When Mediated Poverty Stereotypes align with Public Opinion: A Clear Predictor of Ideology and Party in the U.S.

Why are people poor? That question has filled books and journal articles, studies covering fields ranging from public policy to sociology to economics. However, the question itself, or more precisely poll respondent answers to it, may represent a clear dividing line in the U.S. electorate.

Lakoff (2002, 2004) has pointed out that American conservatives take a "stern father" approach to understanding the world around them. The world is a dangerous place. People have bad instincts and must be taught right. People who are successful have achieved such status by moral uprightness and good choices. People who are not well off, conversely, are in such a state because of some personal or moral failing. Liberals or progressives in the Lakoff analysis follow more of a nurturing family model, seeing societal links and multiple causations.

Mediated portrayals of poverty also very likely play a role in public opinion about causes. Other researchers have critiqued well the failings in mediated portrayals of poverty, specifically how those portrayals skew toward urban, African American, and personal failings frames. This paper will present some of those findings, as well as other results that link mediated portrayals to how people assign causality regarding poverty, personal failings or societal problems. This paper, however, will test a final link—how those views of "why are people poor" represent a clear cleavage in the American electorate. Secondary analyses of polls on the matter, including a national poll on race, will be used to test the strength of that link. That is the purpose of this study.

Literature Review: Mediated Messages about Poverty and Race

Gilens (1996) conducted a substantial content analysis of the 1988-1992 images of race and poverty presented in nightly network newscasts and three major news magazines. This yielded 635 people in 560 still photos in 182 stories related to poverty, 1100 people in a random subset of 50 out of 534 TV news stories. In both media the poor presented were substantially more likely to be African American than the actual national percentage of black poor. Further, the most sympathetic impoverished subgroups (elderly and working poor) were underrepresented while unemployed working-age adults, the least sympathetic group, were overrepresented.

Gould, Stern, and Adams (1981) looked at primetime TV entertainment shows and found few images of poverty, and those that existed were of a sentimentalized, simple, and happy deprivation. Another analysis looked at the text of eleven Newsweek articles about welfare, finding the articles were dominated by a conservative view that stresses victims' failures (de Goede, 1996). Clawson and Kegler (2000) found that even in college textbooks poverty is raced coded as a "black problem" and that view is bolstered by stereotypical images of the poor.

Two separate analyses (Cloud, 1998; Clawson and Trice, 2000) found the stereotypes about race and poverty cycled through federal politics in the early 1990s. Bill Clinton's 1992 pledge to "end welfare as we know it" and the congressional Republicans' "Personal Responsibility Act" both built on mediated stereotypes about race and poverty. Cloud (1998) concluded the "family values" language of both constructs the family as the

site of all responsibility and change, privatizing social responsibility for ending poverty and racism, Lakoff's conservative stern-father model moving easily from media to policy.

Media source as well as story framing may play a role in how much poverty/race stereotype is adopted by the news consumer. Iyengar (1990) found that when news media frame poverty in general terms about outcomes, the public assigns responsibility to society. When news presentations present an example of a particular poor person, respondents then assign causality to a failing in that individual. Sotirovic (2001) found that viewer use of cable TV news and entertainment shows correlated with greater perception of welfare recipients as non-white and young, and higher estimated of federal spending on welfare. This she blames on contextually poor, event centered, and overly personalized approach of said programs. Person who read public affairs content in newspapers or watched more "thematic" stories about welfare and poverty not only had more accurate perceptions of the dimensions of poverty, but also greater support for welfare programs.

Literature Review: Public Opinion Studies and a Working Theory

One study of early public opinion poll data (Newman & Jacobs, 2007) looked at attitudes toward the poor during the Depression and the subsequent New Deal. It found "the jobless were regarded with suspicion, immigrants should be forced to 'go home,' women belong in the kitchen not on the shop floor. The harsher the economic conditions

(by state), the more conservative were public attitudes. Hence New Deal legislative victories accrued despite rather than because of public support" (p. 6).

The link between ideology and answers to "why poor" also appears to be cross-cultural. Wagstaff (1983) studied attitudes toward the poor among male and female respondents in Liverpool and Glasgow, and using MacDonald's Poverty Scale and the Protestant Ethic Scale. He found supporters of the British Conservative Party more likely to blame the poor for their plight. Labour Party supporters were much less likely to do so. Supporters of the Liberal/SDF Alliance fell somewhere in between. Similarly Pandey et al (1982) found those in India with a right-wing orientation take more negative attitudes toward the poor than those with a left-wing orientation.

The correlation of “why poor” answers to political ideology can be seen as a logical extension of Attribution Theory. That theory observes that people have a compelling need to explain things, and those explanations tend to break down into causal assertions either internal to the self or external to an outside agent or force. Zucker and Weiner (2006) studied attribution of causes of poverty among student and non-student samples. In both samples conservatism correlated positively with individualistic causes and negatively with societal causes.

Beck, Whitley, and Wolk (1999) went one step further and sent a questionnaire to Georgia state legislators, asking them to evaluate ten explanations of poverty. The 74 respondents out of 236 (31% response rate) represented a good cross-section of the different demographics of the legislature. At significant levels Democrats, women, and People of Color viewed low wages and discrimination as more important causes than did their counterparts.

Literature Review: Descriptive Data from Polls

Before one re-examines available datasets, however, it would be useful to review the descriptive data, the poll numbers on answers to questions about the reasons for poverty. Those polls rather consistently show significant numbers of respondents in both the "moral failings" and "social conditions" camps, but with slight majorities or pluralities for the moral failings answer.

The U. S. General Social Survey (Davis, Smith & Marsden, 1990), for example, asked the question why are people poor. When the option "lack of effort by the poor themselves" is presented, 46% say that is a very important reason, 45% somewhat important, and less than nine percent not important at all. Furthermore, 39.5% said loose morals and drunkenness were a very important reason, 34.9% somewhat important, and 25.6% not important.

One specialized poll, a national telephone sampling of more than a thousand U. S. Catholics (Davidson, 1995), found 214 respondents blaming poverty on "poor people's own behavior such as not managing their own money," while 761 chose "social conditions such as lack of jobs and low wages." Eighty-three said Don't Know.

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life Survey (2002) conducted a split sample, asking one group the bigger reason why American children are being raised in poverty, and another group the specific why ten million American children are being raised in poverty. The two groups did not differ in responses. Half chose "failure of the

parents as individuals" while 31% opted for "social and economic problems, and thirteen to fourteen percent volunteering "Both."

Similar numbers emerged when Global Strategy Group (2005) polled Americans on behalf of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding. The question was "Do you think poor people in this country are poor because of reasons that are largely under their own control [47%] or because of reasons that are largely out of their control [41%]?" Ten percent said Don't Know, and two percent refused.

One previous nationwide telephone survey (NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy School, 2001), conducted in English and Spanish, took the unusual step of breaking down reported answers by income group. The sample included 294 respondents with an income less than the federal poverty level, 613 with an income of between 100% and 200% of the federal poverty level, and 1,045 with an income above 200% of the federal poverty level. Results for the groups were weighted to reflect the actual distribution in the nation.

All were asked "which is the bigger cause of poverty today - that people are not doing enough to help themselves out of poverty, or that circumstances beyond their control cause them to be poor?" Some 39% of those who were below the poverty line said people were not doing enough to help themselves, but 57% said circumstances. Those barely above poverty themselves split 46% circumstances, 44% people not doing enough. Those at twice the poverty line and higher were the only group placing the onus on the poor themselves, 50% to 44%.

The three groups did not differ substantially on direct questions about whether poor people lacking motivation was a major cause of poverty, slightly more than half called it a major cause and about a third tagged it as a minor cause. Roughly the same

pattern held true on "decline in moral values" as a cause, half calling it major, about three in ten calling it a minor cause. The differences were clearer when respondents were asked about the most important reason. The poor were more likely to mention drug abuse, medical bills, a shortage of jobs, or jobs that only were part time or paid low wages. Those slightly above poverty also mentioned low pay and drug abuse, but added poor quality schools or declining moral values. The more economically comfortable group were most likely to mention lack of motivation or declining moral values, but some also choose poor schools or low-pay jobs.

The public opinion split on reasons for poverty carries over into anti-poverty programs, under the generic term welfare. Of course, welfare long has held a negative stigma in the U.S. (Gilens, 1999) and has fostered persistent myths with little relation to the reality of poverty (Seccombe, 2007).

Two polls (Kaiser, 1994; and NBC/Wall Street Journal, 1994) asked fairly similar questions about the reasons people were on welfare. Kaiser found 65% declaring recipients "choose not work" a major reason, and 26% a minor reason. More than seven in ten thought a major reason people were on welfare was that it pays better than some jobs, and 62% listed as a major reason that women have more babies to get larger checks. NBC had 57% of respondents call a decline in moral values a major reason, 20 percent a moderately important reason. Fifty nine percent thought the breakdown of the traditional family unit a major reason, 20% moderate. Fifty three percent said a major reason was welfare pays better than some jobs. Fully half listed as a major reason women having babies for larger checks, and one in five called that a moderate reason. Reasons such as not enough jobs and racial discrimination by employers were chosen less often as reasons

by respondents to both polls. Poor education scored highly as a reason in the Kaiser poll, but not as much in the NBC poll.

Negative attitudes toward the poor also appear in historical reflection on anti-poverty programs. Schwarz (1988) compiled several studies about "Great Society" anti-poverty programs, finding that most both achieved their objectives and reduced poverty. Not so in public opinion. A study by Americans Talk Issues Foundation (1994) found more respondents (31%) having a negative opinion of the 1960s War on Poverty than those having a positive opinion, 22%. Among those with a negative opinion, 45% said it didn't work to reduce poverty, 22% said it made recipients dependent on welfare, and 14% complained it created a government bureaucracy.

Public assumptions and mythologies about poverty and welfare also dovetail with views on immigration, race, and electoral choices. When one study (Kane, Parsons & Associates, 1984) presented respondents with the statement "Most refugees admitted to the U.S. wind up on welfare," 45% agreed and indicated it was a good reason not to let in refugees. Another 19% thought it true but had no relevance; 23% thought it not true, and ten percent replied "don't know."

The General Social Survey has asked the question, "On the average (negroes/blacks/African-Americans) have worse jobs, income, and housing than white people. Do you think these differences are … [b]ecause most (negroes/blacks/African-Americans) just don't have the motivation or willpower to pull themselves up out of poverty? More than 54% of respondents overall replied yes. One should note the GSS first asked the question in 1977, then every year or other year starting in 1985. The

percentages initially ran as high as 64.7% yes. The percentage generally has declined with passing years, but in 2006 was still 49.8% agreeing with the statement.

When Republicans in 1976 were presented with six reasons for selecting either Ronald Reagan or Gerald Ford as their party's nominee (CBS News/New York Times, 1976), 13% selected, "He'll clean up the welfare situation" as their top reason. That trailed "deal more effectively with the economy" (33%) and "less likely to get us into a war" (22%), but ran ahead of reduce the size of government, 9%; won't let us fall behind Russia, 7%; less likely to split the party, 5%. Six percent volunteered "none of these" and five percent said "don't know."

If Lakoff is correct about moral politics, then the following two hypotheses will hold true. Hypothesis One is that those who view themselves as conservatives will exhibit the highest levels of viewing poverty as associated with personal moral failure, while those viewing themselves as liberal will exhibit the lowest levels of viewing poverty as associated with personal moral failure. Hypothesis Two is that those who self-identify with the Republican Party will exhibit the highest levels of viewing poverty as associated with personal moral failure, while those who self-identify with the Democratic Party will exhibit the lowest levels of viewing poverty as associated with personal moral failure.

Methods

The researcher used keyword searches to find polls in which respondents gave reasons for poverty or why people were poor. Roper's iPoll archive was very useful in

obtaining some of the descriptive data cited in the literature review. In addition, the researcher obtained the Pew Religion and Public Life and the NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy datasets through Roper's iPoll archive. Each was imported into a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) file for data analysis. The General Social Survey, National Race and Politics Survey (Sniderman, Tetlock & Piazza, 1991) and the American National Election Survey were available for online analysis through the Survey Documentation & Analysis (SDA) archive, http://sda.berkeley.edu/. The Odum Institute had seven metropolitan or state polls with the appropriate variables for this secondary analysis. The Association of Religious Data Archives had three additional useful polls. All the Odum and ARDA files were imported into an SPSS file for further analysis.

The previously mentioned hypotheses were tested using both measures of correlation/association and multiple regressions. The regressions tested "why poor" reasons against political philosophy and party identification and viable alternative explanations for variance such as age, income, education, and religiosity to test the strength of the relationship.

Findings: Correlations and Associations

The U.S. General Social Survey is available online from 1972 to 2006. Unfortunately, only in 1990 did GSS ask respondents questions about why people are poor. In the GSS self-identifying as a conservative correlated with attributing poverty to lack of effort and loose morals on the part of the poor themselves. Identifying as a liberal

correlated with attributing poverty more to poor schools and not enough jobs. These relationships were linear and met a high standard of statistical significance (Table 1).

Party identification held to the same pattern on three of the four proffered reasons why people are poor. Greater identification with the Democratic Party also meant respondents were more likely to attribute poverty to lousy jobs or failing schools. Greater identification with the Republican Party meant associating poverty with lack of effort by the poor. Though Republicans were slightly more likely than Democrats to link poverty to loose morals or drunkenness, this tendency failed to achieve statistical significance (Table 2).

The 1991 National Race and Politics Survey presented the statement "Most people are poor because they…" and offered a personal factors reply (don't try hard enough, coded 1) and a social factors reply (don't get the training and education they need, coded 2). Democrats (N=326) and Independents (N=293) leaned toward the social explanation. Both had a mean 1.87. The 311 Republicans did not lean so heavily that direction, mean of 1.79 (ANOVA, Sum of Squares 1.217, df=2, Mean Square .608, Fisher F-value 4.602, p =.0103). The 167 liberals had a mean 1.90, compared to 1.87 for moderates (N=248) and 1.78 for conservatives (N=224). This was statistically significant in the expected duration (ANOVA, Sum of Squares 1.747, df=2, Mean Square .873, Fisher F-value 6.781, p=.0012).

The NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy School Poll (2001) showed a clear pattern on political philosophy and "why poor" questions—circumstances beyond the control of the poor versus not doing enough to help themselves. Self-identified liberals opted for circumstances beyond control 207 to 124. Conservatives chose not doing enough self-

help 257 to 131. Moderates split fairly closely, 263 not enough to 235 circumstances. The same pattern held true in political party identification. Respondents who identified with the Republican Party replied "not doing enough" 337 to 164. Democrats chose circumstances 362 to 235. Independents split closely 224 not enough self-help, 216 circumstances beyond their control.

The responses also can be analyzed by this scale, coding 1 for not enough self-help, 2 for circumstances beyond their control. By that measure declared Republicans averaged 1.33, Democrats 1.61, and Independents 1.49 (ANOVA, Sum of Squares 21.256, df=2, Mean Square 10.628, Fisher F-value 44.972, $p < .0001$) The means barely budged when the measure changed to which party the respondent felt more closely aligned to his or her views, Republicans 1.33, Democrats 1.61, Neither 1.49 (ANOVA, Sum of Squares 6.400, df=2, Mean Square 3.2, Fisher F-value 13.573, $p < .0001$). Those who called themselves conservative had a mean of 1.34, liberals 1.63, and moderates 1.47 (ANOVA, Sum of Squares 14.792, df=2, Mean Square 7.396, Fisher F-value 31.133, $p < .0001$).

The Pew Religion and Public Life Survey (2002) also confirmed the strong association between ideology and "why poor" answers. The scale was from 1= very conservative to 5=very liberal. One that scale respondents who said people were poor because of personal failings averaged 2.69 compared to a much more liberal 3.05 for those who credited society's failures for poverty ($t=9.3339$, $p < .0001$).

The results were similar for why children were being raised in poverty, 2.63 for personal failings, 3.03 for social and economic conditions ($t=7.9984$, $p < .0001$).

Modifying the question to ten million American children in poverty had little effect, personal failings, 2.63, social/economic conditions 3.00 ($t=7.5195$, $p < .0001$).

The results also did not change much when the respondent replies were grouped into a two-by-two table by political party identification. Republicans attributed poverty to personal factors rather than societal ones by better than a three-to-one ratio, 303 to 90. Democrats also blamed personal factors, but at a much smaller ratio, 215 respondents to 134. (Chi-Square p-value < .0001). Democrats split nearly evenly, 93 to 94, on personal versus societal reasons for children in poverty, but Republicans stuck to personal reasons, 118 to 59 (Chi-Square p-value = .0014). The numbers were not much different when the wording was modified to ten million children in poverty. Republicans blamed personal factors, 139 to 65, Democrats opted for societal factors 81 to 72 (Chi-Square p-value < .0001).

Several state polls can be re-analyzed for the reasons given for poverty. For example, Utah respondents (Louis Harris and Associates, 1974) gave their political philosophy on a scale of 1=right wing to 5=left wing. The 356 respondents who attributed poverty to individual factors averaged 2.703. The 474 who credited social factors averaged a more liberal 2.97726 ($t=4.7033$, $p < .0001$).

Political Allegiance and Political Registration in North Carolina (if scaled 1=Democratic, 2=Independent, 3=Republican) also can be analyzed regarding poverty causes (KPC Research, 1988). Concerning registration the 172 who said the poor don't work hard enough to avoid poverty had a mean 1.936, compared to a more Democratic 1.7310 for the 420 citing forces beyond the control of the poor ($t=2.4336$, $p = .0152$). When the question is modified to political allegiance, the gap continues, mean of 2.0539

(N=204) for those citing "don't work hard" compared to 1.8451 (N=536) for those saying "forces beyond their control"(t=2.6548, p = .0081).

Georgia Democrats, Republicans, and Independents were presented with the statement, "Lack of effort by the poor themselves is a major factor in producing poverty" and a response scale from one, very strongly disagree, to ten, very strongly agree (Applied Research Center, 1996). The 167 Republicans registered the highest agreement with a mean score of 6.56. The mean for the 245 Democrats was 5.89, and 5.99 for the 280 Independents (ANOVA Sum of Squares 49.487m df=2, Mean Square = 24.744, Fisher F-value 2.892, p =.056), an overall difference just shy of statistical significance, but largely because of the slight difference between Democrats and Independents.

Two more recent Peach State Polls (Carl Vinson Institute 2002, 2004) queried Georgia residents about whether poverty largely is due to people not helping themselves or to circumstances beyond their control. In 2002 the scale ran from 1=very conservative to 5=very liberal. The 369 who chose not helping themselves averaged 2.3893 while the 321 who opted for circumstances averaged a more liberal 2.78 (t=4.4972, p < .0001). In 2004 the scale was a simpler 1=conservative, 2=moderate, 3=liberal. The 343 choosing not helping themselves had a mean score of 1.5945, compared to a more liberal mean of 1.9215 for those choosing circumstances (t=5.2081, p <.0001).

Findings: Regressions

The GSS results from four potential causes were recoded and combined so that high scores were from citing social conditions (poor schools, insufficient jobs) and low

scores were from citing individual failings (lazy, moral problems or drunk). This served as the dependent variable. Five independent variables were entered in a multiple regression. Conservative views and strongly associating with the Republican Party correlated strongly with attributing poverty to individual failings, so did rising respondent income. Education ran the opposite direction; greater education meant a greater tendency to cite social conditions for poverty. Respondent age was not associated with reasons given for poverty (Table 3).

The 1991 National Race and Politics Survey found that conservative respondents were much more likely than liberals to say most people are poor because they don't try hard enough. Liberals opted for the choice that the poor do not get the training and education they need. Party identification was not significant, and neither were age and income. Education fell just shy of a .05 standard of significance (Table 3).

The NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy (2001) poll had the clearest and firmest links between political philosophy or party and "why poor" answers. Liberals and Democrats opted for "circumstances beyond their control" while conservatives and Republicans said the poor aren't doing enough to help themselves. These relationships were significant below a .001 standard, while education, income, age, and religiosity were not significant at all (Table 3).

The Pew Religion and Public Life Survey (2002) had one question about why people are poor and another about why children grow up in poverty. Low scores were for giving social reasons, high scores for individual reasons for poverty. The combined score on "why poor" became the dependent variable against the independent variables of education, party preference, age, income, conservative to liberal philosophy, and a

religiosity score summed from four measures (church attendance, importance of religion, involvement in church, and prayer). Once again, greater education and being liberal correlated with societal explanations; being Republican correlated with individual reasons given for poverty (Table 3).

Several state or city polls also tend to support strong connections between political party/philosophy and reasons given for poverty, but with a notable exception. Perhaps the alignment of ideology and party were not as clear as they are now when the Miami Herald conducted a community poll in 1968 (Meyer, 1968). It failed to yield a significant relationship between "why poor" answers and party, or four other variables (Table 4).

A Harris Poll in Utah (Louis Harris and Associates, 1974), however, found self-identified liberals more likely to cite social reasons for poverty, compared to conservatives who predominantly chose personal failings. Religiosity, age, income, and education were not significant factors. A North Carolina poll (KPC Research; Charlotte Observer, 1988) found very strong associations between respondents who were Democrats and/or more highly educated and giving social reasons for poverty (Table 4).

Two relatively small samples from Tulsa, each with 300 respondents, yielded some varied findings. Liberals in the 1985 poll were more likely than conservatives to blame poverty on social conditions, so were the highly educated. Those variables, however, were not significant in the 1986 poll, but religiosity was significant in the direction that those who said religion was important in their lives were more likely to blame individual factors for poverty (Eckberg & Blocker, 1985; Eckberg & Blocker, 1986). A survey limited to Indiana Catholics found increased education strongly

associated with social reasons given for poverty, but no significant relationships for the other variables tested (Davidson, 1994).

The Detroit Area Study (Steeh, 1994) had respondents check two factors causing poverty, and to check one least-important factor. These were combined into a "why poor" score in which low scores meant predominantly individual reasons, and high scores largely social reasons. The regression then used party identification, age, religiosity (church attendance plus importance of religion), education, and liberal to conservative political philosophy. As in past regressions, greater education associated with social explanations, and Republicans opted for individual factors. Unlike past analyses liberal-conservative did not prove significant, but greater age associated with individual reasons given for poverty (Table 4).

Three Georgia polls addressed "why poor" questions. One in 1996 (Applied Research Center, 1996) found a strong link between preference for the Republican Party and agreement with the sentence, "Lack of effort by the poor themselves is a major factor in producing poverty." A Peach State Poll (Carl Vinson Institute of Government, 2002) found strong links between preference for the Democratic Party and social reasons given for poverty. The same held true for those with a liberal ideology. A later Peach State Poll (Carl Vinson Institute of Government, 2004) found the same link for party preference, but not for political ideology (Table 4).

Discussion

These secondary analyses make a strong case that the answers to the question "why are people poor" demonstrate a clear and compelling cleavage in the American electorate. One 1968 database showed no linkages between "why poor" answers and political philosophy or party identification. That database may simply be an outdated legacy of an electorate long gone. After all, 1968 was just at the start of Nixon's famed "Southern Strategy" for re-aligning party identification; 1968 also was only a few years into the drift of Southern conservatives from the Democratic to Republican parties. Self-identification as a conservative then likely had more to do with fiscal restraint than a grab bag of social issues such as opposition to abortion, gay rights or civil rights.

Starting as early as 1974, however, these datasets show that conservatives tend to blame personal failings of the poor for poverty, while liberals tend to blame social conditions. Since 1973 these tendencies held up at statistically significant levels ($p < .05$) in seven of nine datasets in which liberal to conservative orientation also were measured. In ten of the post-1973 datasets party identification was asked. In eight of those ten, Democrats at statistically significant levels were more likely than Republicans to blame social factors rather than individual failings for poverty. Independents typically fell somewhere in between.

Across all fourteen datasets analyzed, education was the only alternative tested that had much explanatory power. The more highly educated opted for social explanations for poverty at statistically significant levels ($p < .05$) in six of the fourteen. Age and religiosity were associated with respondent answers for poverty in one dataset each. Income never reached levels of statistical significance in any association with respondent answers to the causes of poverty.

The connections become even clearer when one sets a more stringent standard for association. Eight times Party ID and five times Liberal-Conservative meet a probability standard of less than or equal to .01. If the standard is set at less than or equal to .001, Party ID meets that standard six times while Liberal-Conservative does so thrice. Collectively these results support both hypotheses tested in this project.

In light of these results the researcher conducted one more secondary analysis, using the American National Election Study 2004 (Krosnik & Lupia, 2004). One must caution that this survey never asked about the causes of poverty. It only had a "feeling thermometer," scaled 0 to 100, and used for many groups, including poor people. Nevertheless, one finds a bit of an echo of the results from the other datasets. Political party, running from Strongly Democratic to Strongly Republican, was associated at highly significant levels with the feeling thermometer regarding poor people. Democrats felt more warmly toward the poor, Republicans were colder toward the poor. Political philosophy, liberal to conservative, was not significant. Income yielded confusing results; respondent income was associated with the feeling thermometer but household income was not. These results were placed at the bottom of Table 3.

One cannot state how long the current state of party and ideological alignment will last, but these secondary analyses confirm Lakoff's recent observations about how Republican/Democratic and conservative/liberal political orientations mirror a stern father v. nurturing family mindset. These findings also validate the recent observation by Zucker and Weiner that Attribution Theory may well be at play in how people explain poverty. Democrats and liberals (and the highly educated) lean toward external agents

and outside forces. Republicans and conservatives tend to blame the poor for their own plight, seeing individual failings as the primary, even sole, cause of American poverty.

Finally, from an ethical perspective one must note with alarm how mediated portrayals of poverty have tracked and mirrored, and likely exacerbated, this conservative alignment with a "blame the poor" perspective, and the racial stereotypes that go along for the ride.

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Table 1. General Social Survey, 1990: Political Philosophy by Reasons Why People Are Poor (scaled 1 very important, 2 somewhat important, 3 not important)

Personal:	Lack of Effort*	Loose Morals**	Social:	Poor Schools*	Lousy Jobs**
Extremely Liberal	1.86	2.34		1.64	1.55
Liberal	1.86	2.08		1.61	1.66
Slightly Liberal	1.67	1.90		1.82	1.80
Moderate	1.59	1.86		1.88	1.88
Slightly Conservative	1.56	1.85		1.95	1.94
Conservative	1.54	1.72		1.95	1.92
Extremely Conservative	1.53	1.62		2.00	1.89
* ANOVA Sum of Squares 13.617, df=6, Mean Square 2.269, Fisher F-value 5.548, p=.000.			* ANOVA Sum of Squares 14.876, df=6, Mean Square 4.207, Fisher F-value 4.207, p=.003.		
** ANOVA Sum of Squares 22.230, df=6, Mean Square 3.705, Fisher F-value 5.934, p=.000.			**ANOVA Sum of Squares 11.942, df=6, Mean Square 3.574, Fisher F-value 3.574, p=.0016.		

Table 2. General Social Survey,1990: Party Identification by Reasons Why People Are Poor (scaled 1 very important, 2 somewhat important, 3 not important)

Personal:	Lack of Effort*	Loose Morals**	Social:	Poor Schools*	Lousy Jobs**
Strong Democrat	1.75	1.98		1.68	1.61
Weak Democrat	1.63	1.90		1.84	1.77
Independent Leans Democratic	1.75	1.82		1.79	1.82
Independent	1.61	1.77		1.86	1.82
Independent Leans Republican	1.57	1.85		1.94	1.89
Weak Republican	1.55	1.87		1.95	1.95
Strong Republican	1.54	1.78		2.03	2.13
* ANOVA Sum of Squares 7.741, df=6, Mean Square 1.290, Fisher F-value 3.193, p=.004.			* ANOVA Sum of Squares 13.525, df=6, Mean Square 2.254, Fisher F-value 3.863, p=.001.		
**ANOVA Sum of Squares 5.193, df=6, Mean Square .866, Fisher F-value 1.370, p=.223.			** ANOVA Sum of Squares 26.856, df=6, Mean Square 4.476, Fisher F-value 8.383, p=.000.		

Table 3. National Surveys, Multiple Regression on Reasons Given for Poverty (Individual versus Social) and Political/Other Variables

Survey/Variable	B	Std. Error	Std. Beta	t	Sig. (p)
1990					
GSS/Liberal-Conservative	-.186	.042	-.163	-.4.474	.000
GSS/Party ID	-.103	.028	-.133	-.3.672	.000
GSS/Education	.060	.021	.101	2.845	.005
GSS/Income	-.056	.016	-.120	-3.405	.001
GSS/Age	-.003	.004	-.027	-.795	.427
1991					
Race/Liberal-Conservative	-.059	.021	-.127	-2.895	.004
Race/Party ID: D to R	-.001	.019	-.001	-.029	.977
Race/Education	.026	.013	.084	1.932	.054
Race/Income	-.006	.004	-.057	-1.320	.188
Race/Age	-.001	.001	-.127	1.296	.195
2001					
NPR/Liberal-Conservative	-.082	.033	-.124	6.299	.000
NPR/Party ID: R to D	.287	.051	.283	5.648	.000
NPR/Religiosity	-.021	.047	-.021	-.449	.654
NPR/Education	.018	.015	.059	1.194	.233
NPR/Income	-.065	.048	-.066	-1.340	.181
NPR/Age	.002	.001	.064	1.334	.183
2002					
Pew/Conservative-Liberal	-.036	.014	-.066	-2.604	.009
Pew/Party ID	.106	.013	.201	8.020	.000
Pew/Religiosity	.004	.003	.029	1.334	.182
Pew/Education	-.031	.006	-.114	-5.050	.000
Pew/Income	-.004	.004	-.023	-1.004	.315
Pew/Age	.001	.001	.031	1.435	.151
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* ANES (Measured Poor People in a Feeling Thermometer rather than Poverty Reasons)					
2004					
ANES/Liberal-Conservative	.853	.591	.068	1.442	.150
ANES/Party ID: D to R	-1.322	,492	-.154	-3.287	.001
ANES/Education	-.236	.481	-.020	-.490	.624
ANES/Resp. Income	-.453	.146	-.158	-3.104	.002
ANES/HH Income	.019	.163	.006	.116	.908
ANES/Age	.052	.043	.046	1.217	.224

Table 4. State or Metro Surveys, Multiple Regression on Reasons Given for Poverty (Individual versus Social) and Political/Other Variables

Survey/Variable	B	Std. Error	Std. Beta	t	Sig. (p)
Miami'68/Party ID: D to R	-.025	.027	-.050	-.916	.360
Miami'68/Religiosity	-.054	.049	-.061	-1.099	.272
Miami'68/Education	-.040	.034	-.071	-1.190	.235
Miami'68/Income	-.007	.029	-.014	-.241	.810
Miami'68/Age	.000	.003	.007	.123	.902
Utah'74/Conservative-Liberal	.091	.024	.137	3.817	.000
Utah'74/Religiosity	.019	.019	.035	.975	.330
Utah'74/Education	.004	.012	.012	.314	.754
Utah'74/Income	-.016	.012	-.052	-1.381	.168
Utah'74/Age	-.016	.009	-.062	-1.729	.084
Tulsa'85/Conservative-Liberal	.153	.070	.139	2.179	.030
Tulsa'85/Religiosity	-.072	.047	-.098	-1.526	.128
Tulsa'85/Education	.153	.048	.205	3.151	.002
Tulsa'85/Income	.045	.026	.111	1.725	.086
Tulsa'85/Age	.003	.003	.057	.888	.375
Tulsa'86/Conservative-Liberal	.102	.062	.105	1.648	.101
Tulsa'86/Religiosity	-.097	.043	-.147	-2.259	.025
Tulsa'86/Education	.022	.039	.038	.573	.567
Tulsa'86/Income	.006	.022	.019	.286	.775
Tulsa'86/Age	-.005	.003	-.119	-1.838	.067
NC'89/Party ID: R to D	.057	.018	.124	3.256	.001
NC'89/Education	.069	.017	.177	4.121	.000
NC'89/Income	-.024	.017	-.057	-1.347	.178
NC'89/Age	-.002	.001	-.060	-1.558	.120
IN-Catholic'94/Party ID: D to R	-.048	.209	-.006	-.228	.819
IN-Catholic'94/Religiosity	-.069	.117	-.015	-.592	.554
IN-Catholic'94/Education	.502	.075	.196	6.657	.000
IN-Catholic'94/Income	-.397	.364	-.116	-1.091	.276
IN-Catholic'94/Age	-.002	.007	-.007	-.249	.804
Detroit'94/Conservative-Liberal	-.033	.040	-.042	-.840	.401
Detroit'94/Party ID	.231	.067	.171	3.430	.001
Detroit'94/Religiosity	.007	.024	.015	.306	.760
Detroit'94/Education	.057	.022	.128	2.595	.010
Detroit'94/Age	-.007	.003	-.120	-2.142	.016

GA’96/Party ID: R to D	-.432	.161	-.112	-2.692	.007
GA’96Religiosity	.113	.105	.046	1.081	.280
GA’96/Education	-.144	.106	-.062	-1.364	.173
GA’96/Income	-.069	.092	-.035	-.756	.450
GA’96/Age	.008	.009	.041	.974	.330
GA’02/Liberal-Conservative	.069	.028	.109	2.476	.014
GA’02/Party ID: R to D	.151	.026	.253	5.757	.000
GA/’02/Education	.001	.023	.003	.063	.950
GA’02/Income	-.031	.016	-.091	-1.970	.049
GA’02/Age	-.019	.014	-.058	-1.365	.173
GA’04/Conservative-Liberal	.005	.014	.013	.322	.747
GA’04/Party ID	.216	.025	.361	8.581	.000
GA’04/Education	.035	.021	.072	1.667	.096
GA’04/Income	-.033	.014	-.102	-2.329	.020
GA’04/Age	-.012	.013	-.038	-.938	.349