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Can appraisals of common political life events impact subjective well-being?

Krzysztof Kaniasty^{1,2}, Urszula Jakubowska²

¹Department of Psychology, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

²Institute of Psychology, Polish Academy of Sciences

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Krzysztof Kaniasty, Department of Psychology, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 1020 Oakland Ave., Uhler Hall, Indiana, PA 15705, USA.
E-mail: kaniasty@iup.edu

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Abstract

This study examined the psychological impact of global subjective appraisals of influence exerted on people's lives by common political events. A list of 24 political events was administered to a random sample of 400 adults in Poland. Political self-efficacy, interest in politics, perceived political social support, and political collective efficacy were also assessed as potential moderators of the link between political stress appraisals and subjective well-being (satisfaction with life, sense of anomie, positive affect). Perceptions of the negative influence of political stressors on one's life and the life of the country were associated with concomitant variations in subjective well-being. Among psychosocial resources, political self-efficacy consistently moderated the influence of appraisals of political stressors on satisfaction with life and positive affect.

Political circumstances and conditions are inherent companions of human experience and thus, at the risk of stating a truism, many of life's stressful experiences are politically laden. Indeed, stress and coping researchers have routinely been examining major types of stressors unfolding within specific political contexts. Political events frequently emerge as sudden traumas such as terrorist attacks, violence, revolutions, or assassinations. Discrete life events such as elections, the rise and fall of governments, or abrupt changes in policies have a strong potential to produce significant life changes. Many political stress-related processes develop slowly and may not initially be considered as problematic, but eventually become chronic stressors. Vague tax laws, governmentally sanctioned discrimination of certain groups, or preferential treatment of some citizens are circumstances that typically have a longer lasting impact on peoples' lives. Sudden and chronic financial crises, waves of unemployment, or economic recessions are examples of stressors that occur at the macrosocial system levels. At times, the political milieu of life embodies threats and losses because of the absence of anticipated outcomes. Political stagnation (e.g., perpetual reign of a political faction), unresolved societal issues (e.g., human rights violations), or restricted access to the most fundamental wellness services (e.g., public education, affordable health care, initiatives easing poverty) might well reflect such non-

events. Lastly, politics may also be coupled with relatively minor stressors and become mundane yet irritating, frustrating, and demanding daily hassles (e.g., negativity of political campaigns, drawn-out legislation).

Stressors associated with political violence and oppression

The greater part of stress and coping research examining the impact of political events, both directly and indirectly experienced, on psychological well-being has focused on very specific, usually potentially traumatic or traumatic circumstances (see Bonanno, Brewin, Kaniasty, & La Greca, 2010; Hobfoll et al., 1991; Maugen & Litz, 2006; Neria, DiGrande, & Adams, 2011). Yet, there have also been attempts to operationalize political stress as an aggregate of stressors of varied severity occurring on a protracted basis rather than stemming from a singular event. Slone and her collaborators (e.g., Slone & Hallis, 1999; Slone, Lobel, & Gilat, 1999) developed a "political life events model" that successfully adapted the life events checklist methodology (e.g., Monroe, 2008; Wheaton, 1996) to examine the effects of adverse political conditions on psychological well-being and adjustment of children and adolescents. The authors created the Political Life Events Scale (PLE) that assessed