

Stress and Anxiety  
-  
Applications to Health and Well-Being,  
Work Stressors, and Assessment

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# Stress and Anxiety

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### **ASSESSING COMMON POLITICAL LIFE STRESSORS: WARSAW APPRAISAL OF POLITICAL STRESS INVENTORY**

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Stress and coping research examining the influence of political contexts on sociopsychological functioning is typically conducted within very specific, potentially traumatic and severe, life circumstances (e.g., wars, terrorism, unemployment, poverty). Studies that assess self-reported experiences of political stress occurring on a daily basis, rather than stemming from a singular dramatic context, are less frequent. The present research program defined political stress as perceived influence (unfavorable and favorable) of current common political events and conditions on both peoples' personal lives and the life of their country. A checklist of 24 political events of varied duration, severity, and scope was administered to a random sample of 400 adults in Poland, along with instruments assessing political attitudes and behaviors, subjective well-being, and socialpsychological resources. The Warsaw Appraisal of Political Stress Inventory (WAPSI) showed reasonable psychometric characteristics that warrant its future use in studies that aim to assess political stress process at an aggregate level comprehensively sampling political stressors affecting people on an everyday or periodic basis. Although the strength of the present measurement approach was its reliance on theoretical foundations in the selection of events for the checklist, this study has limited generalizability due to the political, cultural, and geo-historical backgrounds of the studied population. Cross-national or cross-cultural replications and extensions are necessary.

#### **Introduction**

Many life stressors stem from, either directly or indirectly, a political life context. Thus, not surprisingly, much of the contemporary research on traumatic and potentially traumatic events has focused on mental health consequences of politically laden circumstances, such as wars, terrorism, or ethnic conflicts (e.g., Hobfoll et al., 1991; Neria, Di Grande, & Adams, 2011; Pedersen, 2002). There is also a long tradition in stress and coping research of investigating psychological and social well-being in individuals, as well as societies, experiencing stressful

conditions, such as unemployment, inflation, poverty, or other economic crises (e.g., Conover & Feldman, 1986; Diener, Ng, Harter, & Arora, 2010; Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1981; Kressler, Turner, & House, 1989; Luhmann, Hofmann, Eid, & Lucas, 2001). All in all, most of the psychological and sociological research examining the influence of political contexts on sociopsychological functioning was conducted within very specific (usually traumatic or severe) life circumstances. On the other hand, studies that assessed self-reported experiences of political stress occurring on an everyday basis, rather than stemming from a singular dramatic context, are less frequent.

Perhaps the most consistent research program that has successfully operationalized political stress as an aggregate of stressors of varied severity is the work on the *Political Life Events Scale* (PLE) by Slone and her collaborators (e.g., Slone & Hallis, 1999; Lavi & Slone, 2011). The PLE is a checklist that samples ongoing hardships in the lives of children and adolescents exposed to the protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but not in reference to any specific singular event associated with these tumultuous and often deadly confrontations. This 18-item scale includes questions referring to low severity conflict-based events (e.g., “A security drill at school”), moderately severe events (e.g. “A prolonged period of time spent in a security shelter”), and events that are potentially traumatic or are actual traumas (e.g., “Being a victim of or injured by an act of political or military violence”). Several investigations revealed that perceived impact of these political events was related to heightened levels of psychological distress during different periods of hostilities in the Middle East and in other conflictual geopolitical contexts (e.g., Slone, Kaminer, & Durrheim, 2000). There are also studies documenting that stressors assessed by the life event inventories recording differential exposure to lingering political conflicts were associated with heightened symptoms of psychological distress in adult samples (e.g., Muldoon & Downes, 2007; Muldoon, Schmid, & Downes, 2009).

### **Purpose of the study**

Undoubtedly, investigations of traumatic political events or protracted political upheavals are important for stress and coping theories, research, and applications. Yet in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of how political processes influence people’s psychological and social lives, empirical investigations of more commonplace, mundane, or routine politically-laden stressful life events are equally warranted. The present chapter describes a checklist of 24 political life stressors, the *Warsaw Appraisal of Political Stress Inventory* (WAPSI), which attempted to assess the perceived impact of current political events on individuals’ personal lives and the life of their country.

## Method

*Sample and Procedure.* A random sample of 400 adults was interviewed face-to-face in November and December of 2011 in Poland. Limits were placed on the number of interviews that could be obtained with respect to respondents' gender, age, education level, geographical region and population size of place of residence. Respondents were interviewed in their homes, and the average length of the interview was 35 minutes.

Participants were 53% female ( $n = 210$ ), and the mean age of the sample was 44.54 ( $SD = 16.36$ ). The majority of respondents were married or had a permanent partner (71%,  $n = 282$ ). Fifty-three percent of the sample attained elementary or vocational education ( $n = 210$ ), and 31% completed high school or a few years of post high school education ( $n = 124$ ), whereas 16% ( $n = 65$ ) of respondents reported receiving a college degree. The sample was also representative of respondents' places of residence in terms of population sizes: 38% of participants lived in villages ( $n = 150$ ), 24% in towns up to 50,000 in population size ( $n = 95$ ), 16% resided in cities with up to 200,000 inhabitants ( $n = 65$ ), and the remaining 22% of the respondents lived in larger cities with population sizes greater than 200,000 ( $n = 90$ ).

*The Checklist - Warsaw Appraisal of Political Stress Inventory.* This research program defined political stress as the perceived impact of current political events and circumstances on both the personal lives of the respondents and their concerns about the socio-economic well-being of the country. We began by creating a long list of items referencing a variety of political events taking place in contemporary Poland. The intention was to incorporate all different types of stressors along the "stress continuum" proposed by Wheaton (1996): traumas (e.g., "foreign terrorist attack"), life change events (e.g., "Poland becoming a member of European Union"), chronic stressors (e.g., "widening of the gap between the rich and poor") macro system stressors (e.g., "economic crisis in some European countries"), nonevents (e.g., "inability to solve national health care issues"), and daily hassles (e.g., "lies of politicians"). Two preliminary pilot studies employing small convenience samples estimated the respondents' appraisals of the influence these events exerted on their lives and the life of the country as a whole (Jakubowska, 2011).

The inventory consists of two parts, each asking 24 questions with different sets of instructions. In the first part of the WAPSI, instructions read as follows: "Next we will present you with a list of various political events and activities that tend to be widely commented on in public forums in Poland. We would like you to express your opinion whether and to what extent these events and circumstances unfavorably or favorably influence your own life." All 24 items were scored on a 7-point scale: -3 (unfavorably to a large extent), -2 (unfavorably to a moderate extent), -1 (unfavorably to a small extent), 0 (the event had no impact), +1 (favora-

bly to a small extent), +2 (favorably to a moderate extent), + 3 (favorably to a large extent). The second part of the inventory asked respondents to appraise, on the same 7-point scale, how these events affected the life of the country (“Now we would like you to consider the extent to which each of the above-mentioned political events and actions unfavorably or favorably influence the life of the country.”). All items and frequencies of responses are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Distribution of responses to items on the Warsaw Appraisal of Political Stress Inventory – Influence on respondents’ own personal lives.

Item from the WAPSI – Influence on own life	Political event						
	Unfavorable influence				Favorable influence		
	Great	Moderate	Small	No impact	Small	Moderate	Great
4. Increases in consumer prices relative to salaries	61.2	18.0	7.8	6.8	3.0	2.2	1.0
19. Inability of the authorities to solve universal (national) health care issues	50.8	23.8	12.0	8.5	3.0	1.8	0.2
15. Inability of the government to deal with unemployment	48.2	23.0	12.8	10.2	3.5	2.2	0.0
23. Too much of the budget being spent on maintaining politicians’ offices and standards of their working conditions	44.5	25.2	14.0	12.0	2.8	1.2	0.2
20. Politicians abusing their positions for personal and family gains	43.2	25.8	14.5	11.8	2.0	2.8	0.0
17. Discrepancies between politicians’ declarations and their actions	42.2	27.2	13.8	12.5	2.2	2.0	0.0
21. The government allowing for the widening of the gap between the rich and poor	46.2	24.8	11.8	12.5	2.8	1.8	0.2
13. Lack of concern on the part of the government about crime and insufficient efforts to guarantee safety to all citizens	37.2	26.8	15.8	16.0	2.2	1.5	0.5
14. Politicians putting themselves above the law	42.0	24.5	12.2	16.0	3.2	1.5	0.5
18. Lack of concern on the part of the government to minimize ecological and health threats (e.g., technological catastrophes, environmental pollution)	32.8	29.2	16.8	15.5	3.2	2.0	0.5
22. Politicians unable to make progress in solving their differences	33.8	30.0	14.8	17.0	2.5	1.5	0.5
3. Lies of Polish politicians	36.5	23.2	17.8	16.2	3.8	2.0	0.5
7. Actions of certain politicians producing a negative image of Poland in the world	37.0	24.8	15.0	17.8	3.2	2.2	0.0
16. Clashes between politicians, throwing dirt at each other	37.8	20.5	15.8	22.0	3.2	0.5	0.2
6. Political authorities creating privileges for certain population groups	33.8	24.8	15.0	16.5	3.8	5.0	1.2
24. Economic crisis in some European countries (e.g., Greece, Spain, Portugal)	27.2	27.0	17.0	22.8	2.8	2.5	0.8
5. The prospect of Poland switching to EURO (€) currency	36.0	19.8	14.5	14.2	6.8	6.8	2.0
11. Moral and ethical scandals of politicians	30.5	22.8	16.5	25.0	2.2	2.5	0.5
12. The authorities treating minority groups as inferior	25.8	23.0	18.0	28.5	2.8	1.5	0.5
10. Involvement of Poland in military interventions.	20.8	23.5	19.0	25.0	5.8	4.8	1.2
8. Influx of immigrants unrestricted by the government	20.2	22.2	20.5	32.2	2.0	2.2	0.5
2. Possibility of a foreign terrorist attack.	22.8	19.8	18.5	31.2	3.5	3.5	0.8
9. Participation of Poland in NATO	10.8	15.0	12.8	30.8	11.8	12.8	6.2
1. Poland becoming a member of the European Union	2.2	7.5	11.0	21.0	25.2	21.8	11.2

Note: N = 400. Prefix number indicates the position of the item in the inventory



Table 2. Distribution of responses to items on the Warsaw Appraisal of Political Stress Inventory – Influence on the life of the country.

Item from the WAPSI – Influence on own life	Political event						
	Unfavorable influence			No impact	Favorable influence		
	Great	Moderate	Small		Small	Moderate	Great
19. Inability of the authorities to solve universal (national) health care issues	56.2	23.5	10.2	5.2	2.5	2.2	0.0
23. Too much of the budget being spent on maintaining politicians' offices and standards of their working conditions	52.5	25.0	12.2	7.0	2.0	1.0	0.2
17. Discrepancies between politicians' declarations and their actions	51.5	26.5	11.2	8.0	1.5	1.0	0.2
21. The government allowing for the widening of the gap between the rich and poor	49.2	29.0	11.2	7.2	1.8	1.5	0.0
15. Inability of the government to deal with unemployment	57.2	23.2	8.8	6.0	2.2	2.0	0.5
20. Politicians abusing their positions for personal and family gains	50.8	27.2	11.2	6.0	2.8	1.8	0.2
4. Increases in consumer prices relative to salaries	61.5	19.0	8.5	5.0	3.8	2.2	0.0
22. Politicians unable to make progress in solving their differences	47.5	29.5	12.0	6.8	2.5	1.8	0.0
3. Lies of Polish politicians	48.8	24.5	15.5	6.2	3.5	1.5	0.0
14. Politicians putting themselves above the law	49.8	25.5	13.5	7.2	2.5	1.0	0.5
7. Actions of certain politicians producing a negative image of Poland in the world	43.8	31.0	12.5	8.5	2.8	1.5	0.0
13. Lack of concern on the part of the government about crime and insufficient efforts to guarantee safety to all citizens	44.5	28.0	14.2	7.5	2.8	2.5	0.5
18. Lack of concern on the part of the government to minimize ecological and health threats (e.g., technological catastrophes, environmental pollution)	40.5	31.5	14.5	9.0	2.5	1.8	0.2
16. Clashes between politicians, throwing dirt at each other	44.8	28.8	12.0	10.2	2.5	1.2	0.5
11. Moral and ethical scandals of politicians	43.2	22.5	18.5	10.8	3.0	1.8	0.2
6. Political authorities creating privileges for certain population groups	42.5	23.8	17.0	8.0	5.5	3.2	0.0
24. Economic crisis in some European countries (e.g., Greece, Spain, Portugal)	34.0	30.5	17.2	13.2	3.5	1.0	0.5
12. The authorities treating minority groups as inferior	28.8	29.2	19.5	18.0	2.5	1.8	0.2
2. Possibility of a foreign terrorist attack	29.0	25.0	20.5	18.8	3.8	2.5	0.5
5. The prospect of Poland switching to <i>EURO</i> (€) currency	38.5	20.2	15.8	10.5	8.5	5.8	0.8
8. Influx of immigrants unrestricted by the government	24.2	26.0	22.8	21.5	3.5	1.5	0.5
10. Involvement of Poland in military interventions	30.5	23.2	17.8	15.8	6.8	4.5	1.5
9. Participation of Poland in NATO	15.0	13.2	13.8	23.2	13.2	15.2	6.2
1. Poland becoming a member of the European Union	8.8	11.0	11.2	11.8	19.0	23.0	15.2

Note: N = 400. Prefix number indicates the position of the item in the inventory

As with many life events checklists, several different (and redundant) ways of scoring are possible. In this report, four methods of calculation of political life events scores are presented. The number of negative political events (“losses”) was a count of items on which respondents appraised their influence as unfavorable (regardless of the extent of their impact; thus, all responses were recoded as 1 = -3, -2, -1). Likewise, the number of positive political events (“gains”) was a count of items on which respondents appraised their influence as favorable

(items recoded as 1 = 3, 2, 1). Separate scores were computed for events exerting the influence on “the self” (*losses-to-self sum* and *gains-to-self sum*) as well as the influence on “the country” (*losses-to-country sum* and *losses-to-country sum*).

Another set of four indicators of political stressors were averages of negative or positive ratings of each event. The *intensity of political stress as losses-to-self* measure was the average of all items to which respondents indicated that a particular event negatively influenced their own lives (3 = *to a large extent*, 2 = *to a moderate extent*, and 1 = *to a small extent*). If the respondent answered that an event “*had no impact*” on her/him or that it exerted a favorable influence on her/him, then she/he received a score of “0” for that item. The *intensity of political stress as gains-to-self* measure was created based on items to which respondents offered answers indicating that these events influenced their own lives positively (3 = *to a large extent*, 2 = *to a moderate extent*, 1 = *to a small extent*, 0 = *no impact or a negative influence*). The two political stress intensity indicators assessing the influence of political events on the life of the country, *losses-to-country* and *gains-to-country*, were computed in the same fashion.

The final two indicators of political stressors as computed based on WAPSI items were averages based on the entire range of rating options (from -3 to +3) for all 24 questions. Calculated in this fashion, the score represented the end balance of ratings of events both appraised negatively and positively. The balance scores (for “self” and “country,” respectively) were recoded so that the high score would indicate a more unfavorable (negative) appraisal of political events. The top panel of Table 3 presents means, standard deviations, internal reliability coefficients, and correlations for the entire set of 10 political stress indicators.

## Results

*Basic descriptive statistics.* Table 1 presents all the items from WAPSI with overall ratings of unfavorability (values of -3, -2, -1 summed) and favorability (values of 1, 2, 3 summed) as appraised in reference to the influence of these events on respondents’ personal lives. Table 2 presents the data for ratings concerning the influence of political events on the life of the country. The events are listed in the order from highest to lowest unfavorability. The correspondence of rankings between the events affecting “the self” and the events affecting “the country” was very high (Spearman's rank correlation coefficient  $\rho = .94$ ). Pearson correlations shown in Table 3 between corresponding measures of losses and gains (i.e., sum, intensity, balance) to “the self” and “the country” were obviously very high as well ( $r$ s range from .65 to .76). Likewise, the internal reliability coefficients were high.

Table 3. Correlation among political stressors indicators, their means, standard deviations, and reliability coefficients (top panel). Correlations of political stressors with psychological well-being and political attitude and behaviors (bottom panel).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Losses-to-self Sum	<b>.na</b>									
2. Gains-to-self Sum	-.54	<b>.na</b>								
3. Losses-to-country Sum	.65	-.59	<b>.na</b>							
4. Gains-to-country Sum	-.48	.76	-.73	<b>.na</b>						
5. Losses-to-self Intensity	.88	-.44	.61	-.41	<b>.95</b>					
6. Gains-to-self Intensity	-.49	.96	-.55	.72	-.38	<b>.89</b>				
7. Losses-to-country Intensity	.60	-.46	.84	-.56	.73	-.40	<b>.95</b>			
8. Gains-to-country Intensity	-.44	.73	-.65	.95	-.34	.75	-.47	<b>.87</b>		
9. All stressors-self Balance	.90	-.66	.68	-.56	.96	-.61	.74	-.51	<b>.94</b>	
10. All stressors-country Balance	.63	-.59	.88	-.73	.71	-.54	.97	-.66	.76	<b>.94</b>
Mean	17.33	2.25	19.32	2.17	1.64	0.16	1.88	0.15	1.48	1.73
Standard Deviation	6.00	3.65	5.27	3.42	0.76	0.26	0.74	0.23	0.89	0.87
Correlation with measures of psychological well-being and political attitudes/behaviors										
Satisfaction with life	-.09	.10*	-.17*	.14**	.08	.19**	.09	-.14**	-.14**	-.19**
Sense of anomie	.09	-.15**	.14**	-.17**	-.17**	.17**	-.19**	.15**	.15**	.20**
Direction of Poland	-.04	.08	-.05	.14**	.12*	-.02	.18**	-.05	-.05	-.07
Interest in politics	.07	.16**	.00	.13*	.18*	-.01	.15**	.02	.02	-.05
Attitude toward democracy	.02	-.14**	.11*	-.09	-.11*	.16**	-.03	.09	.09	.15**
Political activity	.12*	-.04	.14**	-.04	-.01	.12*	.01	.10*	.10*	.10*

Note.  $N=400$ . In the top panel, all correlations are statistically significant,  $p<.001$ . Internal reliability coefficients (Cronbach alpha) are in bold on the diagonal. In the bottom panel, \* $p<.05$ , \*\* $p<.01$ .

The same seven stressors, although not in the same rank order, were the top unfavorable impact events for personal lives as well as the life of the country. Listed in the rank order of influence on “the self,” they were: event 4 “*Increases in consumer prices*” (self = 87%; country = 89%), event 19 “*Inability to solve national health issues*” (self = 86.5%, country = 90%), event 15 “*Inability to deal with unemployment*” (self = 84%, country = 89.2%), event 23 “*Too much budget spent on maintaining offices of politicians*” (self = 83.8%, country = 89.8%), event 20 “*Politicians abusing their positions for gains*” (self = 83.5%, country = 89.2%), event 17 “*Discrepancies between politicians’ declarations and actions*” (self = 83.2%, country = 89.5%), and event 21 “*The widening of the gap between rich and poor*” (self = 82.8%, country = 89.5%).

Only one event was considered explicitly as favorable for both “the self” and “the country”: event 1 “*Poland becoming a member of EU*” (self = 58.2%, country = 57.2%). The next event that could be considered as somewhat positive was event 9, which asked about Poland joining the NATO forces (self = 30.8%; country = 34.8%).

In general, the inspection of means for all the measures of losses and gains presented in Table 3 also clearly showed that our respondents appraised the listed political events as unfavorable. In terms of comparisons between the influence of the events on “the self” versus influence on “the country,” paired sample *t*-tests conducted with loss (negative) events revealed statistically higher levels of unfavorability of the influence on the life of the country (e.g., losses-self balance vs. losses-country balance,  $t [399] = -8.17, p < .001$ ; the tests with other loss measures would be redundant). On the other hand, comparisons of measures of gain-to-self versus gains-to-country did not yield statistically significant differences.

*Bivariate correlations with sociodemographic variables and normative life events.* Correlational analyses of relationships between different indicators of common political losses and gains with sociodemographic characteristics (i.e., gender, age, level of education, marital status, and population size of place of residence) did not produce many significant correlations, and those that achieved the level of statistical significance were low in magnitude. Losses and gains were not associated with gender or age. Persons with higher educational attainment reported higher levels of political gains-to-self (e.g., political gains-to-self intensity,  $r = .13, p < .01$ ). Persons residing in larger urban areas consistently reported greater occurrence of more negative political events to “the self” and “the country” (e.g., losses-to-self sum,  $r = .15, p < .01$ ; losses-to-country sum,  $r = .10, p < .05$ ). Unfavorability and favorability ratings of common political events did not correlate with the number of normative major life events experienced in the past 12 months (e.g., change in employment status, change in marital status, birth of a child/grandchild; illness to self or family, bereavements, etc.).

*Bivariate correlations with measures of psychological well-being and political attitudes/activities.* Correlation coefficients of various indicators of common political stressors (losses and gains) with a 5-item satisfaction with life scale (SWLS, Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) and a 4-item sense of political anomie scale (Korzeniewski, 2002) were in the expected directions, but their magnitudes were low (see Table 3, lower panel). Nevertheless, it can be said that respondents who perceived political events as unfavorably influencing their lives and the life of the country expressed concomitant lower levels of life satisfaction and higher levels of feelings of alienation, normlessness, and meaninglessness of the contemporary world (i.e., anomie). Interestingly, political gains-to-self and gains-to-country were associated with lower levels of political anomie.

Likewise, the correlations of political stress indicators with measures of political attitudes or behaviors (i.e., belief that changes in Poland were going in the right direction, greater interest in politics, positive attitude toward democracy, and engagement in political activities) were low in magnitude (Table 3, lower panel). People who reported more political gains in their lives and in the life of their country were more interested in politics. Respondents who ap-

praised political events as unfavorable reported participating in a greater number of political activities (e.g., voting in elections at different administrative levels, signing petitions, participating in legal demonstrations). Correlations with a general attitude toward democracy were not consistent, yet they might suggest that people who reported more events as unfavorably affecting their country exhibited more positive attitudes toward democracy. Altogether, all correlation sizes were small (see Table 3); hence these associations should be interpreted very tentatively.

## Discussion

The present report described a self-report instrument sampling the experiences of political stress occurring on a daily basis, rather than stemming from a singular dramatic event or a constellation of related events within a specific political upheaval or crisis. We defined political stress as the perceived impact of current everyday political events and circumstances on individuals' personal identities ("the self") and their sense of collective identities ("the country"). In other words, it was assumed that the influence of commonplace political events could be indexed both directly in people's personal lives as well as, in a broader scope, in the life of their country. As with many stressful life events, a political event may represent a threat of loss, or may be an actual loss, for some people. For others, the same political circumstance could represent a challenge or even an actual gain. Thus, in accordance with leading theoretical frameworks in stress and coping research (e.g., Hobfoll, 2001; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), each event listed in the *Warsaw Appraisal of Political Stress Inventory* (WAPSI) was appraised by the respondents on the extent to which it unfavorably ("losses") or favorably ("gains") influenced their personal lives and the life of their country.

The majority of events were appraised as unfavorable both for respondents personally and for their nation. A chronic stressor (i.e., "*increases in consumer prices relative to salaries*") and a nonevent (i.e., "*inability of the authorities to solve universal health care issues*") were considered as most negative both in the personal and the national contexts. Predictably, events related to the economic sphere of politics were perceived as most detrimental (e.g., "*inability of the government to deal with unemployment*," "*the government allowing for the widening of the gap between the rich and poor*"), which is of course consistent with conceptions of the stress process as an assault on the most fundamental life resources (e.g., Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1981; Hobfoll, 2001). Nonetheless, several other events that were explicitly political in nature were also judged unfavorably, again both to personal lives of the respondents and to the nation as a whole (e.g., "*discrepancies between politicians' declarations and their actions*," "*insufficient efforts to guarantee safety to all citizens*"). Most interestingly, for a

large majority of participants, questionable and potentially mendacious actions of politicians, such as taking advantage of their positions for personal gain or overspending budgets to support their political enterprises were not only seen as negatively affecting the country in general, but also as negatively affecting respondents' own lives.

Only a very small number of respondents appraised the political events listed in the inventory as favorable. Predominance of unfavorable over favorable appraisals of political events is consistent with the centrality of resource loss over resource gain in the stress process (Hobfoll, 2001). The two most frequently endorsed favorable political events (i.e., "*Poland becoming a member of the EU*" and "*Poland joining the ranks of NATO*") were considered relevant for both peoples' personal lives and the life of their country. Indeed, the correlations between aggregate judgments regarding the influence of these events on one's personal life as well as the status of the country were substantial (see Table 3, top panel). Further research with this instrument predicting various outcome measures assessing psychological (e.g., subjective well-being), social (e.g., sense of community), and political (e.g., voting behavior) constructs is needed to establish whether or not it is empirically useful to keep separate, "the self" versus "the country," indicators of stress appraisals associated with common political events. In general, however, these simple descriptive analyses presented here provided reasonable evidence for both face and content validities of WAPSI items.

The composite scores of political stress did not correlate with gender, age, marital status or education attainment, which suggested that appraisals of common political events were not confounded with socioeconomic status. Small positive correlations with the population size of communities in which respondents resided most likely indicated that politics and events associated with it are typically more salient and debated in larger urban areas.

Although very small in magnitude, bivariate correlations between aggregated appraisals (both negative and positive) of common political events with indicators of political attitudes and actions provided some evidence for the validity of this method of assessment of political stressors. Respondents who appraised political events as unfavorable reported participating in a greater number of political activities (e.g., voting, legal demonstrations) and exhibited greater respect for democracy in general (e.g., "*Democracy is superior to all other forms of political governments*"). Interestingly, people who appraised political events as "gains-to-self" and "gains-to-country" expressed greater levels of interest in politics in general.

Correlations of WAPSI's political stressors with two measures of psychological well-being were also very modest, but low bivariate correlations between indices based on life-event checklists and psychological health measures are routinely small in magnitude (see Monroe, 2008). Most importantly, and consistent with theoretical validity expectations, participants who appraised political events as unfavorably influencing their lives and the life of the country

exhibited lower scores on satisfaction with life and sense of anomie scales. In our other study based on the present sample and measures (Kaniasty & Jakubowska, 2013), we conducted a series of hierarchical regression analyses in a conservative manner, whereby the potential influence of typically studied variables affecting psychological well-being (i.e., sociodemographic factors, normative life events, negative mood) was partialled out prior to examining the role of political stressors. These analyses also accounted for the influence of personal and communal resources such as political self-efficacy, interest in politics, perceived political social support, and political collective efficacy. Appraisals of political events as unfavorably affecting one's own life and the life of the country were found to exert an adverse impact on satisfaction with life and sense of political anomie. The influence of appraisals of political events as favorably affecting one's own life and the life of the country was more limited.

The *Warsaw Appraisal of Political Stress Inventory* (WAPSI) appears to possess reasonable psychometric characteristics that warrant its future use in studies that aim at assessments of political stress at an aggregate level, comprehensively sampling stressors of varied severity occurring on a daily or frequent periodic basis, rather than stemming from a singular (usually severe or traumatic) event. The strength of the present measurement approach was its reliance on theoretical foundations in the selection of events for the checklist and its referencing the potential impact of stressors on both individual and collective dimensions of peoples' lives. The sample was large and representative of the general population in Poland, but this study has limited generalizability due to both the specificity of the political geo-historical and cultural characteristics of the studied population. It is reasonable to claim that assessments of stressful political life events in a purely neutral manner (i.e., completely free of sociopolitical surroundings) may be unattainable. Yet it would be instructive to assess and compare self-reported experiences of political stress occurring on an everyday basis across a variety of cultural, political, and geographical contexts.

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