

Original Paper

A Comparison of Religiosity and Life Satisfaction among Seven Different Religious Groups

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to see if six widely used indicators of religiosity (self-reporting as being religious; importance of their religion to them; church membership, attendance and belonging to church groups; and praying) are related to happiness and life satisfaction. Using an on-line survey (N = 1399) I found that all except the frequency of prayer indicator were positively associated with life satisfaction and happiness. The sample was then broken into seven groups: Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Buddhist, Unitarian, Unity and no religion. Significant ANOVAs were found among the groups on each of my four questions: Life Satisfaction, Happiness, Not Feeling Lonely, and Group Satisfaction. Overall, Unity members scored high on these questions while the non-religious, Buddhists, and Unitarians scored low. The results for Unity, Unitarianism and Buddhism were discussed in terms of their doctrines accounting for these scores. Finally, recommendations were made for future research.

Keywords

religiosity, spirituality, happiness, life Satisfaction

1. Introduction

In recent years the role of religiosity and its relationship with happiness and life satisfaction has been a topic of much discussion and research. The research has been fairly unequivocal: there is a positive correlation between religion and happiness/life satisfaction (e.g., Ellison, 1991; Ferriss, 2002).

Various religious variables which have been studied in relation to happiness include: (a) self-reported level of religiosity, (b) church attendance, and (c) prayer. In terms of the research relating self-reported levels of religion numerous studies support the conclusion that those who report being religious have higher levels of satisfaction. Green and Elliott (2010) found that individuals who identified themselves

as religious were happier. The General Social Survey (2004) found that 43 percent of those saying they were religious were “very happy” with their lives; only 23 percent of those without a religion gave this response. And, in a survey of over 676,000 Americans conducted by the Gallup organization for their Gallup-Health ways Well-Being Index, it was found that the “very religious” respondents had a Well-Being score of 69.2 while the non-religious figure was 65.3 (Newport, Witters, & Agrawal, 2016). In another Gallup survey of over 550,000 Americans, they found that the very religious were also less likely than either the moderately or non-religious to have been diagnosed over the course of their lifetime with depression (Newport, Agrawal, & Witters, 2010).

Church attendance has also been found to be positively associated with happiness. Stark and Maier (2008) combined 24 General Social Science Surveys and found a strong positive correlation between attendance and happiness. Barkan and Greenwood (2003) also analyzed data from the General Social surveys. They merged samples of the American population age 65 and over from the 1988-1994 (with the exception of 1992) surveys and found significant positive correlations between church attendance and well-being. Levin and Taylor (1998), in a study of African Americans, found significant positive correlations between both happiness and life satisfaction and church attendance.

One might speculate that attending services brings one in contact with others and, having contact with others, allows us to get to know those people and form friendships. As a result, these connections can provide much needed support when one is depressed, alone, in need of a ride to the doctor’s office, etc. This idea is reinforced by the research finding that the correlation between religion and happiness is stronger for those individuals who are single, elderly, and in poor health (Nielson, 2016).

Although prayer is not as widely used as other indicators of religion, research finds that it is important in the U.S. Three-fourths of Americans report praying on a daily or weekly basis (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008). Of the studies conducted using this as an independent variable, we find a positive relationship between prayer and happiness. Brooks (2008), looking at 2004 GSS findings, reports that 36 percent of those who said they prayed daily (irrespective of church attendance) indicated that they were “very happy,” whereas only 21 percent who never prayed gave the “very happy” response. The aforementioned study of African Americans by Levin and Taylor found a significant positive correlation of +.16 between prayer and happiness and a +.13 correlation between life satisfaction and prayer.

1.1 Cross-Cultural Studies

The majority of evidence, then, indicates that there is a positive correlation between happiness and well-being and various measures of religiosity. One might then ask: Are these findings the same across different cultures? The answer seems to be: yes. Inglehart (1990) reports that, in a study of over 160 Europeans, 85 percent of those who attended church services weekly said they were “very satisfied” with life. Among those who never attended services, the number was 72 percent.

In Great Britain, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) ascertains the levels of happiness for their citizens. Respondents were asked to indicate, on a 0 to 10 scale, how happy they were in the previous

day. The higher the score the happier people were. Respondents were also asked to indicate whether they experienced a sense of life being worthwhile. Their most recent findings indicated that, while the average score for the population on happiness was 7.38; the score for the non-religious population was lower: 7.22. They also found a lower sense of life being worthwhile among the non-religious (Bingham, 2016).

However, we should note that there is evidence that a positive correlation between happiness ratings and religiosity does not exist everywhere. Okubiez-Kozaryn (2010) found a greater relationship between religion and happiness/life satisfaction in those countries where most of its population is religious. They concluded that, in those relatively non-religious societies, religion has little or no relationship with life satisfaction variables. Diener (2008) concluded the same: “Whatever the reason, religion does not seem to equal happiness everywhere”. And, in a large-scale cross-national study involving over 317,000 individuals representing 88 different countries, Hayward and Elliott (2014) stated:

Results supported the hypothesis that self-reported health religion is most strongly related to greater happiness and better self-reported health in societies where it is freely and widely practiced. In contrast, religiousness may be harmful when it is relatively deviant, and restrictions of freedom may serve to further exacerbate this effect. These results suggest that this positive association between religion and well-being is not universal... (p. 23).

1.2 Different Religious Traditions and Happiness

In addition to the question of its cross-cultural generality, we could ask if all religions show a positive correlation with happiness and life-satisfaction. The aforementioned surveys conducted by Britain’s ONS indicates that differences do, in fact, exist among various religious groups. They analyzed the responses of six specific groups: Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh, along with those who had no religious identification. Of their religious groups, they found that their Jewish sample had the highest mean score (7.90) for life being worthwhile. They were followed closely by Christians (7.86). Among those stating a religious affiliation preference, Buddhists had the lowest score: 7.61. However, the lowest score came from their non-religious sample: 7.58. Hindus had the highest happiness score. Their score was 7.57 while the non-religious had the lowest score: 7.22 (Ringhorn, 2016).

In a study of different religious groupings in the U.S., Lim (2016) analyzed five specific religious traditions: Catholic, Jewish, Mormon, Muslim and Protestant. The sample also included those stating they have no religion. One of the major findings, similar to previous research, was that subjective well-being was highly related to church attendance. And, for those who attended church services at least once a week, no matter the religion, the life satisfaction score was higher than for the non-attendees. However, there were differences among groups. Specifically, the correlation between life satisfaction and church attendance was highest for the Mormons and “other Christians” and weakest for the Jews and non-religious.

We may conclude from the previous studies that the bulk of research supports the idea that a positive correlation exists between happiness/life satisfaction and religion, at least in religious societies. Also, differences do exist among various religions.

1.3 Happiness and Social Relations: Rise of Positive Psychology

In the past few years a whole discipline has arisen looking at what the key factors are important as relating to happiness and well-being. This burgeoning field is known as the Positive Psychology movement and the results show that, although religion is important, what seems to be of greater significance is the extent of our relations with others. In an early study conducted at the University of Illinois, students were contacted at various times of the day and asked to indicate their mood state. Respondents were happiest when they were with their friends and least happy when alone (Diener, 2002). Seligman (2002), in his book *Authentic Happiness*, concluded that very happy people have a much more rich and fulfilling social life. These happy people spent a great deal of time socializing and little time alone.

Time Magazine conducted a national survey in 2004 in which they asked people various questions relating to happiness. One of their major findings was that happiness was found in people's relationships with others. In fact, when they asked: "What are your major sources of happiness?", the top response was their relationship with their children (77% gave this response). A close second (76%) was their relations with their friends (Wallis, 2005).

1.4 Religion and Happiness

Putnam and Campbell (2010), in their major study of religion in America (*American Grace*) found, like others, that church-goers reported a higher level of happiness than non-church-goers. However, their research led them to conclude that the relationship was not a matter of faith or specific theological doctrine but, rather, that community involvement (in this case, through a church) was the critical variable. This finding is also reminiscent of Putnam's (2000) findings in his work, entitled *Bowling Alone*. Putnam states: "...praying together seems to be better than either bowling alone or praying alone" (p. 492).

Putnam and Campbell (2010) found that, if a person attended church on a regular basis, but had no close ties with fellow churchgoers, then s/he was actually less happy than someone with the same characteristics but who did not attend church. Again, it seems to be the sense of community, not the faith. Okulicz-Kozaryn (2009), also concludes that social support is key: "...it is not only religiosity per se that makes people happy, but rather a social setting it offers." (p. 155)

1.5 Conclusions from the Literature

Conclusions which may be reached from the literature review indicate the following:

- (1) The relationship between religiosity and happiness occurs primarily in societies where religion is important.
- (2) Religiosity is positively associated with happiness and life satisfaction.
- (3) Some religions have higher rates of happiness than others.

(4) While the relationship between religion and life satisfaction is positive, the crucial variable may be the social support that religion provides. Social ties may, in fact, be the key variable and not the religiosity.

1.6 Present Study

The present study will act as a replication of three of the four results from previous studies. Finding Number 1 (see above), stating that the relationship between happiness and religiosity occurs in religious societies, will be assumed. Religion, using various measures such as belief in a God, church attendance, and prayer, indicate that the U.S. is a religious society (Putnam & Campbell, 2010). Therefore, I predict that religiosity and measures of happiness and life satisfaction will be positively related. This hypothesis stems from the finding relevant to Number 2 above.

The present study analyzed six different religious groups along with a self-identified group of the non-religious. This was done to test finding 3 above that religions differ in their levels of happiness and life satisfaction. The religious groups I studied were: Buddhism, Catholicism, Judaism, Protestantism, Unitarianism and the Unity Movement. Protestants, Catholics and Jews were included given the fact that these three have been included in almost all comparisons of religious groups in the United States. A fourth group consists of the non-religious. This group is now typically included in religious comparisons and research indicates it is growing. In 2007, those claiming no kind of religious affiliation were approximately 37 million; by 2014, that number had grown to almost 56 million (*America's Changing Religious Landscape*, 2015).

Buddhists, Unitarians, and Unity Church members were specifically chosen because each represents a different religious tradition.

Buddhism represents an Eastern tradition and is often interpreted less as a religious organization than a philosophical perspective. Although making up less than one percent of the U.S. population, it is probably the most widely recognized of the Eastern traditions (*America's Changing Religious Landscape*, 2015). I also included Unitarianism-Universalism. The group is part of Christianity but stresses a rational, humanistic philosophy. My sixth group is the Unity Movement. This group is probably the largest, and best known, representative of the so-called New Thought Movement.

My final hypothesis, stemming from Number 4 above is: When we control for membership in church-related groups, the relationship between religion and happiness will disappear. To test for this I will control for the number of groups to which one belongs for both religious and non-religious identifiers. If the hypothesis is correct then those who attend church and identify as religious but do not belong to any groups within the church will be no happier than non-religious identifiers.

2. Method

2.1 Sample

Respondents were recruited from three different sources. One source was from students who were in both introductory and advanced sociology and social psychology classes during the fall and spring

semester of 2008-2009. Students also had the option of recruiting up to five respondents from outside the university. Two extra credit points for each completed questionnaire was awarded to the student. Secondly, various local churches were asked if they would place the questionnaire on their websites. A Presbyterian, Unity and a United Church of Christ did so. A third, and largest, source was from BeliefNet.com. BeliefNet.com is a website that focuses primarily upon religious and spiritual issues. All religious faiths are covered and individuals have the opportunity to go to sites and discuss anything from traditional Judeo-Christianity to paganism and atheism. In total, 1399 individuals completed the survey.

2.2 Procedure

The present study was conducted over the period from 2008 to 2009 and was approved by the university Institutional Board of Review in accordance with the ethical standards for human subjects. A questionnaire was placed on a popular information gathering website: Survey Monkey.

2.3 Measure

While the total number of questions were 72, only ten were of interest to the current study. These questions (independent variables) dealt with the following:

- 1) Respondents' personal beliefs relating to religion/spirituality.
- 2) Importance of their religion/spirituality.
- 3) Membership in a church-related group.
- 4) Frequency of prayer.
- 5) Church attendance in a typical month.
- 6) Number of church affiliated groups to which they belong.

Questions/statements making up the dependent variable were:

- 1) A self-rating from 1 (low) to 10 (high) on how happy they perceived themselves to be.
- 2) A self-rating on a five point scale (higher the score the higher the satisfaction) on the respondent's overall satisfaction with his/her life.
- 3) The respondent's level of satisfaction with the groups to which s/he belong. This was measured using a five-point scale with 1 being the least satisfaction and 5 the highest level.
- 4) The extent to which the respondent perceives him/herself as being lonely. This was measured on a five-point scale with 1 being very lonely and 5 being the least lonely.

3. Result

3.1 Religiosity and Happiness

I looked at a number of indicators previously found to be important in terms of religiosity and happiness/life satisfaction. Respondents were asked if they were religious, spiritual, or both. This religious/spiritual group had a mean score of 7.4 on the Happiness scale (Item 7 above) while those indicating no degree of religiosity or spirituality had a mean score of 7.0. The difference between the two groups was significant: $t(1237)$, $p < .01$. Respondents were also asked to indicate their level of life

satisfaction. The religious group averaged 3.3 (on a 5-point scale) while the non-religious averaged 2.9: $t(1238) = 2.5, p < .02$.

A second variable was how important their religion/spirituality was to them. For those who indicated it was either "Very Important" or "Important", the mean happiness score was 7.4 while those who said it was either "Not Very Important", or "Not at all Important", the happiness score was 7.1. This difference was significant at the $p < .01$ level. Similarly, there was a significant difference between the two groups on the Life Satisfaction scale. The religious group averaged 3.3 while those saying it was not important scored lower (2.9) in satisfaction: $t(1188) = 2.7, p < .01$.

Respondents were asked if they belonged to any kind of church or synagogue/mosque. Those who answered in the affirmative had a mean happiness score of 7.5 while those who said they did not belong had a significantly lower score of 7.1: $t(1322) = 4.1, p < .001$. On the life satisfaction question, those who indicated belonging to a church averaged 3.1 while those who did not belong to any church averaged 2.9. This difference was significant at the $p < .05$ level.

A fourth dependent variable was church attendance. A Pearson correlation between monthly church attendance and happiness was: $r = +.08 (p < .01)$. The correlation with life satisfaction was also significant: $r(1335) = +.06, p < .05$. I also asked the respondents if they belonged to any church groups or not (my fifth indicator). Those who said they did belong to a group had a happiness score of 7.5, while the score for those who did not belong to any groups was 7.1. This difference was statistically significant: $t(1321) = 4.1, p < .001$. The two groups also differed significantly when asked their level of life satisfaction. The church members had an average score of 3.1 while those who had no church identification averaged 2.9: $t(1321) = 1.9, p < .05$.

My sixth indicator was time spent in prayer. A Pearson r of .00 between this variable and happiness resulted while a correlation of +.02 was found between time spent praying each week and life satisfaction. Neither of these correlations was significant.

3.2 Differences among the Different Religions

Next, I broke the sample into seven groupings in terms of which religion they identified. The groupings were: Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Unity, Buddhism, Unitarian, and those with no religious identification.

Using Catholics, Jews and Protestants in religious surveys is typical given these traditions have been the largest segment of the U.S. population. Currently, Protestants make up 46.5 percent of the U.S. population; almost 21 percent of U.S. citizens are Catholic, while Judaism makes up 1.9 percent of the population. However, it should be noted that a fast-growing segment of the population is the non-identifier (22.8%) (Pew Research Center, 2004). This group was also included. In addition, I included three other groups: Unity, Unitarianism and Buddhism. Results on two variables, (Happiness and Life Satisfaction) are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Levels of Happiness and Life Satisfaction by Religious Group

Variables:	Happiness*	Life	Satisfaction*
Group:	<i>n M M</i>		
Catholic	201	7.5	3.4
Jewish	21	7.6	3.3
Protestant	460	7.4	3.0
Unity	30	8.1	4.1
Buddhist	20	7.3	2.9
Unitarianism	43	7.1	2.6
No Religious Identification	378	7.1	2.9

- * Happiness as measured on a 1 (Low) to 10 (High) scale: $F(6) = 3.7, p < .01$.
- ** Life Satisfaction as measured by a 1 (Low) to 5 (High) scale: $F(6) = 3.7, p < .001$.

On the Happiness question the groups ranged from a low of 7.1 for both the Unitarians and the non-religious to a high of 8.1 for the Unity identifiers. Significant differences existed among the groups: $F(6) = 3.7, p < .01$. Respondents were also asked their level of life satisfaction. Unity members had the highest level ($M = 4.1$) of life satisfaction while the lowest level came from the Unitarians ($M = 2.6$). Significant differences existed among these different groups: $F(6) = 3.7, p < .001$.

I also asked: (1) their levels of loneliness, and (2) the level of satisfaction which they get from the groups to which they belong.

Table 2. Levels of Loneliness and Group Satisfaction by Religious Group

Variables:	Feel Lonely*	Group	Satisfaction**
Group:	<i>n M M</i>		
Catholic	201	2.3	4.3
Jewish	21	1.5	4.7
Protestant	460	2.2	4.4
Unity	30	1.4	4.6
Buddhist	20	2.4	4.2
Unitarianism	43	2.1	4.6
No Religious Identification	378	2.4	4.2

*Measured on a 1 (Low levels of Loneliness) to 5 (High) scale: $F(6) = 2.8, p < .01$.

**Measured on a 1 (Low) to 5 (High) scale: $F(6) = 2.6, p < .02$.

All the groups scored low on feelings of being lonely. Those who identified as either Buddhist or non-religious had, compared to the other groups, the greatest amount of loneliness ($M_s = 2.4$) while the Unity group experienced the lowest level ($M = 1.4$). An analysis of variance revealed a significant difference among the groups: $F(6) = 2.8, p < .01$.

A fourth question asked dealt with how satisfied they were with the groups to which they belong. While all the groups had high scores on this question, differences among the groups did exist. Specifically, the Buddhist and non-religious respondents had the lowest scores while the Jewish sample had the highest level of group satisfaction: $F(6) = 2.6, p < .02$.

3.3 Religion and Happiness Controlling for Church Group Membership

Finally, I controlled for the number of church groups to which each respondent belonged. For those who regularly attended church (defined here as attending church 4 or more times a month) but belonged to no church groups, the mean happiness score was 7.1. For those who attended church services either once a month or less, and did not belong to a group, the score was identical to the former group: 7.1.

4. Discussion

When I analyzed six different indicators of religiosity as related to both happiness and life satisfaction I found significant differences on five of the six variables. This supports hypothesis 1. The only exception was the lack of a significant relation between prayer and either happiness or life satisfaction. This finding is puzzling. There seem to be fewer studies using prayer as a measure but, when it is used, a positive relationship is found.

One possibility for the discrepancy could be that the relationship only exists among certain groups. The Levin and Taylor study used only African Americans. The majority of respondents in this study were white. It is also possible that the response categories were different than in this study. In the GSS study cited by Brooks only those respondents who said they never prayed versus those who said they prayed daily made up their categories. In my study the number of minutes spent in prayer was asked. Responses to the happiness variable in the Brooks study were given in discrete categories ("Very Happy", etc.) as opposed to the 1-10 continuum used here.

Intrigued by this contradictory finding from previous research, I looked more closely at the category of prayer. What I found was that there is a point where happiness and life satisfaction appear to be affected by how many hours a respondent reports being in prayer. The correlation between happiness and prayer for those respondents reporting eight or less hours per week was $+0.07$ and was significant beyond the $.01$ level. The Pearson r between life satisfaction and prayer for these individuals was $+0.06$ which was also significant: $p < .05$. Using nine hours as the cutoff point I found a significant (at the $.05$ level) Pearson r for happiness but the life satisfaction and prayer correlation was not significant. After nine hours there is no significant relationship between prayer and either happiness or life satisfaction. Thus, including those individuals over nine hours was responsible for the overall non-significant

correlation with happiness and life satisfaction.

The reason for this is not immediately apparent. Why would spending a long time (i.e., more than 9 hours) each week in prayer be deleterious? This author has no perspective on why this should be the case. However, questions one could ask include: Does praying, somehow, lose its meaning as one continues to pray? Does one feel that it is somehow forced upon them? Does one pray more when that person experiences some kind of life setback (a health issue, losing one's job, family problems, etc.) and those prayers have not been answered (at least, as yet)? Does one feel badly because their time spent in prayer is taking away from other aspects of their lives? Certainly, this demands further study.

Another important finding dealt with group membership. I found that there was no relationship between either happiness or life satisfaction and church attendance when I controlled for membership in a church-affiliated group. These findings were as hypothesized and support Putnam and others who argue that the relationship between religion and happiness is less due to the religious factor and more to the social factor. That is, belonging to a group seems to be a critical factor at play.

A major focus of this study was to determine if some religions have a higher level of happiness and life satisfaction than others. And, indeed, this was the case. Although a general positive relationship existed on the various religious indicators (except prayer) when I broke the sample down into various religious groupings I did not find this finding to be true of all the religions. Of the groupings, four (Catholic, Protestant, Unity, and Unitarian) had a positive correlation between church attendance and happiness. On the other hand, two groups (Jews and Buddhists) actually had a negative correlation. The Jews had a significant negative correlation of $-.56$ ($p < .05$) while the Buddhists had a non-significant negative correlation of $-.10$. The Jews, Buddhists and the Unitarians also had negative correlations between church group membership and happiness. As with church attendance, the correlation was significant for the Jews: $r = -.39$, $p < .05$. Only the Protestants had a significant positive correlation: $r = .18$, $p < .05$.

This finding is important. While studies have generally found an overall positive correlation between happiness and religious indicators (such as church attendance and church group membership), it may be due to the disproportionately large number of Protestants and Catholics and this is masking the diversity when we look at different groupings. This is certainly a factor which should be further examined.

My findings also demonstrated that certain religious groups seem to be worthy of attention. These are: Unity, Buddhism, Unitarianism, and Judaism.

4.1 Discussion of Four Religions

4.1.1 Unity

Unity members had the highest averages on happiness and life satisfaction and the lowest average score on feelings of loneliness. They also tied for second in feelings of satisfaction which they get from their group memberships. Unity is a Christian-based religion but is generally classified as a New Thought religion. Founded by Myrtle and Charles Fillmore in 1889, principles like meditation, the power of positive affirmations, prosperity and gratitude are at the heart of their movement (Mosley, 2006).

Unity's stress upon gratitude can help explain their high level of happiness obtained in this study. Gratitude is also emphasized by positive psychology writers in terms of increasing levels of happiness. For example, Emmons (2008) has conducted research in this area and concludes that those who practice gratitude tend to be happier. For this reason, many positive psychology writers advocate keeping a "gratitude journal". Seligman (2002) suggests a number of ways of increasing one's level of happiness. One of the ways is to keep a journal, writing down once a week between three and five things for which a person is currently thankful.

4.1.2 Buddhism

An important aspect of Buddhism is also gratitude (along with meditation and spiritual reflection) as leading to happiness. When we listen to the Dali Lama we almost always hear about being happy. However, unlike the Unity respondents, the Buddhists had a lower score (7.3) on happiness compared to 8.1 for the Unity sample. The Buddhists also scored lower on life satisfaction (2.9), as compared to 4.1 for the Unity respondents, and had more feelings of loneliness than the Unity group. While the two happiness scores were not statistically significant, the life satisfaction and loneliness were significant. And, Ringhorn found that the Buddhists had the lowest score on life being worthwhile.

So why the difference between Unity members and Buddhists?

Could it be that such an emphasis upon happiness creates a pressure to feel happy? Bastian (2017) found that a felt pressure to be happy can actually exacerbate symptoms of depression. In addition, the Buddhist tradition, with its Four Noble Truths, may increase feelings of unhappiness. The first truth is dukkha or suffering. This truth centers around the great "shocks" of life: birth, sickness, old age and death. Suffering is also evident in the second truth: the arising of suffering (tanha) along with the third (escape from suffering-nibbana) and the fourth or the finding of truth which ceases the suffering. Many other Buddhist works focus on loneliness (e.g., Sarvananda, 2012). Given these "truths" one might see where a person may become "bogged down" dealing with these principles which can, in turn, lead to lower levels of happiness and life satisfaction (Cousins, 1997)

4.1.3 Unitarianism

To this author's knowledge, Unitarianism has been rarely studied or compared with other religious traditions. Unitarianism is sometimes seen as a kind of secular humanism which emphasizes the individual over dogma. This tradition has no real shared creed and consists of people who can identify all the way from atheist to Wiccan to Christian. One of the hallmarks of this religion is its liberal, progressive stance which manifests itself in social action causes (*Unitarianism Explained*, 2014).

Unitarianism represents an interesting group. This group, which includes many atheists and agnostics, should, therefore, reflect some of the characteristics associated with the non-religious. Two of my major dependent variables were happiness and life satisfaction. And, results showed that the Unitarians and the non-religious, scored the same (7.1) on the Happiness question. The Unitarians also had the second lowest score on Life Satisfaction, higher only than the non-religious.

However, the Unitarians differed from the non-religious on the social relations variables, variables

associated with higher levels of happiness. The Unitarians felt less lonely (4.0 vs 3.6 for the non-religious) and scored significantly higher on the Group Satisfaction question (Unitarians: 4.6) than the non-religious (4.2). In fact, the difference between these two groups was significant beyond the .01 level. Results also revealed that the Unitarians' average score for Church Group Membership (another social variable) was 1.4 (the highest of any of my groups) compared to .1 for the non-religious: $t(395) = 10.3, p < .001$.

So why should the Unitarians have a low happiness and life satisfaction score given their high scores on the social variables, variables highly related to happiness? And, again, Putnam and others have argued that group membership is the crucial variable related to happiness.

It is the argument here that political ideology is crucial to understanding the low life satisfaction scores. Unitarians are more politically liberal in their views than other religions. In this study 28.6% labeled themselves as "liberal"; 45.2% said "very liberal". Green and Elliott (2010) found that those who had politically liberal beliefs were less happy than those individuals having more fundamentalist views. Napier and Jost (2008), too, found that conservatives are generally happier than liberals. They argue, using a Self-Justification approach, that conservatives are more likely to endorse a set of beliefs that justify the status quo. Failings, if they occur, are due to the individual. On the other hand, liberals, utilizing a more Cognitive approach, see the society with all its social and economic flaws, and are more likely to explain these differences in terms of systemic flaws, not a failing of the individual. This can explain the current findings that Unitarians, although they may have high rates of group satisfaction, have lower rates of happiness and life satisfaction. They are joining and socializing with friends who are similar (and belonging is good) but the values they share go toward the systemic explanation.

4.1.4 Judaism

I found that members of the Jewish faith, although having a high level of group satisfaction, had a significant negative correlation between church attendance and happiness. A significant negative correlation was also found between church group membership and happiness for the Jews. A cursory examination of the topic led to no writings or findings allowing for a hypothesis to be made. So why these findings should be the case is not clearly evident to this author. One thing that might be of value would be to see if this relationship exists among all the major Jewish sects. The current study did not provide an opportunity for the Jewish sample to state whether they identified as Orthodox, Conservative or Reform (or one of the smaller sects like Reconstructionist).

4.2 Final Recommendation

One recommendation, following from the above, would be to include a large enough Jewish sample in order to include their specific identification. Along these same lines, I would recommend breaking religion into the various traditions. The current study lumped all Protestant traditions together. It would certainly be beneficial to separate this major grouping into various specific Protestant groups (Methodist, Baptist, Episcopalian, etc., on the more "liberal" side and the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches on the more "conservative" side). And, an analysis of the "less traditional" groups like the

Latter Day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, Muslim, etc. seems in order. Although I had these kinds of groups in this study their numbers were less than 20 respondents so I did not include them for analysis here but they do demand our attention.

Finally, besides the very small Jewish sample (N = 20) I had a small number of Buddhists (N = 20) along with a limited number of Unity identifiers (N = 30) and Unitarians (N = 43). Certainly, a larger size sample for these groups would be extremely beneficial.

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