e.g., R squared, adjusted R squared, and standard error of the estimate), ANOVA, and coefficients.

Threats to Validity

Some typical issues that threaten external validity usually entail limiting a sample to a specific population, also limiting generalizability. Although this current study was

limited to the U.S. population, future research will eventually explore other cultures and languages for better understanding generalizability. To address the issue of external validity with this present study, I used a strategy that explored beyond the typical population of college students. The contemporary tool that this study used Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). This research domain helps mitigate the process of solely acquiring convenience samples such as college students, which can limit such demographics as age, as well as other social and cultural aspects as that of work experience and socioeconomic status (Barger et al., 2011; Buhrmester et al., 2011; Huff & Tingley, 2015). More importantly, recent research by Huff and Tingley (2015) found a strengthening of external validity by the use of MTurk due to age, gender, and race, and that more political scientists are using MTurk due to the amelioration of external validity.

All five instruments used for this current study are found valid and reliable. The following includes information on each psychometrics instrument regarding validity and reliability.

- Smith et al. (2011) tested the validity of the MWPI with a self-report political affiliation measurement, and by using Bivariate correlations (Pearson's *r*). The authors found strong correlations between the two instruments in measuring political orientation on the left-right continuum.
- Cohen and Janicki-Deverts (2012) first devised their PSS-14 in 1983, and eventually transformed it into a 10-item instrument called the PSS-10. Having included 4 of the items as reversed-scored, the authors have continued to use this instrument for over 30 years. The PSS-10 has also

been used with other instruments such as the SWLS and SHS and has been found valid and reliable for measuring levels of happiness.

- Pavot and Diener (1993) investigated the SWLS used in other studies and found that this instrument maintains validity and reliability, as well as across cultures and languages that include France, Netherlands, Russia, China, and Korea.
- Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) found that the SHS had internal validity and reliability after having used test-retest reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity measures with the other happiness scales used that included the SWLS.
- Schiffrin and Nelson (2010) validated both the SWLS and SHS with other happiness instruments known as the Authentic Happiness Inventory (AHI) and Fordyce's Happiness Scale. While using the SWLS and SHS, Schiffrin and Nelson (2010) found that the happier a person, the less perceived stress they have. This current study analyzed validity comparisons with the Schiffrin and Nelson (2010) study on SWLS, SHS, and the PSS-10.
- In testing the validity of Allport and Ross's ROS instrument, several studies have been conducted on ROS while researching perceived stress, happiness, and political orientation, and are as follows: One, Burris (1999) tested the ROS with the Intrinsic and Quest scales and found similar results. Two, Swinyard et al. (2001) found differences with intrinsic and

extrinsic religiosity while using their happiness scale known as Delighted-Terrible (D-T) scale. Three, Schlenker et al. (2012) acknowledged that the more religious a person is, the more inclined he/she is to possess better-coping strategies for dealing with stressful events. Overall, Schlenker et al. (2012) found that while measuring for ROS and SWLS, conservatives were happier and characterized more with intrinsic religiosity than liberals. Four, Clements and Ermakova (2012) and Reutter and Bigatti (2014) found that higher measures of religiosity resulted in lower measures of stress and blood pressure. More specifically, Hunter and Merrill (2013) found that intrinsic religiosity had a positive association with lower measures of perceived stress using the PSS-10.

Due to the first time being used together in research, political orientation (MWPI) and perceived stress (PSS-10) regarding construct validity are of concern. That is, there are no other studies to compare data results with for analyzing any construct validity discrepancies. However, because there are studies that used MWPI and PSS-10 separately with SWLS, SHS, and ROS, this study compares results with previous for understanding the quality of construct validity.

Another issue that could pose a threat to construct validity is the fact that samples used in many previous studies entailed college student participants. However, the MTurk participants used for this current study are potentially a more diverse and less biased sample than college students alone. While using MTurk is a newly derived strategy for acquiring a sample, the several comparisons drawn from the typical college samples do

show that MTurk is as equally valid and reliable, which is why an increasing number of behavioral, social, and political scientists are using MTurk. Again, Chapter-4 addresses any questioning concerns on construct validity with previous data results.

Ethical Procedures

Having gained access to participants for this study was accomplished using an Amazon MTurk account. Using this method allows potential participants to view a variety of surveys, as well as know how much the researcher will pay (e.g., payments can range from .05 cents to several dollars). This strategy of using MTurk also allowed for quick access to potential participants, which acquired 230 in just a few hours. However, this current study commenced after notification by Walden University's IRB. After completion of the required IRB application and submission to Walden's IRC and accepted, then the research process commenced.

Furthermore, no treatment of participants occurred for this current study. The only possible contact with potential participants would have been if a participant might have had questions on the survey, I could have then collaborated with him/her via email or telephonically. Regarding recruitment materials, participants accessed the survey through their Amazon MTurk account where they were redirected to the PsychData website to complete the survey. Everything on the MWPI, PSS-10, SWLS, SHS, and ROS was made available upon entry into the PsychData website. One ethical concern that pertains to data collection is the possibility that a participant may not receive compensation for conducting the survey. For example, if a participant did not correctly complete the survey, then no payment was made.

Upon survey completion, and once the minimum number of samples were acquired, I analyzed data at the PsychData website using SPSS software. There is a five-year minimum requirement for holding data and saved on an external hard drive with password protection. The data will be maintained with confidentiality, but not anonymity, depending on how each person's Amazon MTurk account is set up as an Account or User Name. For example, a person may decide to depict their account in a way that displays his/her actual name rather than a nickname.

Summary

The design of this unique study entails an analysis of the extent perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity correlate with political orientation. In choosing a sample of participants, the strategy of this study encompasses the idea that researching only college students limits not only the level of generalizability across American regions but also limits the age factor of maturity from life experiences. In mitigating the age and life-experience biases, a sample of 201 participants was acquired using Amazon's Mechanical Turk. This strategy of using M-Turk allows for an array of age groups, education levels, and regional culture characteristics, as well as anonymity. Included in the sample recruiting process is an informed consent form explaining the research process and rights of participants.

Used for this study is a hierarchical multiple regression for measuring and analyzing the effects of perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity on political orientation. As political orientation is the dependent variable, perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity are the independent variables. Covariates used to reveal possible

extraneous or confounding correlates are the demographics of race, sex, age, marital status, number of children, education level, cigarette smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination. After the collection of data, the information was then analyzed using SPSS within the PsychData account, and then stored on an external hard drive with password protection to ensure participant privacy and protection of data.

The following Chapter-4 section provides a more detailed explanation of the results using the hierarchical multiple regression analysis, to include statistical tables to assist other scientists in replicating this current study for purposes of future research.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative research was to analyze the relationship between perceived stress, happiness, religiosity, and political orientation in the U.S. Having used a hierarchical multiple regression model for this study, the predictor variables of interest are perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity, while controlling for some demographics. The overall conceptual approach for this strategy was to observe whether any differences existed on the left-right continuum of political orientation. A review of the research questions and hypotheses are as follows.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

1. Is Perceived Stress a predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination?

   Null Hypothesis (H_o1): Perceived Stress is not a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religion.

   Alternative Hypothesis (H_a1): Perceived Stress is a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religion.

2. Is Subjective Happiness a predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination?

   Null Hypotheses (H_o2): Subjective Happiness is not a significant predictor of political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religion.

   Alternative Hypothesis (H_a2): Subjective Happiness is a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religion.

3. Is Satisfaction With Life a predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination?

   Null Hypothesis (H_o3): Satisfaction With Life is not a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religion.

   Alternative Hypothesis (H_a3): Satisfaction With Life is a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religion.

4. Is Religiosity a predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination?

   Null Hypothesis (H_o4): Religiosity is not a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religion.

   Alternative Hypothesis (H_a4): Religiosity is a significant predictor of Political Orientation after controlling for sex, age, race, marital status, children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religion.

Furthermore, Chapter 4 entails an explanation of the data collection process (e.g., data screening and cleaning), and a description of the sample demographics that are representative of the U.S. population. Also, the results of the study include an evaluation of the assumptions tested, descriptive and inferential statistics, as well as corresponding tables that include appropriate statistical analyses and effect sizes. This chapter concludes with a brief transitional overview of the Chapter 5 summary.

Data Collection

After receiving IRB approval from Walden University, I recruited participants from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk); the name of MTurk participants is called a Worker (participant), and the researchers seeking others to participate in a study are called Requesters. After a worker chooses a survey of interest, the person then uses a website called PsychData, to acknowledge the Informed Consent Form before

commencing with the survey. I acquired a sample of 230 participants in only a few hours on 20 March 2018. This contemporary strategy is being used more by researchers in the social sciences, and is considered as valid in representing the population under analysis as that of traditional methods (e.g., telephonic recruitment, pamphlets, and door-to-door – Barger et al., 2011; Buhrmester et al., 2011). Lastly, participants completed their survey in approximately 40 minutes, which is an acceptable completion rate.

Demographic Characteristics of Sample

In preparing the MTurk account, I programmed it to only allow U.S. citizens to participate. To mitigate violating the minimum age requirement of 18, only people who are at least 18 years of age can have an MTurk account. I prepared the MTurk project in a manner that limited access once the minimal sample number of 230 was acquired. Although a sample of only 200 was needed to meet the minimal requirement of the G*Power calculation, I decided to set a 230 limit in case some participants did not complete the survey. As a result, sample participants provided a variety of demographic characteristics, and a baseline description of those characteristics are as follows: The largest percentage of sample participants in each category were male, White, single, have a college degree, full-time employment, make $25,000.-or-less of yearly income, never smoked, and the most significant religious denomination is atheist (See Tables 1 – 10). Explained in further detail are the sample demographics along with their corresponding tables in the following section.

Descriptive Statistics

Demographic Variables

Total sample size used for this study was 201 participants (see Table 1) recruited via Amazon's MTurk. The following are demographic variables representative of the U.S. Beginning with the demographic categorical variables and the frequencies, the number of male participants was slightly larger (55.7%) (see Table 2), they were White (73.6%) (see Table 3), single (36.8%) (see Table 4), with a college degree (52.7%) (see Table 5), had fulltime employment (71.6%) (see Table 6), a yearly income of $25,000.-or-less (30.3%) (see Table 7), had never smoked (48.8%) (see Table 8) and were atheists (25.9%) (see Table 9). As for the continuous demographic variables, the minimum age of the participants was 21 and the maximum age was 73 (M = 33.84, SD = 9.309); and, while the minimum number of children that participants had was 0, the maximum was 6 (M = .79, SD = 1.204) (see Table 10).

Table 1: *Frequency of Sample*

		Sex	Age	Race	Marital	Children	Education	Job	Income	Smoking	Religion
N	Valid	201	201	201	196	201	201	201	201	201	201
	Missing	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2: *Sex*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Male	112	55.7	55.7	55.7
	2 Female	89	44.3	44.3	100.0
	Total	201	100.0	100.0	

Table 3: *Race*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 White	148	73.6	73.6	73.6
	2 Black	28	13.9	13.9	87.6
	3 Other	25	12.4	12.4	100.0
	Total	201	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: *Marital Status*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Single	74	36.8	37.8	37.8
	2 Relationship	56	27.9	28.6	66.3
	3 Married	66	32.8	33.7	100.0
	Total	196	97.5	100.0	
Missing	System	5	2.5		
Total		201	100.0		

Table 5: *Education Level*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 High School / Associate's	47	23.4	23.4	23.4
	2 Some College	48	23.9	23.9	47.3
	3 College Degree	106	52.7	52.7	100.0
	Total	201	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: *Employment Status*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Full-Time	144	71.6	71.6	71.6
	2 Self-Employed	31	15.4	15.4	87.1
	3 Other	26	12.9	12.9	100.0
	Total	201	100.0	100.0	

Table 7: *Current Income*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 $25,000 or less	61	30.3	30.3	30.3
	2 $25,001 - $35,000	38	18.9	18.9	49.3
	3 $35,001 - $50,000	39	19.4	19.4	68.7
	4 $50,001 - $75,000	50	24.9	24.9	93.5
	5 $75,001 or more	13	6.5	6.5	100.0
	Total	201	100.0	100.0	

Table 8: *Cigarette Smoking*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Yes	61	30.3	30.3	30.3
	2 No - I quit smoking	42	20.9	20.9	51.2
	3 No - I never smoked	98	48.8	48.8	100.0
	Total	201	100.0	100.0	

Table 9: *Religious Denomination*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Protestant	48	23.9	23.9	23.9
	2 Catholic	24	11.9	11.9	35.8
	3 Agnostic	43	21.4	21.4	57.2
	4 Atheist	52	25.9	25.9	83.1
	5 Other	34	16.9	16.9	100.0
	Total	201	100.0	100.0	

Table 10: *Descriptive Statistics for Continuous Demographic Variables*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	201	21	73	33.84	9.309
Number of children or stepchildren	201	0	6	.79	1.204
Valid N (listwise)	201				

Dependent and Independent Variables

The sample descriptives for the independent and dependent variables are as follows. Political orientation (MWPI) ranged from 21 to 89, with a mean of 53; perceived stress (PSS) ranged from 0 to 40, with a mean of 14; subjective happiness (SHS) ranged from 4 to 28, with a mean of 19; satisfaction with life (SWLS) happiness ranged from 5 to 35, with a mean of 23; intrinsic religiosity (ROSIN) ranged from 9 to 45, with a mean of 23; and, extrinsic religiosity ranged from 12 to 53, with a mean of 31 (see Table 11).

Table 11: *Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Independent Variables*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
MWPI	201	21.00	89.00	53.0348	14.36258
PSS	201	.00	40.00	14.3632	8.08903
SHS	201	4.00	28.00	18.8010	5.75588
SWLS	201	5.00	35.00	22.7761	8.41158
ROSIN	201	9.00	45.00	22.5274	11.36312
ROSEX	201	12.00	53.00	30.7910	10.00580
Valid N (listwise)	201				

Assumptions

In using the hierarchical multiple regression model for this study, there are a set of assumptions to consider: normality, sample size, outliers, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity (Field, 2013). These assumptions are provided below in further detail along with their corresponding tables and figures.

Normality, Sample Size, and Outliers

In testing the assumptions for this current model, all criteria were met to fit this current model. For example, in checking for a normal distribution of MWPI (DV), a bell curve was formed on the histogram chart (See Figure 1), as well as the Q-Q Plot showing an even dispersion along the straight line (See Figure 2). Additionally, when using a multiple regression model, a sample size of 20 samples per independent variable is required. In this study there are 4 IVs, which requires at least 80 samples; therefore, this study's 201 samples meet the minimal requirement. Regarding outliers, case 146 did negatively affect the homoscedasticity, therefore was removed to help meet the

requirement of this assumption (See Figure 3). An explanation of these values is in the following section on homoscedasticity and multicollinearity (Field, 2013).

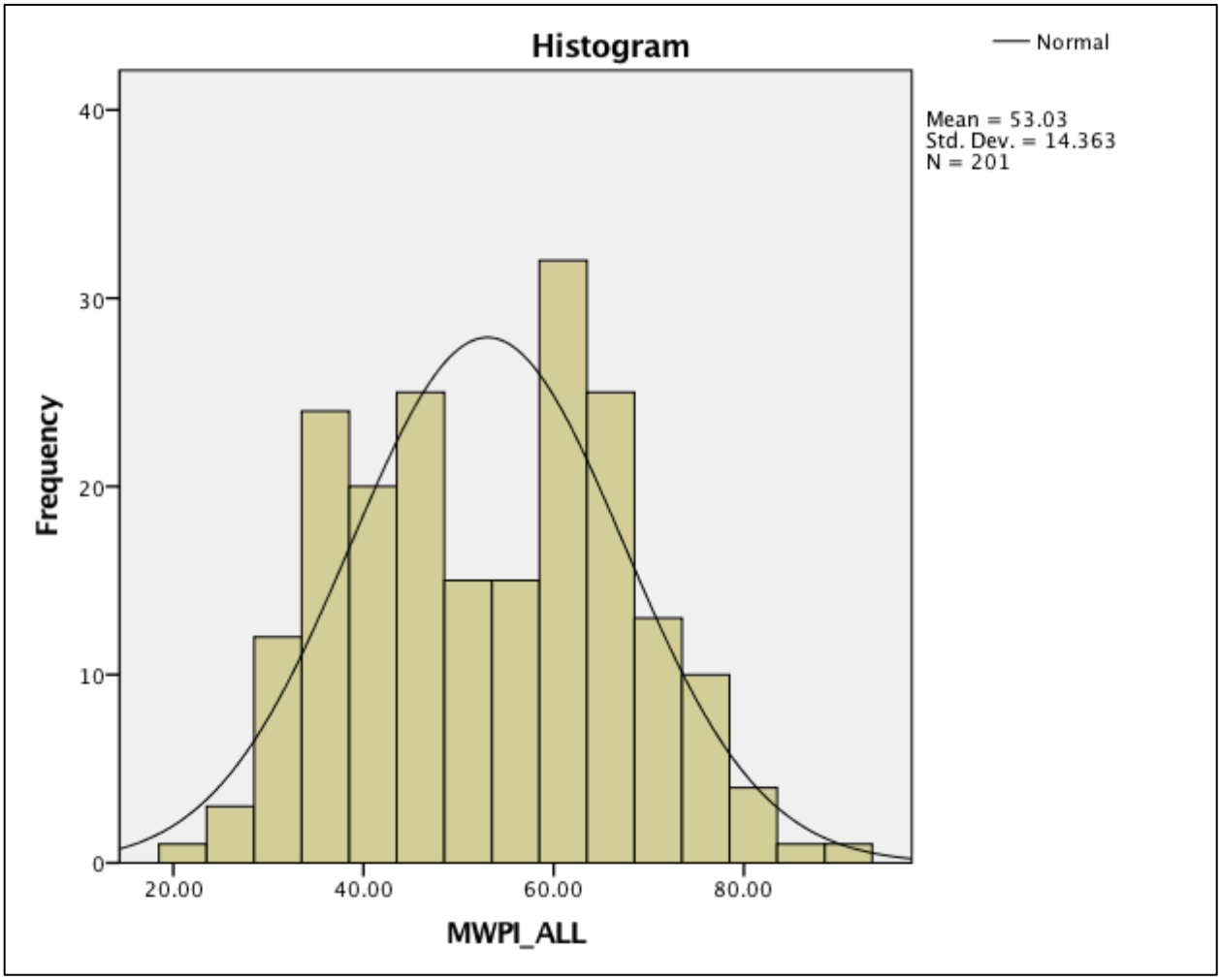

Figure 1. Normality Histogram of MWPI

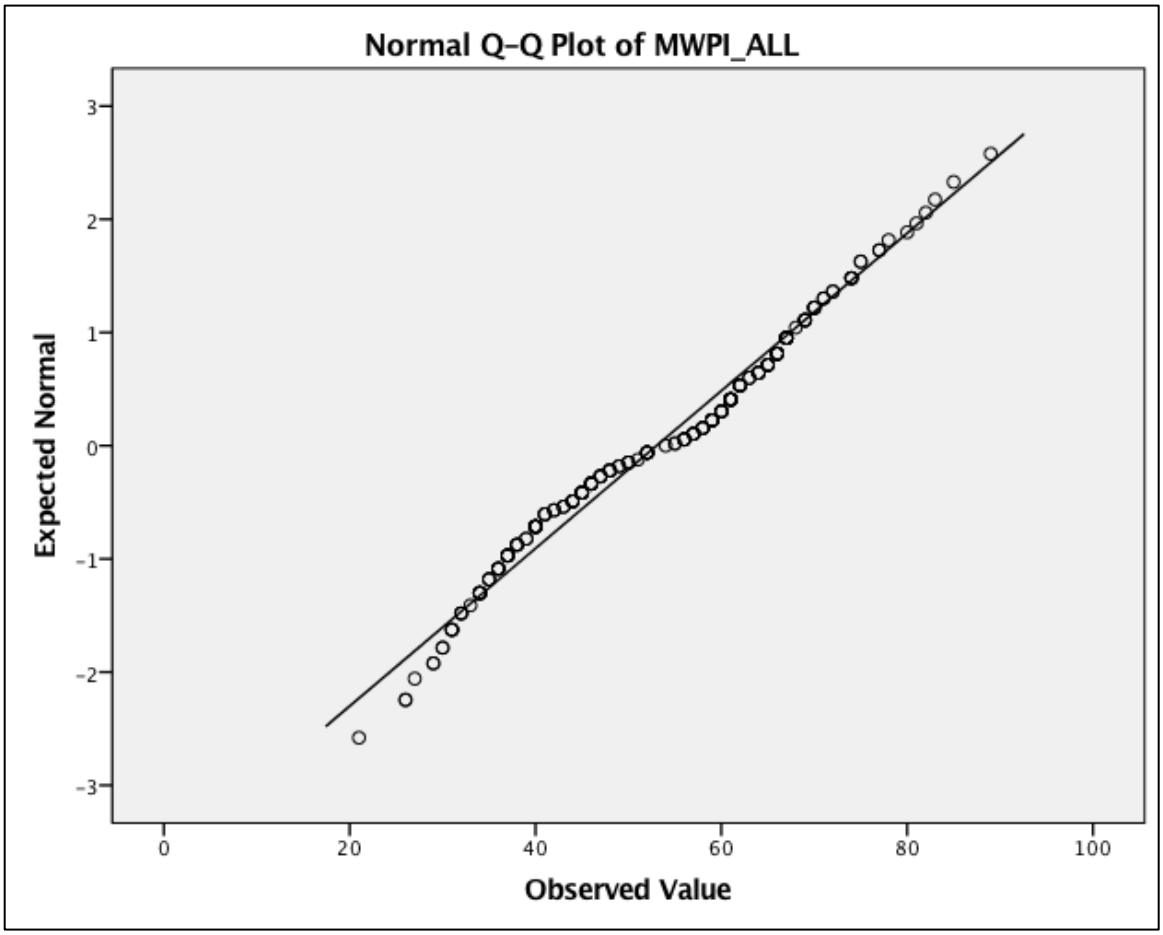

Figure 2: Normality Q-Q Plot of MWPI

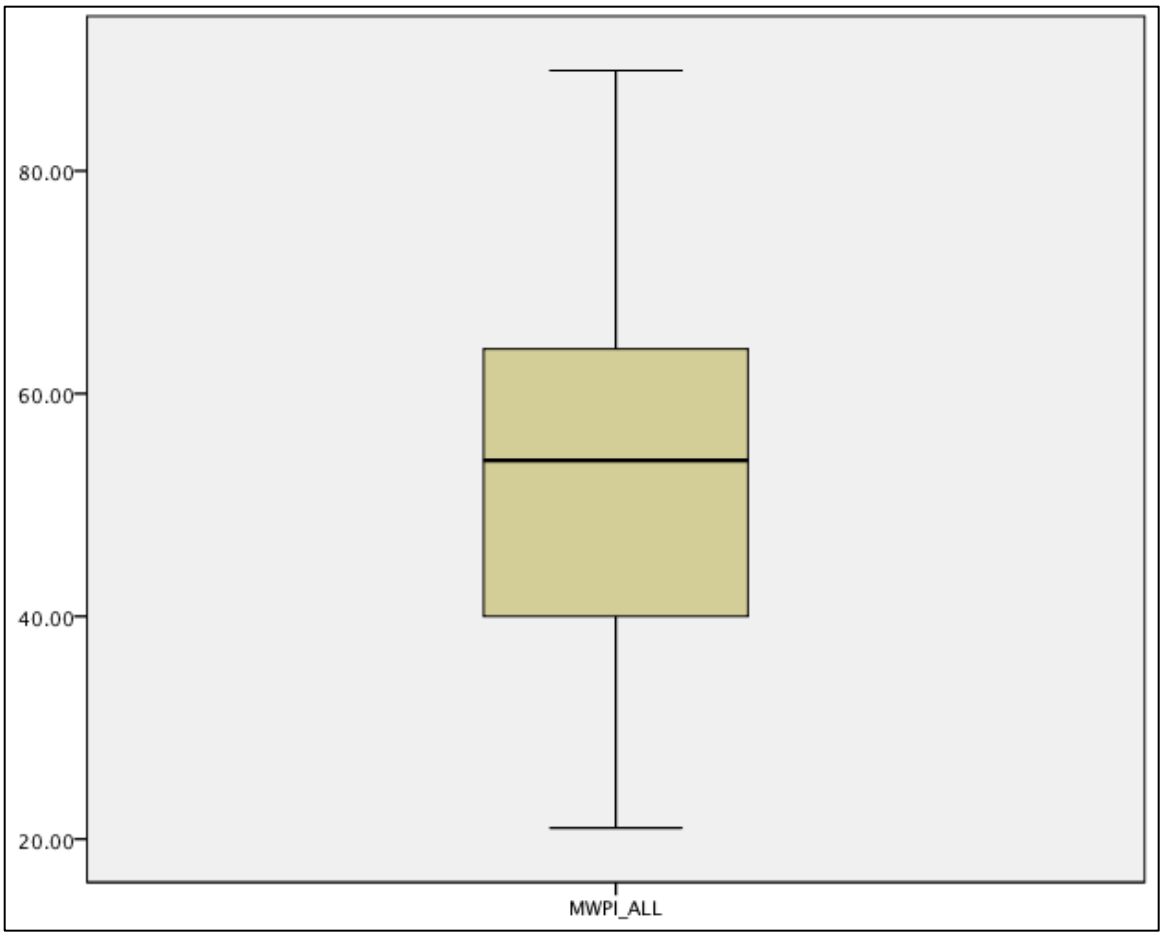

Figure 3: Outliers of MWPI

Multicollinearity and Homoscedasticity

The assumption of multicollinearity begins with the observance of values between predictor IVs and should be less than .7, while values between DV and IVs should be higher than .3 in order to be a good fit. As a result, although all IVs met the criteria for being less than .7; only intrinsic religiosity (ROSIN) with a value of .594 met the criteria when measured against the DV (See Table 12). Finally, both the Tolerance and VIF (Variance of Inflation Factor) fell within the accepted range in that all values for Tolerance were more significant than .1, while all values for VIF were less than 10 (See Table 13) (Field, 2013).

In observing the assumption of homoscedasticity, we refer to the *Std. Residual* and *Cook's Distance* within the *Residuals Statistics table* (i.e., Minimum and Maximum columns) to observe the values for ensuring the range falls between *-3 and +3 Std. Residuals* and less than 1.0 for *Cook's Distance*. As a result, the *Std. Residual's* Min. was -2.645 and Max. 2.676, the values of *Cook's Distance* was a Min. of .000 and a Max. of .090, which all fall within the accepted range for the assumption of homoscedasticity (See Table 14 and Figure 5). Provided in Figures 4 and 5 are values for the assumption of Independence of Residuals5.

Table 12: *Correlation: Multicollinearity Values Among DV and IVs*

		MWPI	PSS	SHS	SWLS	ROSIN	ROSEX
Pearson Correlation	MWPI	1.000	.064	.047	.095	.594	.268
	PSS	.064	1.000	-.615	-.490	.054	.089
	SHS	.047	-.615	1.000	.576	.189	.180
	SWLS	.095	-.490	.576	1.000	.186	.254
	ROSIN	.594	.054	.189	.186	1.000	.518
	ROSEX	.268	.089	.180	.254	.518	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	MWPI	.	.185	.252	.091	.000	.000
	PSS	.185	.	.000	.000	.223	.104
	SHS	.252	.000	.	.000	.004	.005
	SWLS	.091	.000	.000	.	.004	.000
	ROSIN	.000	.223	.004	.004	.	.000
	ROSEX	.000	.104	.005	.000	.000	.
N	MWPI	201	201	201	201	201	201
	PSS	201	201	201	201	201	201
	SHS	201	201	201	201	201	201
	SWLS	201	201	201	201	201	201
	ROSIN	201	201	201	201	201	201
	ROSEX	201	201	201	201	201	201

Table 13: *Coefficients[a] Among DV and IVs*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	Constant	39.758	5.196		7.652	.000					
	PSS	.004	.140	.002	.030	.976	.064	.002	.002	.530	1.888
	SHS	-.210	.203	-.084	-1.03	.303	.047	-.074	-.059	.494	2.024
	SWLS	.069	.127	.041	.548	.585	.095	.039	.031	.596	1.677
	ROSIN	.796	.086	.630	9.283	.000	.594	.554	.532	.713	1.402
	ROSEX	-.076	.100	-.053	-.759	.449	.268	-.054	-.043	.671	1.490

a. Dependent Variable: MWPI

Table 14: *Residuals Statistics[a] Among DV and IVs*

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	40.3893	70.9379	53.0348	8.61665	201
Std. Predicted Value	-1.468	2.078	.000	1.000	201
Standard Error of Predicted Value	.884	4.330	1.935	.548	201
Adjusted Predicted Value	38.1493	72.1521	53.0020	8.67152	201
Residual	-30.78066	27.93532	.00000	11.49074	201
Std. Residual	-2.645	2.401	.000	.987	201
Stud. Residual	-2.676	2.427	.001	1.003	201
Deleted Residual	-31.50908	28.54507	.03282	11.86701	201
Stud. Deleted Residual	-2.720	2.458	.002	1.008	201
Mahal. Distance	.159	26.700	4.975	3.759	201
Cook's Distance	.000	.090	.006	.011	201
Centered Leverage Value	.001	.133	.025	.019	201

a. Dependent Variable: MWPI

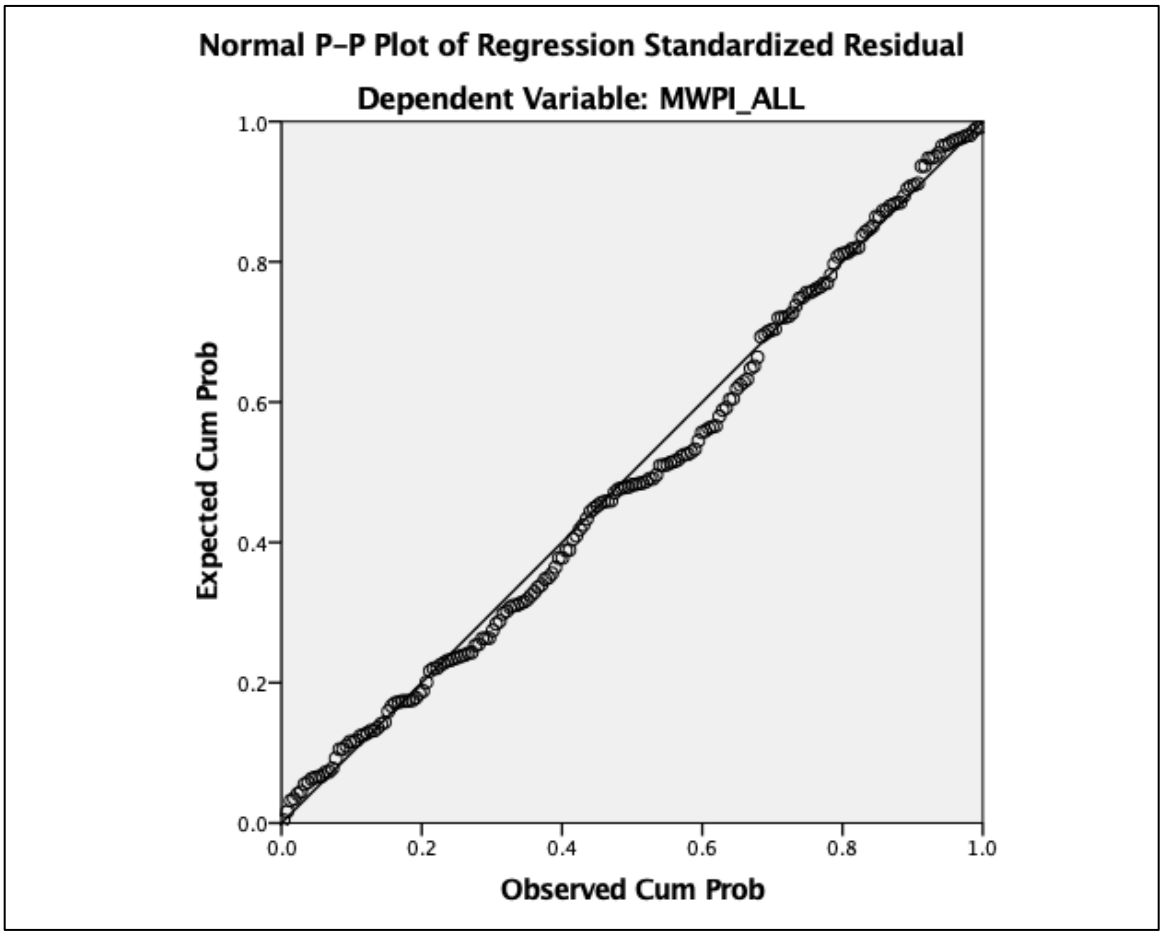

Figure 4: P-P Plot

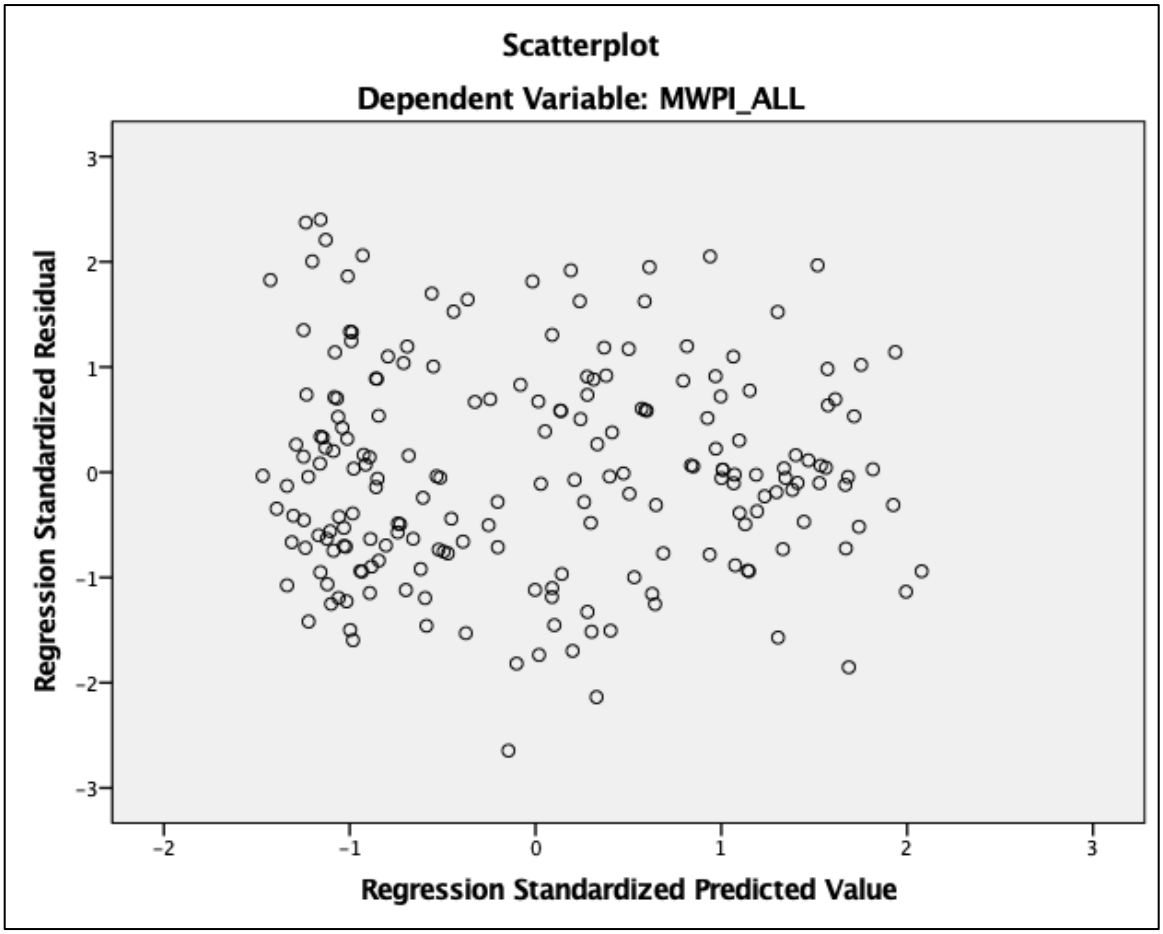

Figure 5: Homoscedasticity of outliers

Results

This study used a hierarchical multiple regression model to explore political orientation and the differences of perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity while controlling for some demographic variables. Preliminary analyses were performed to test the assumptions of normality, sample size, outliers, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity, which were all met. The following primary analysis includes the four research questions and corresponding hypotheses, in which political orientation (MWPI) is used as the dependent variable, while perceived stress (PSS), subjective happiness (SHS), satisfaction with life (SWLS), and ROS – intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity (ROSIN and ROSEX) are the independent variables. Also included in this research model are the demographic variables under control: sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination. While using these variables in a hierarchical multiple regression model, the demographic variables were entered into step 1, as the IVs into step 2. The results of the output are as follows.

Primary Analysis

Research question 1.

The first research question and hypothesis analyzed whether perceived stress (PSS) was a significant predictor of political orientation (MWPI) when controlling for demographic variables of sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination. Step 1 of the model was significant (R_2 = .46, F (20,180) = 7.79, p < .05) indicating that the covariates accounted

for a significant amount of variance in political orientation. Perceived stress, entered on step 2, only accounted for an additional .005% in variance explained in political orientation, which was not significant ($R^2\Delta$ = .005, F (1,179) = 1.52, p = .22; See Table 15).

Table 15: *Model Summary[c] for MWPI, PSS, and Demographics*

				Std. Error	Change Statistics				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.681[a]	.464	.404	11.08467	.464	7.789	20	180	.000
2	.684[b]	.468	.406	11.06880	.005	1.517	1	179	.220

a. Predictors: (Constant), sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, religious denomination
b. Predictors: (Constant), sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, religious denomination, PSS
c. Dependent Variable: MWPI

Research question 2.

The second research question and hypothesis analyzed whether subjective happiness (SHS) was a significant predictor of political orientation (MWPI) when controlling for demographic variables of sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination. Subjective happiness, entered on step 2, only accounted for an additional .004% in variance explained in political orientation, which was not significant ($R^2\Delta$ = .005, F (1,179) = 1.25, p = .27; see Table 16). Refer to step 1 of research question 1 for statistical results of demographic covariates.

Table 16: *Model Summary[c] for MWPI, SHS, and Demographics*

				Std. Error	Change Statistics				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.681[a]	.464	.404	11.08467	.464	7.789	20	180	.000
2	.684[b]	.468	.405	11.07690	.004	1.253	1	179	.265

a. Predictors: (Constant), sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, religious denomination

b. Predictors: (Constant), sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, religious denomination, SHS

c. Dependent Variable: MWPI

Research question 3.

The third research question and hypothesis analyzed whether life satisfaction (SWLS) was a significant predictor of political orientation (MWPI) when controlling for demographic variables of sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination. Life satisfaction, entered on step 2, accounted for no variance (.000%) in political orientation, which was not significant ($R^2\Delta$ = .000, F (1,179) = .06, p = .81; see Table 17). Refer to step 1 of research question 1 for statistical results of demographic covariates.

Table 17: *Model Summary[c] for MWPI, SWLS, and Demographics*

				Std. Error	Change Statistics				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.681[a]	.464	.404	11.08467	.464	7.789	20	180	.000
2	.681[b]	.464	.401	11.11371	.000	.061	1	179	.806

a. Predictors: (Constant), sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, religious denomination

b. Predictors: (Constant), sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, religious denomination, SWLS

c. Dependent Variable: MWPI

Research question 4.

The fourth research question and hypothesis analyzed whether religiosity (ROS) was a significant predictor of political orientation when controlling for demographic variables of sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination. As a result, when intrinsic religiosity (ROSIN) was entered in step 2, it accounted for an additional .022% in variance explained in political orientation, which was statistically significant ($R^2\Delta$ = .022, F (1,179) = 7.58, $p < .05$; See Table 18). However, extrinsic religiosity (ROSEX) accounted for .000% in variance for political orientation, which was not significant ($R^2\Delta$ = .000, F (1,179) = .04, p = .85; See Table 19). Refer to step 1 of research question 1 for statistical results of demographic covariates.

Table 18: *Model Summary[c] for MWPI, ROSIN, and Demographics*

				Std. Error	Change Statistics				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.681[a]	.464	.404	11.08467	.464	7.789	20	180	.000
2	.697[b]	.486	.425	10.88738	.022	7.583	1	179	.007

a. Predictors: (Constant), sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, religious denomination

b. Predictors: (Constant), sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, religious denomination, ROSIN

c. Dependent Variable: MWPI

Table 19: *Model Summary[c] for MWPI, ROSEX, and Demographics*

				Std. Error	Change Statistics				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.681[a]	.464	.404	11.08467	.464	7.789	20	180	.000
2	.681[b]	.464	.401	11.11446	.000	.036	1	179	.849

a. Predictors: (Constant), sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, religious denomination

b. Predictors: (Constant), sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, religious denomination, ROSEX

c. Dependent Variable: MWPI

Summary

In this chapter, a hierarchical multiple regression model was used to investigate the relationship between political orientation, perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity, while also controlling for the demographics of sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination. As a result, the only statistically significant outcome was the positive correlation between conservative political orientation and intrinsic religiosity.

Provided in the following is an in-depth review of the research findings in the Chapter-5 summary. The topics discussed include interpretations of the findings and how they relate to peer-reviewed literature on the topics under analysis. Chapter 5 also includes a discussion of limitations of generalizability, validity, and reliability of this current study. There are also recommendations for future research to help better understand whether some aspects of current psychometrics instruments and the research design should be modified. Finally, implications for social change conclude the Chapter-5 summary as to what aspects of this current research can provide potential positive influences or awareness for individuals, families, varietal social groups, governing policies, as well as the social and health sciences in general.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to analyze political orientation in the U.S. and its relationship with perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity. Controlling for potential extraneous or confounding variables, the demographics of sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination were also analyzed. This research was essential to pursue because of the 20-year high of political dichotomy in the U.S. (PEW Research Center, 2014), as well as a 30% increase in stress levels over 30 years (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012). Currently, this research appears to be the first of its kind and is uniquely designed to accommodate for previous literature on the primary variables of interest. Data from this study were produced using a hierarchical multiple regression model. As a result, when controlling for demographics there was a positive correlation between conservative political orientation and intrinsic religiosity. This statistical significance replicated previous research by Schlenker et al. (2012), in which higher measures of political conservatism correlated with higher measures of intrinsic religiosity. Additionally, secondary analyses revealed several statistically significant relationships among demographic variables, as well as between demographics and the primary variables under analysis. These findings are presented in the following section.

Interpretation of the Findings

Primary Analyses

Seemingly the first of its kind, there is no previous research relative to whether stress differences exist on the left-right continuum of liberal and conservative political

orientation. As a reiteration of the Chapter-2 literature review, there is an array of characterizing differences of liberal and conservative political orientation that range from individualism and collectivism (Vandello & Cohen, 1999), sleep patterns (Bulkeley, 2006), cognitive patterns (Amodio, Jost, Master, & Yee, 2007), cleanliness (Carney et al., 2008), and personality differences of openness and conscientiousness (Allik & McCrae, 2004; Carney et al., 2008; Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003; Rentfrow et al., 2013; Schlenker, Chambers, & Le, 2012; Tuschman, 2013). From past research on liberals and conservatives, the notion that psychological stress differences could exist on the left-right continuum derives from the theoretical foundation of the System Justification Theory (SJT) and the Moral Foundations Theory (MFT).

On the basis of these two theories, SJT is the concept that conservatives are happier than liberals due to their ability to justify social inequality (Bixter, 2015; Kay & Jost, 2003; Moghaddam, 2008; Napier & Jost, 2008; Schlenker et al., 2012; Snoep, 2008; Swinyard, Kau, & Phua, 2001); and, MFT encompasses the idea that the two politically-minded groups have a different moral compass where religion plays an influencing role more for conservatives than for liberals. (Graham & Haidt, 2010; Graham et a., 2009; Graham et al., 2011). More importantly, and as a consequence of these two theoretical outlooks of SJT and MFT, previous studies have shown that while higher measures of religiosity and happiness correlate with lower measures of perceived stress (Clements & Ermakova, 2012; Moghaddam, 2008; Reutter & Bigatti, 2014; Snoep, 2008; Swinyard, Kau, & Phua, 2001), higher measures of conservatism could correlate with lower measures of perceived stress.

In this study, there were no statistical significances between liberal and conservative political orientation relating to perceived stress, happiness, or extrinsic religiosity. However, there was a positive correlation between higher measures of political conservatism and intrinsic religiosity, which replicates previous research by Schlenker et al. (2012). Again, intrinsic religiosity is one's passion for serving God and living by biblical scripture to help give life meaning and direction (Allport & Ross, 1967; Burris, 1999).

Per the theoretical foundation on SJT and MFT, the results of this current study reveal that conservatives are more religious than liberals. Previous research by Napier and Jost (2008) did not include religiosity in their SJT research on political orientation and happiness, but they did suggest that religion plays a role in conservative happiness over liberals according to social psychologist, Jonathan Haidt (2006). More contemporary research on SJT did include religiosity and found that higher levels of conservatism correlated with higher levels of intrinsic religiosity (Bixter, 2015; Schlenker et al., 2012). Furthermore, the same results occurred regarding MFT on conservatism and religiosity. Though this current study found no statistical significance between political orientation and happiness, but like previous research on MFT as it pertains to conservatism and religiosity (Graham & Haidt, 2010; Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011), results did also reveal that higher levels of conservatism correlate with higher levels of religiosity.

Additional analyses were conducted at the level of controlled demographic variables using crosstabs and a regression model in conjunction with political orientation,

perceived stress, happiness, intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. In the following section on secondary analyses is a brief summarization of these current findings.

Secondary Analyses of Demographic Variables

The following secondary analyses were produced using crosstabs and regression analyses comparing demographics against the dependent and independent variables. One reason for conducting secondary analyses for this study is due to the limited information from previous studies on the influence of demographics. However, one study by Cohen and Janicki-Deverts (2012) did analyze perceived stress and demographics, which resulted in perceived stress having a significant correlation with younger, single participants, minorities, and those with lower income (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012). After running the secondary analyses, this current study also resulted in similar demographic correlations as that of the Cohen and Janicki-Deverts (2012) study. Performing secondary analyses in this case allows for demographic comparisons for future research. The results of this current study also show other social factors influencing the results, which are provided in the following.

Political Orientation (MWPI). Blacks, Protestants, and Catholics had significantly higher measures of conservatism, while atheists and agnostics measured significantly higher in liberalism.

Perceived Stress (PSS). Younger, single participants, Blacks, participants with lower income, cigarette smokers, and those who quit smoking had significantly higher measures of perceived stress, while Whites had significantly lower levels of perceived stress.

Subjective Happiness (SHS). Whites and participants with full-time employment had the highest measures of subjective happiness, while cigarette smokers and atheists had significantly lower levels of subjective happiness.

Life Satisfaction (SWLS). Those who are married, participants with a college degree, as well as Catholics and other religious denominations (e.g., Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus) had significantly high measures of life satisfaction, while atheists were significantly low.

Religiosity (ROS).

Intrinsic Religiosity (ROSIN). Blacks, single participants, cigarette smokers, and Protestants had significantly high measures of intrinsic religiosity.

Extrinsic Religiosity (ROSEX). Blacks and medium income participants had higher measures of extrinsic religiosity, while Protestants had significantly lower measures than Catholics and other religious denominations

In conjunction with the above analyses, crosstabs were conducted that revealed several statistical significances among demographics. As a result, the most significant contributor of perceived stress were Black participants. Furthermore, although Black participants had significantly higher measures of conservatism and religiosity, they also smoked more than other races, which correlated with their low measures of overall happiness and high measures of perceived stress. More importantly, as it relates to previous research by Cohen and Janicki-Deverts (2012) on perceived stress and demographic comparisons, this current study also resulted with younger, single

participants, minorities, and lower income having significantly higher measures of perceived stress. Other results included Atheist participants measuring higher for liberalism but lower for happiness, but they had significantly lower measures of perceived stress than Black participants. No previous research exists on the topic of atheism, stress, and happiness, but these results appear relative to previous research in that conservatives are generally happier than liberals in accordance with SJT (Bixter, 2015; Napier & Jost, 2008; Jost et al., 2014; Schlenker et al., 2012).

Blacks in this current study were no happier than other races regardless of their high measures of conservatism and religiosity, and one explanation is the possible correlation with their high measures of cigarette smoking and perceived stress. Previous research conducted on SJT by Jost et al. (2003) also discovered contradictory data on African-American happiness or contentment regarding economic inequality. The authors found in one study that low-income African-Americans in the southern U.S. states were more content with economic inequality than Whites; however, in a separate study, the authors also found that higher-income African-Americans in the north were less content on economic inequality (Jost et al., 2003).

More importantly regarding stress and health, the results of this current study revealed underlying issues with Blacks' high rates of cigarette smoking and perceived stress, in which there could be several influencing factors contributing to this outcome. One such possibility is that of quality healthcare. For example, previous studies have found that liberals are generally healthier than conservatives (Herian et al., 2014; Navarro et al., 2006; Rentfrow et al., 2013), which possibly account for high rates of cigarette

smoking and obesity on the part of conservatives (Herian et al., 2014). Decades of past research have also shown a correlation between cigarette smoking and obesity rates with high levels of stress (Boonstra & Fox, 2013; Gouin et al., 2012; Sapolsky, 1988; Sapolsky, 2005; Selye, 1955; Selye, 1973; Stress, n.d.). A second possible factor for Blacks' high measures of cigarette smoking and perceived stress could be geographic. Studies by Centers for Disease Control (2019) have shown that Southern and Midwestern states have higher rates of smoking than all other regions in the U.S., in which the South and Midwest are predominantly conservative states (Saad, 2018).

Overall, the controlled demographics variables contributed more statistical significances than did political orientation (DV) with the independent variables of perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity. This acknowledgment leads into the following sections on the limitations of the study, validity, reliability, generalizability, and recommendations for future research.

Limitations of the Study

The following section entails a variety of limitations, to include issues of internal and external validity, generalizability, as well as construct validity and reliability using the standard Cronbach's alpha values for the psychometric instruments used for this current study.

Internal Validity

There are some questioning concerns to highlight as they pertain to issues of internal validity. When taking into consideration possible extraneous and confounding variables, a variety of sociological, psychological, and physical variables can influence

peoples' attitudes. The first issue of concern for this study includes the sample collection strategy, which entailed using a contemporary method known as Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Once MTurk participants are redirected to an additional website known as PsychData, they acknowledge the informed consent form before proceeding with the survey. This study acquired a sample of 230 participants within just a few hours; however, an issue of internal validity arises concerning the quality at which participants completed the survey. This issue of quality control is a concern as to whether participants can focus on the details of the survey, or whether they are more concerned about receiving the $2.00 payment for participation (i.e., the more surveys a person can take in a day, the more money made as a result). Having more monitoring control of the testing environment could help mitigate this issue in future studies.

Another issue of concern for internal validity is the sample of Black participants. Although Blacks only made up 14% of the sample, the group had significantly higher measures of religiosity and conservatism than other races; however, Blacks also had lower measures of happiness and higher measurements of perceived stress. In having higher measures of conservatism and religiosity, Blacks should have had lower measures of perceived stress per previous research. For example, a variety of studies have shown an inverse relationship between higher measures of religiosity and lower measures of perceived stress (Clements & Ermakova, 2012; Hunter & Merrill, 2013; Reutter & Bigatti, 2014; Siegel et al., 2001). There are two explanations for the unusual occurrence from this current study on Black participants: one, approximately 50% of the Blacks in the sample group were cigarette smokers, while only 29% of Whites in their group were

cigarette smokers. Secondly, although the majority of Blacks had full-time employment, they also fell into the category of receiving the least amount of income. Additionally, per the original research on the PSS-14 by Cohen et al. (1983), results did find cigarette smokers were more prone to increased perceived stress levels; however, this study did not include Black participants. Another study by Cohen and Janicki-Deverts (2012) did find that minority groups had higher measures of perceived stress until other demographics were included, then the results found no differences in stress of Whites and minorities.

Contemporary studies in the U.S. now include Blacks as an integral part of analyzing cigarette smoking, stress, and religiosity in their communities. One study analyzed the rate of cigarette smoking among religious participants in that those who were more involved with their religion – to include church attendance – were less prone to cigarette smoking; however, this study did not include Blacks (Bailey, Slopen, Albert, & Williams, 2015; Belgrave et al., 2010). A second study on cigarette smoking and religiosity specifically targeted urban minority communities in the U.S. due to the lack of research on this population; this study included a sample that was 92% African-American (Brown et al., 2014). As a result, the authors found that African-American communities who were religious also had an association with high rates of cigarette smoking (Brown et al., 2014). A similar study found that although religiosity better deterred Whites from cigarette smoking, it was not the case for Blacks (Ward, Allen, & Gryczynski, 2014). Other contemporary studies have also focused on the Black community in regard to questioning concerns on smoking and perceived stress pertaining to sociocultural stressors, and found that African-American women who had little education, were single,

and fell within a lower socioeconomic stratum had the higher rates of perceived stress and cigarette smoking (Fernander & Schumacher, 2008; Fernander, Schumacher, & Nasim, 2008).

Future research is needed on these issues of cigarette smoking, religiosity, and perceived stress in the Black community to deduce and infer how a group can have high measurements of conservatism and religiosity, but also have lower measures of happiness and higher measures of perceived stress. It is possible that cigarette smoking and lower socioeconomic status can override one's high levels of religiosity and happiness to induce higher levels of psychological stress.

External Validity and Generalizability

A contemporary strategy for sample collection, this study used Amazon's MTurk to acquire sample participants. This research strategy for sample collection has become a widely used tool across the social sciences in measuring for generalizability for any population under analysis (Barger et al., 2011; Buhrmester et al., 2011; Huff & Tingley, 2015). One of the features that Amazon provides is that it allows the researcher to select only the most credible MTurk participants who have a high rating. In controlling for external validity, this study included such U.S. demographics as that of sex, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, smoking, socioeconomic status, and religious denomination.

Although this study’s sample had a generalizable representation of the U.S. population, there was one disparity that pertained to religious denomination. For example, as the U.S.'s average religious denominations consists of approximately 70.6%

Protestant, 20.9% Catholic, 4% Agnostic, and 3.1% Atheist (Pew Research Center, 2015), this study consisted of 25.9% Atheist, 21.4% Agnostic, 23.9% Protestant, 11.9% Catholic, and 16.9% Other – that is, atheism and agnosticism accounted for approximately 48% of the sample. The demographic percentages of this current study are not generalizable of the U.S. population; and, while atheists and agnostics had higher measurements of liberalism, there was no significant disparity between groups regarding perceived stress. In all, there was virtually no difference in perceived stress among religious denominations.

Construct Validity and Reliability

No issues of construct validity were present for the psychometric instruments used for this study. Except for the Modified Wilson-Patterson Inventory, which is an updated, contemporary version of today's sociopolitical issues (Smith et al., 2011) based on the original Conservativism Scale devised by Wilson and Patterson in 1968, all other instruments have been tested and used for decades. Beginning with the Satisfaction With Life Scale, this instrument was initially devised by Diener in 1985. The Subjective Happiness Scale has 20 years of usage (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1997). Religious Orientation Scale was initially devised in 1967 by Allport and Ross. Lastly, the Perceived Stress Scale was first devised in 1983 by Cohen et al. Although there is an array of contemporary versions of psychometric instruments to measure political orientation, happiness, religiosity, and perceived stress, the original scales used in the current study do have a history of meeting the standards for internal and construct validity, and reliability.

For example, when determining the reliability of a psychometrics instrument, it is a general rule that a minimum value of .7 is acceptable, but .8 is preferred (Field, 2013). After running an SPSS reliability analyses on all psychometrics instruments used for the entire 201 participants from this current study, a Cronbach's alpha resulted in the following values for the dependent and independent variables: MWPI Liberal items = .809, MWPI Conservative items = .856, Extrinsic Religiosity items = .877, Intrinsic Religiosity items = .958, Satisfaction With Life Scale = .930, Subjective Happiness Scale = .885, and Perceived Stress Scale = .902. As a result, all psychometrics instruments used for this study had minimum values of at least .809 and maximum values of .958, in which all exceed the minimum Cronbach's alpha reliability standard of .7 (Field, 2013). Although there were projected questioning concerns on the MWPI and its quality of construct validity, both liberal and conservative aspects of this instrument were found to be within the standard Cronbach's alpha range of reliability (.809 and .856).

Recommendations for Future Research

This current study on political orientation, perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity covered literature dating back a century. The first of its kind, this unique study required several years of extensive research within the scholarly, peer-reviewed literature. After numerous revisions, the final product uncovered several identifying characteristics. One significant concern that is the most profound to highlight entails the perspectives on sociopolitical issues. In the years following 11 September 2001, there is the potentiality that some sociopolitical categories as that of conservative and liberal-specific issues have changed within these groups. Using the MWPI for this study – a modern day version of

Wilson and Patterson's (1968) classic Conservatism Scale – it is presumed that some individuals who consider themselves liberal or conservative could have different views on issues as that of the Patriot Act, Premarital Sex, Gay Marriage, Iraq War, Military Spending, as just a few examples to mention (Smith et al., 2011). With so much political strife in the U.S. throughout the years of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and now during the Donald Trump administration, it is recommended to devise and test a more contemporary, updated psychometrics instrument mirroring today's sociopolitical issues that interest the American people the most.

Another recommendation for future research includes taking into consideration election cycles. Individuals who are the most far-right conservative and most far-left liberal could be affected by levels of perceived stress as to whether one's political Party has control of the presidency, the Senate, or House of Representatives. Political partisan biases reported in varietal news media could also affect one's emotional state; finally, levels of perceived stress could fluctuate due to everyday issues of the human condition such as illness, loss of a job, relationship issues, death of a family member, or any number of confounding variables that could negatively affect a person. Furthermore, it is recommended to include of a larger sample size across different U.S. domains (e.g., Alabama, New York, Alaska, California, and Hawaii) is recommended in ameliorating issues as that of generalizability across a variety of U.S. cultural regions.

One such cultural aspect that needs addressing is that of the Black community on political orientation and moral values. This current study used MFT as an elemental part of the theoretical foundation pertaining to conservatism and moral values; however,

recent studies on MFT have shown that Blacks are more religious and liberal than Whites. What the authors specifically found was that the binding foundations of respect/authority and purity/sanctity were weaker in Blacks than in Whites (Davis et al., 2016). The above information shows that future research studies need to focus more attention on racial differences in all aspects of political orientation, happiness, religiosity, and perceived stress.

Implications for Social Change

This study revealed a variety of statistical output on the topics of political orientation, perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity. Per previous studies, I postulated that a person who has higher measures of conservatism would also have increased measures of religiosity and happiness, therefore having decreased levels of perceived stress. However, and contrary to years of previous research, this study did not produce such results. For example, based on the System Justification Theory (SJT) and Moral Foundations Theory (MFT), this study conceptualized the idea that while conservatives are happier than liberals due to their ability to justify social and economic inequality (Bixter, 2015; Kay & Jost, 2003; Moghaddam, 2008; Napier & Jost, 2008; Schlenker et al., 2012; Snoep, 2008; Swinyard, Kau, & Phua, 2001), and while conservatives also have a different set of moral values in that religion plays an impacting role (Bulbulia et al., 2013; Graham & Haidt, 2010; Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011), conservatives could have lower measures of perceived stress. As a result, the most conservative and religious demographic in this study were Black participants; however, they had the highest measures of perceived stress. Two explanations for these findings relate to Blacks

also having high rates of cigarette smoking and falling into the lower socioeconomic strata of yearly income.

Although the primary focus of this study was not based on race and cigarette smoking, there are some takeaway thoughts to provide pertaining to – but not limited to – social and economic inequality. Firstly, there is limited literature from previous decades of research on the Black community as it relates to religiosity, political orientation, happiness, and perceived stress. As the Jim Crow era came to an end in 1965, racial discrimination and economic inequality did not end as quickly. Even today Blacks are still experiencing a number of unintended consequences as that of alcoholism, drug addiction, and cigarette smoking (Metzger et al., 2018), which also have correlative effects of high levels of stress from the lack of family and community support within Black communities (Obasi et al., 2017). In the 19th century, Daniel Tuke (1878a; 1878b) had already written about social forces as that of economic class influencing psychological stress.

Contemporarily, the U.S. has similar issues as that of social inequality relating to Native Americans and Blacks (African-Americans). In 2018, the Centers for Disease Control reported that Native Americans and other minority groups had the highest rates of cigarette smoking (CDC, n.d.). In 2017, the CDC (2019) reported that a higher percentage of Native-Americans (24%) smoked compared to all other racial groups in the U.S., and that there was little difference between White (15.2%) and Black (14.9%) communities. Reports of alcoholism and higher rates of cigarette smoking appear as though Native-Americans are still contending with the unintended consequences of

having been ostracized onto Indian reservations centuries ago (U.S. Department of Interior, n.d.). With more research being conducted on the U.S. Black population, optimism appears regarding the mitigation of high rates of cigarette smoking and alcoholism. Though Blacks are still contending with degrees of social and racial discrimination (Metzger et al., 2018), optimism arises for Blacks when family and community support is made available, which also has a correlative effect of lowering levels of perceived stress (Obasi et al., 2017).

Within the first decade following the events of 11 September 2001, some studies revealed an increase in both a political dichotomy and stress levels. For example, over 20 years, it was revealed that the U.S. had reached an all-time high with sociopolitical strife (PEW Research Center, 2014), while a separate study showed that there was also a 30-year high in stress levels (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012). Both of these issues are of concern for a variety of reasons such as personal health and wellbeing, which can affect society as a whole from such domains as the workplace environment and family household. More specific to this current study, if Blacks are typically more conservative and religious, but they also have the highest measures of perceived stress, then this paradoxical phenomenon reveals that there are other underlying factors. Such factors may include low yearly income, cigarette smoking, racial and social discrimination, and an overall lack of family and community support. Could these issues derive from cultural influences, genetic predispositions, or a combination of the two?

Implications for positive social change begin with uncovering the underlying issues that correlate with the high measures of perceived stress. What initially began as a

research study on the differences of political orientation and psychological stress, inevitably transformed into other concerns as that of race and socioeconomic stress – regardless of one's political orientation and religiosity. Due to the complexity of this research, there is still much focus on further analyzing the differences in psychological stress and the demographics of liberal and conservative political orientation. As a reiteration from this study's literature review, previous research on conservative political orientation has uncovered a variety of traits: fearfulness, aggressive behavior, closemindedness (and/or intolerance of ambiguity), avoiding uncertain situations, living by an orderly or structured lifestyle, and group structure and defense (Jost et al., 2003), which all appear could lead to high measures of perceived stress.

However, other research transcends beyond just personality traits and other varietal characteristics of conservatives to show that this demographic also has higher measures of religiosity and happiness (Bixter, 2015; Choma et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011; Haidt, 2006; 2012; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt, 2012; Jetten et al., 2013; Schlenker et al., 2012) that correlate with lower measures of perceived stress (Clements & Ermakova, 2012; Hunter & Merrill, 2013; Reutter & Bigatti, 2014; Siegel et al., 2001; Schiffrin & Nelson, 2010). With this being the case, it appears under unique circumstances that specific demographics can be negatively affected by psychological stress regardless of having high measures of conservatism, religiosity, and happiness.

In providing positive social change, one must fathom the level of complexity of this current study regarding just the demographics of political orientation alone. Again,

the results of this study revealed statistical significance between higher measures of conservative political orientation and intrinsic religiosity, which has replicated previous research by Schlenker et al. (2012). However, and at a demographic level, while Blacks measured higher with conservatism and religiosity, they also had higher measures of perceived stress. This outcome could be due to a combination of factors such as high rates of cigarette smoking, low yearly income, as well as other social forces as that of racial discrimination (Metzger et al., 2018) and lack of family and community support (Obasi et al., 2017). Although this racial demographic was only a small portion of the sample, further studies are needed across varietal regions of the U.S. That is, could there be distinguishing differences within the same race across different regional cultures of the U.S. as that of Alabama, New York, Alaska, and Hawaii? Furthermore, could there be differences within the same group of political orientation across U.S. regions? Future studies will need to take into consideration the idea of delving more into regional cultures to better analyze the similarities and differences of political orientation as it relates to sex, race, and other distinguishing demographics.

This current study has taken a step in the right direction in providing unique data that could assist clinical and health psychologists in better understanding individual characteristics relating to psychological health and wellbeing, which inevitably could provide positive social change for the family household. Other social and cultural domains that can benefit from the study's data include workplace organizations via social and organizational psychologists, which can assist in promoting governing policy for mitigating high-stress levels for lower socioeconomic communities and households.

Conclusion

As this unique research study explored the complexity of political orientation and its relationship with perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity, only high measures of conservative political orientation and intrinsic religiosity were found to be statistically significant. However, after controlling for several demographic variables, this study did uncover some other surprising correlates between demographics as they relate to political orientation, perceived stress, happiness, and religiosity. For example, although Blacks are more conservative and religious than other groups, they also had higher measures of perceived stress. A couple of explanations for this occurrence could be that the Blacks in this particular sample also had higher measures of cigarette smoking, and ranked in the two lower brackets of yearly income; both cigarette smoking and lower socioeconomic status correlate with increased measures of perceived stress.

Implications for positive social change begin with acknowledging the complexity of the human condition in that there are no definitive explanations as to how individual humans acquire their range emotionality over one's lifespan. In the biological and social sciences, researchers have acquired a plethora of knowledge on the varietal characteristics of the human condition. Scientists continue to excogitate the nature vs. nurture debate on the questioning concern as to what percentage of biological, social, and environmental forces influence human emotions the most, as well as the behavioral outcomes thereof. Some examples of the nature-vs.-nurture debate include the following traits: personality characteristics (McCrae et al., 2000); sexual orientation (Francis, 2008; Kauth, 2006); psychopathy (Hicks et a., 2012; Taylor, Loney, Bobadilla, Iacono, &

McGue, 2003; Tuvblad, Fanti, Andershed, Colins, & Larsson, 2017); uniqueness of Blacks and Whites (Jayaratne et al., 2009); as well as juxtaposing our apish ancestors as that of bonobos and chimpanzees (Hare, Wobber, & Wrangham, 2012; White & Chapman, 1994; Wobber, Hare, Maboto, Lipson, Wrangham, & Ellison, 2010).

The basis of this study is to assist in mitigating issues as that of the U.S.'s 20-year high in political dichotomy (PEW Research Center, 2014) and 30% increase in stress levels over 30 years (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012). Due to the complexity of this current study as it relates to the varietal traits of the human condition, much more research needs to be conducted on political orientation and perceived stress. Furthermore, although no statistical significance revealed correlative effects between perceived stress and its relationship with political orientation, there are some implications for positive social change that this unique study can provide. As subsequent studies attempt to replicate and fine-tune this current research, scientists can learn more about the differences of U.S. demographics.

In understanding demographic differences as that of liberal and conservative political orientation, clinical and health psychologists can begin devising methods on how to better treat unique individuals. Analogous to the differences of personality types, scientists may never determine whether liberals and conservatives are what they are due to nature, nurture, or a combination of both (Fowler & Schreiber, 2008; Shultziner, 2013; Smith et al., 2011). Knowing that chimpanzees have their version of quid-pro-quo politics (De Waal & Waal, 2007; Duffy, Wrangham, & Silk, 2007), are human beings that much different from their apish ancestors? No matter the unique human

characteristics across cultural domains, and no matter the circumstances of space-and-time events, a variety of everyday people from parents, teachers, clinical and health psychologists, and even governing entities implementing policy legislation can make the positive social change that is relative to all groups and individuals around the world.

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