

Political Representation of the Poor in the U.S. Political System:  
A Discussion of Theory and Practice

by

Erin Flaherty Hardy

B.A., Government and Economics (2001)

Wesleyan University

Submitted to the Department of Political Science in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Political Science

at the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

September 2007

© 2007 Erin Flaherty Hardy All rights reserved.

The author hereby grants to MIT permission to reproduce and to distribute  
publicly paper and electronic copies of this thesis document in whole or in part  
in any medium now known or hereafter created.

Signature of Author.....

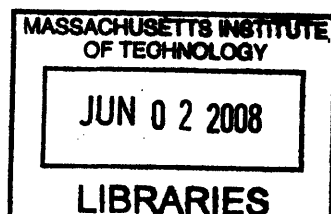
Department of Political Science  
August 6, 2007

Certified by.....

Adam J. Berinsky  
Associate Professor of Political Science  
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by.....

Roger Petersen  
Chair, Graduate Studies Program



ARCHIVES

Political Representation of the Poor in the U. S. Political System:  
A Discussion of Theory and Practice

by

Erin Flaherty Hardy

Submitted to the Department of Political Science  
on August 6, 2007 in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Science in Political Science

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the nature of political representation of the American poor from both a theoretical and an empirical perspective. A normative framework, based on the major theories of representation, is used to examine the empirical mechanisms through which the poor can obtain representation. “Formal” mechanisms include voting, formal participatory activities and membership in political institutions. The primary “informal” mechanism examined is the public opinion survey. The normative framework is grounded in the notion that being poor in an affluent nation is an attached, personal interest--a substantive understanding of the interests of the poor cannot be determined through intellectual deliberation alone. Social and economic closeness (or similarity in relevant descriptive characteristics such as income and race) informs poverty advocates about the nature of poverty and the impact of anti-poverty policies.

A significant amount of evidence suggests that the poor are underrepresented (relative to other groups with more economic and political resources) in formal participation mechanisms. There is less evidence about how well and to what extent the poor are represented in the primary “informal mechanism”--public opinion. Preliminary evidence suggests that the political voice of the poor and their advocates may be muted in opinion polls. This research motivates the original empirical analysis in this thesis that examines who *is* advocating for the poor in public opinion surveys and what those advocates are saying. The original research produces two key findings. First, over the longer term period (1980s-2002) descriptive similarity of poverty advocates declined. Second, in the more recent time period (mid-1990s-2002) descriptive similarity increased amongst poverty advocates in open-ended survey questions (which measure salience of opinion) yet declined amongst poverty advocates in close-ended questions (which measure direction of opinion). The disconnect between the results of the salience and directional analyses suggests that while descriptively similar survey respondents have found poverty to be a more salient issue since the mid-1990s, increased salience did not translate into preferences for expansion of existing anti-poverty programs. These findings raise questions about competence of representation of our nation’s poor and have meaningful implications for the future of U.S. anti-poverty policy in an age of inequality.

Thesis Supervisor: Adam J. Berinsky  
Title: Associate Professor of Political Science

***Acknowledgements***

*I would like acknowledge*

*Adam Berinsky, Stephen Ansolabehere and Riccardo Puglisi  
for their input and support in connection with this thesis*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	4
II.	PLAN OF THESIS.....	6
III.	SECTION 1: THEORIES OF REPRESENTATION.....	8
IV.	SECTION 2: NATURE OF REPRESENTATION OF THE POOR IN THE U.S.: EXISTING RESEARCH.....	33
V.	SECTION 3(A): PUBLIC OPINION AND THE NATURE OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF THE POOR.....	45
VI.	SECTION 3(B): ORIGINAL RESEARCH: DESCRIPTIVE REPRESENTATION IN PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS.....	52
VII.	SECTION 4: DISCUSSION / IMPLICATIONS.....	74
VIII.	REFERENCES.....	82
IX.	APPENDIX A: DATA AND MODEL SPECIFICATION INFORMATION.....	84
X.	APPENDIX B: FULL REGRESSION RESULTS.....	89
XI.	APPENDIX C: TECHNICAL NOTES.....	98

## INTRODUCTION

In 1996, several of President Bill Clinton's top aides resigned in protest to his signing of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act ("PRWORA") restructured welfare "as we knew it" by imposing mandatory work requirements and time limits on recipients and by devolving responsibility for program administration to the states, ending welfare's status as a federal entitlement program. The formal goals of the PRWORA were as follows<sup>1</sup>:

- (1) Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or in the homes of relatives;
- (2) End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work and marriage;
- (3) Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and
- (4) Encourage the formation and maintenance of two parent families.

Passage of the PRWORA sparked criticism from left-of-center advocates of the poor who feared that the 1996 welfare reforms would lead to meaningful, negative consequences for the nation's most economically disadvantaged. Critics also argued that the formal goals set forth by the PRWORA could be received as value-laden or overly intrusive. The issue at the center of this controversy was (and remains) whether or not the interests of the poor were being properly represented in the deliberations and resulting policy outcomes of the 1996 welfare reforms. More broadly, however, the controversy surrounding the 1996 welfare reforms raises numerous interrelated questions about political representation of the poor in the U.S., including: Who represents the poor and what is the nature of that representation? What are the interests of the poor and who determines what is in the best interest of our nation's poor? How well are the interests of the poor represented and how do we measure/assess this?

---

<sup>1</sup> Source: Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, Section 401 of HR 3734.

These questions lead us to ask the following: What policy outcomes best serve the interests of the American poor? Who is most capable of determining what is in the best interest the poor? Who is most capable of translating those interests into policy preferences?

By analyzing these questions, we can characterize the nature of representation of the poor in the U.S. political system and how representation “matters” for policy outcomes that impact the American poor. An understanding of the nature of representation of the poor in the U.S. political system allows us to think constructively about the normative implications of policy decisions and about the fate of antipoverty policy in the future.

### **Overview of Research**

In the U.S. political system, citizens can utilize a number of mechanisms to communicate attitudes and preferences in order to obtain representation of their interests. “Formal” mechanisms include voting, formal participatory activities (writing letters to elected officials, attending rallies, volunteering on political campaigns, membership in advocacy/public interest groups), and membership in political institutions (i.e., holding political office). These mechanisms are formal in the sense that they involve direct interaction between citizens and formal representatives (i.e., elected officials or formal legislative institutions).

The primary “informal” mechanism for communicating attitudes and preferences is the public opinion survey. Public opinion surveys are informal in the sense that they do not involve any formal arrangements or interactions between citizens and formal representatives. However, while elected officials are not formally bound by the results of opinion polls, research has demonstrated that in addition to being responsive to formal representation mechanisms, political institutions are also responsive to shifts in aggregate public opinion (Stimson et al., 1995; Page and Shapiro, 1992). In this sense, public opinion is a form of

political participation through which citizens can communicate their preferences and hold representatives accountable.

There is a significant amount of evidence suggesting that the interests of the poor are underrepresented (relative to other groups with more economic and political resources) in formal participation mechanisms (to be discussed in detail throughout). There is less evidence about how well and to what extent the interests of the poor are represented in the primary informal mechanism -- public opinion polls. Recent research by Berinsky (2004) and Bartels (2002) suggests that the political voice of the poor and their advocates may be muted in public opinion polls. These findings provide the primary motivation for the original research contained herein that examines who *is* advocating for the poor in public opinion surveys. As will be argued in more detail throughout this thesis, the characteristics of those who advocate for the poor have meaningful implications for the future of U.S. anti-poverty policy in an age of rising economic and political inequality.

The primary goals of this thesis are to: (i) outline various theories of and concepts relating to political representation, (ii) develop a normative benchmark for evaluating the nature of political representation of the poor in the U.S. system, (iii) use the normative benchmark to examine representation of the American poor across formal mechanisms in the U.S. (drawing on existing empirical research), and (iv) use the normative benchmark to examine representation of the poor in the primary informal mechanism for representation, public opinion surveys (drawing on existing and original empirical research).

## **PLAN OF THESIS**

Section 1 provides an overview of relevant theories of and concepts relating to political representation. This discussion provides the foundation for the normative framework employed to examine the nature of representation of the poor in the U.S.

political system. Section 2 evaluates the nature of political representation of the poor across formal representation mechanisms drawing on existing empirical research. Section 3 examines the nature of representation of the poor across the primary informal representation mechanism, public opinion, drawing on both existing and original empirical research. Section 4 provides a summary and discussion of the implications of the findings of prior and current research for representation of the interests of the poor in an age of rising political and economic inequality.

## SECTION 1. THEORIES OF REPRESENTATION

### Defining Representation

Students of political science commonly use the terms “representation” and “representative government” with some pre-existing notion of their meaning in mind. For example, when we think about how the term representation applies to various forms of government, we feel there is a distinction to be made between a representative democracy and a dictatorship. However, it is less common to hear a lengthy debate about the meaning of the word “representation” and how that meaning translates into political systems and institutions.

Once we start scratching the surface of the concept of representation, it becomes clear that it can take on many meanings, even contrasting or paradoxical meanings at times. For example, Thomas Hobbes, the 17<sup>th</sup> Century British philosopher, claimed that every government is representative because all governments represent their subjects. Other theorists argue that every type of government uses agenda control and propaganda to manipulate its subjects and therefore no government can be considered truly representative. Long standing controversy remains over the meaning of representation, how it translates into systems of governance, and the relevant relationship between representative and the represented.

Hanna Pitkin, in her 1967 work, *The Concept of Representation* surveys the historical debate surrounding the meaning of representation and discusses how varying theories and concepts coalesce or diverge. She offers the following straightforward definition of representation: “Representation, taken generally, means the making present in *some sense* something which is nevertheless *not* present literally or in fact” (Pitkin 1967 pp. 8). Her definition highlights the fundamental paradox in the meaning of representation – the dual



requirements that the represented object or person simultaneously be present and not present.

In defining representation, Pitkin focuses on the *reasons that can be given* to suggest that someone is being represented, not on what causes people to *feel* represented. She reviews the major competing theories of and concepts relating to representation to support her definition. Pitkin summarizes formalistic views of representation – including those based on the concept of authorization and accountability, respectively. She also discusses theories of representation based on the ideas that representatives “stand for” and “act for” someone or something. Due to the inadequacy of each of these definitions taken on a standalone basis, she builds upon them to arrive at a comprehensive theory of representation. Pitkin concludes that representation, in a comprehensive sense, is a “substantive acting for” the object or person being represented.

Because the normative framework I develop to evaluate the nature of representation of the poor in the U.S. draws on aspects of each major theory mentioned above, I provide an overview of each of these major views. Throughout this discussion I use Pitkin’s survey of the representation literature to frame the discussion of how competing theories and concepts are realized in reference to representation of the poor in the U.S. political system.

### **Formalistic Views of Representation**

**Authorization View.** The first of the two formalistic theories of representation is the authorization view. In Chapter 16 of his work *Leviathan*, called “Of Persons, Authors and Things Personated,” Thomas Hobbes lays the groundwork for the authorization view of representation. Authorization theories focus on the formal arrangements between representative and the represented. Under this view, representation “occurs when one

person is authorized to act in place of others” and the representative, “acts with binding authority in the name of others” (Pitkin 1967 pp. 42).

Under the authorization view, the arrangements of primary concern are those through which authority is granted to the representative. The representative can be thought of as a conduit for the actions of the represented. Hobbes explains the role of the representative using the metaphor of a stage actor. He distinguishes between natural and artificial persons as follows:

*A person, is he, whose words or actions are considered, either as his own, or as representing the words or actions of another man, or of any other thing, to whom they are attributed, whether truly or by fiction. When they are considered as his own then is he called a natural person: and when they are considered as representing the words and actions of another, then is he a feigned or artificial person. (Hobbes, 1651 in Pitkin 1969 pp. 24)*

In Hobbes’ metaphor, the stage actor is an artificial person who represents the “owned actions” of the natural person, the author of the actions. However, the stage actor, while artificial, is commissioned (or granted authority) by the author to represent or depict the actions owned by the author. Therefore, under the authorization view, the represented are the “authors” and the representative is the “actor” (Pitkin, 1967). The represented have authority, or ownership of actions.

Implicit in Hobbes’ metaphor are two aspects of authority or what it means to “own an action.” First, authority is the right to act, and second, it is the responsibility for the action. Hobbes states, “For every act done, is the act of him, without whose consent it is invalid” (Hobbes, qtd. in Pitkin 1967 pp. 17). Under the authorization view, people essentially contract by authorizing, to their representative, all actions and judgments “as if they were their own.” Therefore, the key concept in the authorization view is that rights and privileges accrue to the representative while obligation and responsibility for actions accrue to the represented.

There are three other relevant concepts related to the authorization view. First, only rational actors can grant authority. For example, because a child is unable to rationalize, a parent would not be considered a representative of his or her child, but rather a trustee who looks after the interests of the child. Therefore, in order to be an author or “owner” of actions, under this view, the author (the represented) must have the ability to rationalize. Second, once a representative has been authorized to act, he or she is free to act, but only within the limits of the granted authorization. Once the representative acts outside of the bounds of his or her authorization, he or she is no longer considered a representative.

The third key concept under the authorization view is the idea that a “multitude of men are made *one* person, when they are by one man, or one person, represented” (Hobbes, 1651 in Pitkin, 1969). In this sense, a representative is given authority by many authors and because the responsibility for actions accrues to the represented, each represented person becomes the “owner” of all actions of the representative (whether the represented individual was the original author of the actions or not). Hobbes also states that “And if the representative consists of many men, the voice of the greater number, must be considered as the voice of them all.” In the U.S. political system, representatives always represent a multitude of men and women. However, if a representative focuses solely on the interests of the majority of his constituents, it is unclear if he truly represents the whole constituency. As we contemplate the authorization view in the U.S. context, it becomes evident that this view lacks sufficient guidance about how representatives of multiple persons with divergent interests are supposed to act.

While the authorization view highlights a critical dimension of representation--the act of “authorizing” a representative to act on one’s behalf--it does not offer a complete definition of representation. The authorization view suggests that once the represented grant authority they must accept responsibility for all actions of their representatives as if

they were their own. However, because this view focuses solely on formal arrangements between representative and the represented it lacks normative guidance for how a representative *should* act and whose interests he or she *should* represent. This shortcoming becomes deleterious when we attempt to apply this theory of representation to actual political systems. For instance, the authorization view suggests that representative democracies and stable dictatorships are equally representative. Both governments are granted authority from their people (in a representative democracy, authority is granted through elections, and in a dictatorship authority is assumed to be granted unless the sovereign is overthrown by its subjects). The authorization view is therefore also incomplete due to its exclusion the concept of political consensus that is so fundamental to our notion of representative government.

Also, in an attempt to assign a clear purpose to representative government, authorization theory is too narrow and overly formalistic. Pitkin highlights the limitations of this view:

[B]ehind the formal problem lies the real need to enlist the capacities of citizens for positive political action, the problem of participation, the problem of creating motives for obedience and cooperation with a government. (Pitkin 1967 pp. 35)

Authorization theorists see a formalistic view of representative government as the only solution to the political conflicts that will surely arise in a nation of diverse constituents. While inclusion of political consensus in our definition of representation precludes us from achieving conflict-free institutions, its inclusion preserves a fundamental underpinning of our concept of representative government. We expect representative institutions to provide structure for resolving conflict, but they need not eliminate it entirely.

In a representative democracy, specifically in the U.S. political system, elections are seen as the authorizing action at the center of authorization theory. Under this view, an elected body is only “truly representative” if it is granted the authority to deliberate and

decide for others. Authorization theorist, John Plamentz suggests that implicit in this grant of authority is the notion of consent. He suggests that acting with the consent of someone else has two key elements: (i) consent is conditional on the fact that the represented person has expressed an explicit wish, and (ii) consent is only present if the represented person accepts some level of responsibility for the actions of the representative (Plamentz, 1938). These two elements of the notion of consent highlight the difficulties that arise when we attempt to apply authorization theory to the practice of representative democracy.

When voters elect representatives, it is difficult to ascertain their explicit wishes just by nature of which candidates they elect. Furthermore, voters, through the electoral process, certainly do not outline a set of specific actions for their representatives to take. These two difficulties complicate Plamentz's second notion of consent--accepting responsibility for the actions of one's representative. Fundamental to the idea of accepting responsibility for actions is the notion of accepting responsibility for the normative consequences associated with those actions (Griffiths and Wollheim, 1960). In a complex political system, like the U.S. system, it seems awkward to expect the average voter to accept responsibility for the normative consequences of intricate policy decisions. If government is only truly representative when vested with the authority to decide for others, and vesting is tied to consent, then it is unclear whether or not U.S. elections constitute a true grant of authority.

While traditional authorization theories focus on formal arrangements or procedures (such as voting) as the operative mechanisms for granting authority, moderate authorization views offer an interesting counterpoint. Contemporary theorist, Nadia Urbinati (2000) subscribes to an authorization view that differs dramatically in form from the more traditional, formalistic authorization theorists. Urbinati stresses the importance of domain of opinion and consent formation. She characterizes representation as advocacy and identifies two key fundamentals of her view: (i) a "passionate link "between representatives

and the interests of their electors, and (ii) the autonomy of the representative to act. In her view, representative institutions are deliberative in nature and the substance of these deliberations actually thrives on disagreements as a means to preserving liberty in a democratic system. The authorizing act between represented and representative is essentially organic in nature through the “passionate link” between constituents and their “advocates”.

Application of this view to the U.S. political system suggests that citizens can “grant authority” without participating in elections. Authority or consent can be granted through participation in deliberative, rather than formal, institutional activities. A primary example of a non-institutional, deliberative mechanism in the U.S. political system is public opinion polling. Public opinion polling has been historically viewed as a mechanism for measuring political consensus where elections may fail. If public opinion polls achieve this end, it may suggest, according to Urbinati’s view that representatives could use polls as a proxy for the interests of their constituents in order to strengthen the “passionate link” to their constituents.

A comprehensive definition of representation should include the concept of authorization. Particularly in the U.S. context, our system is not a direct, but representative, democracy. As a result, the act of granting authority to a representative to act on one’s behalf is fundamental to the representation process. The above discussion highlights the interconnectedness between the concepts of granting of authority and consent. While this process can occur through formal, institutional mechanisms, it is also found in informal mechanisms. While the authorization view gives us a fundamental component of what it means to be represented, its failure to incorporate the ideas of consulting constituents to determine their wishes, and protecting the interests of and being responsible to the represented make it an incomplete theory of representation for the current purposes.

**Accountability View.** The second formalistic view of representation is centered on the concept of accountability. A strict reading of the accountability view implies that, while also formalistic in nature, it is diametrically opposed to the authorization view. Under the accountability view a representative is one who is to be held responsible for his or her actions. Carl Friedrich summarizes this view by stating, “if A represents B, he is presumed to be responsible *to* B, that is to say he is answerable to B for what he says and does” (Friedrich 1950 pp. 263-264).

Interestingly, elections in a representative democracy are the focal point of the formal arrangements between represented and representative, as they are in the authorization view. However, under the accountability view, elections are a mechanism for holding the government accountable for its actions. Accountability theorist Terry Hoy (1956) states the following:

The role of the electoral body as the source of sovereign power is to give or withhold consent. This power is not one of instructing political leaders on specific policies, but holding them accountable at periodic elections. (Hoy 1956 pp. 92, 97)

The key concepts implicit in the accountability view are the notions of consent and government responsiveness. The notion of consent in the accountability view is retrospective as opposed to the prospective, consensual granting of authority under the authorization view. The second key difference from the authorization view is the idea that representative governments must, by definition, be responsive to their constituents. While elections are the primary formal mechanism that citizens use to hold their representatives to account, there are certainly also mechanisms that achieve this end, including non-electoral forms of participation (advocacy, protest, contacting representatives), public opinion polls and the media.

On a standalone basis, the accountability view is insufficient for a complete assessment of the nature of political representation in the U.S. Pitkin highlights the primary

deficiencies of the accountability view. First, this theory does not address how representatives are supposed to act between elections and whose interests they are supposed to represent. Second, representatives that act in a manner counter to how they “should” act can not be formally held accountable between elections. These deficiencies limit the ability of accountability theorists to measure how “representative” a government is.

While I agree that the accountability view is certainly not comprehensive, Pitkin’s argument that representative government can not be sufficiently held to account between elections may be overstated. There is empirical evidence to suggest that Congress is responsive to informal political mechanisms, such as macro-public opinion in the U.S. (Stimson et al., 1995). Further, studies of Congress reveal that throughout recent history, legislative representatives have become less likely to move to alternate careers (Mayhew, 1974 and Polsby, 1968). This finding suggests that a meaningful number of legislative representatives are career politicians and therefore their actions between election cycles are meaningfully tied to gaining re-election. If elections can hold representatives to account under the accountability view, then re-election motives between elections can serve the same purpose. Pitkin’s concern may be more pressing in the context of the executive, who has weaker re-election motives (particularly in the second term) relative to career politicians in Congress.

Therefore, the accountability view adds two necessary dimensions--evaluation and government responsiveness--to our comprehensive definition of representation. Re-election motives and public opinion are two mechanisms for evaluating and granting consent--both of which do indeed guide the actions of representatives in the U.S. Therefore, while the accountability view may not provide complete guidance about how representatives should act, the notion that representatives should be responsible to the represented provides at least



initial guidance for actions of the representative and is critical to an assessment of political representation in the U.S. context.

**Conclusions About Formalistic Views.** In the discussion above, the authorization and accountability views are presented as essentially conflicting viewpoints. A contemporary theorist, Iris Marion Young (2000) suggests that the authorization and accountability views are not necessarily disharmonious. She conceives of political representation as a dynamic process in which the relationship between represented and representative oscillates between moments of authorization and moments of accountability. In other words, the represented are continually authorizing and holding accountable--i.e., the evaluation and granting-of-consent processes are circular under this view. Therefore, a normative benchmark for evaluating the nature of political representation should: (i) incorporate concepts of consent and evaluation, and (ii) allow consent to be granted and representatives to be evaluated through both formal and informal mechanisms.

### **“Standing For” Views of Representation**

**Descriptive Representation.** The second major set of representation theories focus on the idea that a representative “stands for” the object or person he or she represents. There are two major views of representation concerned with the idea of “standing for”; the first of which is the descriptive representation view. Unlike formalistic theories which focus on formal arrangements between representative and represented, descriptive representation theorists are primarily concerned with the characteristics of representatives and the composition of legislative bodies. Under this view, we think of representation the way we think of a representative work of art--one that is meant to resemble the object it represents.

Advocates of proportional representation systems of government, such as John Stuart Mills (the keynote proportionalist), embody the concept of descriptive representation. Proportionalists believe that a legislative body is only truly representative when its

composition reflects the nation's composition. Strict proportionalists find it fundamental to "secure a representative assembly reflecting with more or less mathematical exactness the various divisions in the electorate" (cited in Friedrich 1950 pp. 304-305). Others, such as John Adams, who argued, "A representative legislature should be an exact portrait, in miniature, of the people at large, as it should think, feel, reason and act like them," (qtd. in Pitkin 1969 pp. 73) and Sir George Cave suggest that the legislature should "mirror the people, the state of public consciousness, or the movement of social and economic forces in the nation" (qtd. in Pitkin 1967 pp. 61).

Descriptive representation theorists highlight the relationship between descriptive likeness and effective democratic self-governance. Because we do not have direct, but representative democracy in the U.S., a representative legislature that closely mirrors the whole nation arguably acts as the whole nation would if it were directly self-governing (Swabey, 1937). Underlying this view is the utilitarian notion that each person is the best judge of his or her own self-interest. Proportionalist, Simon Sterne (1871) stresses the importance of representation of the *whole* people and equality of individuals in a democratic system. He points out that under a system where representatives are elected by district, the portion of the votes that do not go to the winning representative are essentially "wasted". Therefore, under the descriptive view, resembling the various interests in the electorate with either mathematical precision or some other, less exact, form of resemblance, the legislative body ensures that all opinions (majority and minority) are heard in political deliberations, increasing the effectiveness of self-governance.

Pitkin criticizes the definition of representation put forth by descriptive representation theorists for excluding any notion of how representatives are supposed to act. In her view, action is fundamental to the concept of representation. In addition, she criticizes the proportionalist view that the characteristics of a legislative body determine how

well it resembles the nation. She argues that the idea that something is representative of an object or person (like a representational work of art) embodies the idea of distance between the actual object or person and the representation of that object or person. Without this idea of distance between representative and the object/person being represented, the object is simply being replicated, not represented. She concludes therefore that the “intent to depict” is what is fundamental to resemblance or representativeness.

Pitkin raises a crucial distinction engendered by the descriptive view--the difference between representativeness and representing. Simply put, just because someone resembles you, does not mean he or she will be the best person to represent you. In a political context, the average voter often expects his or her elected representative to have a somewhat superior grasp of complex issues of public policy or a greater passion for political action. However, the more critical insight of the descriptive view is that if your elected representative bears no resemblance to you, he or she is unable to truly represent you. This argument implies that a descriptive representative supplies information about your wishes and interests, which informs the decision-making process (Verba et al., 1995). Therefore, while Pitkin criticizes the descriptive view for lacking guidance about the “actions” of representatives, she fails to emphasize the crucial connection between descriptive resemblance and the ability of a representative to act in a substantively informed manner.

The discussion thus far has suggested that descriptive representation is not necessarily the linchpin for assessing the nature of political representation of a particular group in the U.S. political system. However, as mentioned above, the critical insight offered by the descriptive view is that descriptive representatives, by nature of resemblance to their constituents, provide substantive information that informs the legislative decision-making process. This idea becomes increasingly important when we think about the role of descriptive representation in certain contexts and for certain functions. Jane Mansbridge

(1999) highlights an example of these contingencies in her work about the importance of descriptive representation for marginalized groups. Mansbridge focuses on four specific functions for which disadvantaged groups, such as the poor, would want to be represented by a member of their own group. These four functions are as follows:

- (1) To promote adequate communication in a context of mistrust
- (2) To provide innovative thinking when interests are not fully crystallized or expressed
- (3) To create social meaning of “ability to rule”
- (4) To increase legitimacy of the surrounding polity in the context of past discrimination

Mansbridge expounds the idea that marginalized groups have differentiated “representation-needs” in certain contexts. For example, if poor Americans feel they have historically been suppressed or subjugated by more affluent Americans, this may translate into mistrust of government and lack of political efficacy (or belief in “ability to rule”). In addition, evolution of interests and values can be impacted by one’s relative positioning in society. While discussion of the role of class consciousness in interest realization is beyond the scope of this thesis, American political scientists and sociologists have observed instances of the poor over-subscribing to traditionally middle- and upper-class political values. For instance, Gaventa (1980) observed political quiescence among the poor in an Appalachian mining town in the face of extreme maltreatment and oppression by the town elites. He conjectures that an imbalance in the representativeness of deliberations and decisions in favor of powerful or elite groups may produce outcomes in favor of elites, at the expense of non-elites. Gaventa essentially argues that the ruling class uses its power to “engineer consent” among the subordinate classes. Descriptive representatives may mitigate the extent of consent engineering by playing a more substantive role in interest realization and/or formation.

Mansbridge’s insights suggest that in the context of the American poor, descriptive representatives may facilitate the processes of gathering information about interests among

the poor, promote communication, improve political efficacy and increase trust. In these ways, descriptive representation for the American poor plays an important role in the *substantive* aspects of their political representation.

While greater descriptive representation can enhance the efficacy and volume of minority voices, Young (2000) also highlights the (sometimes inadvertent) trade-offs that can arise with increased descriptive representation. She cautions that, by definition, as soon as more voices are included in the political realm, the more likely it is that other voices become muted. The example she uses to illuminate the point is one where a Latino representative might (inadvertently or intentionally) represent straight Latinos at the expense of gay and lesbian Latinos (Young, 2000). While the challenge of competing interests is present in all theories of representation, Young's insight reveals that the paradox that greater descriptive representation of one minority group may, by definition, inhibit consideration of other competing minority views. These empirical complexities become relevant when we assess whether representation of a particular group is descriptive in nature.

In summary, the key insight of the descriptive view, particularly as it relates to representation of the American poor, is that the descriptive characteristics of representatives impact their actions. Additionally, the importance of descriptive characteristics is arguably heightened in the context of representation of marginalized groups, like the poor in the U.S. Therefore, in our examination of the nature of political representation of the poor in the U.S., descriptive likeness of representatives will be a critical aspect of representation to be evaluated.

**Symbolic Representation.** The symbolic representation perspective is another view centered on the idea that a representative “stands for” the object or person he or she represents. While our concept of a symbol differs from our notion of a representation (under the descriptive view), we still think of a symbol as “standing for” something or

someone. For instance, the American flag is a symbol of the United States. A person observing this symbol would make a connection between its presence and a feeling of the presence of the United States. The distinction we make between a symbol and a representation is that the American flag symbolizes the United States but it does not resemble the U.S. A symbolic representative therefore invokes emotion, feelings or attitudes that we connect with the object or person that is being made present by the symbol.

In practice, symbolic representation is tied to the represented person or group's belief that its representative is satisfactorily promoting its interests. Gosnell (1948) offers the following definition:

Representation of an individual in a society is a condition which exists when the characteristics and acts of a person in a position of power in the society are in accord with the desires, expressed and unexpressed, of the individual. (Gosnell 1948 qtd. in Pitkin 1969 pp. 104)

Two primary aspects of the symbolic view are its notions of subjectivity and individuality. Under this view, representation only exists if the represented person feels the representative has acted in accordance with his wishes. This view is individualistic in the sense that if an individual's representative (who presumably represents a multitude of individuals) acts in accordance with the explicit wishes of the majority, and this runs counter to the explicit wishes of the individual, then representation does not exist for the individual. The notions of consent, effective leadership and legitimacy of government are all present under the symbolic representation view. Additionally, embedded in this view is the idea of alignment of interests or wills between representative and represented.

The extreme view of the symbolic representation theorist is evident in the fascist concept of representation, as explicated by Rene de Visme Williamson (1941). Under the fascist view, leaders manipulate their followers to gain acceptance and to achieve artificial or false consensus. This view suggests that representation is simply power. Under this view, effective leadership is guaranteed in the sense that the wills of leaders and subjects are

perfectly aligned. This extreme view highlights a shortcoming of the more moderate versions of the symbolic view. The symbolic view does not render any criteria for how consent should be formed. Under the symbolic view, a dictatorship ruled by a beneficent despot is an equally representative form of government as a representative democracy. No importance is placed on how the agreement between ruler and the ruled is engendered.

Pitkin criticizes this view with the following claim:

“Representation concerns not the mere fact” that the represented do accept the representative’s decisions, “but rather the reasons they have for doing so”; and reasons are different from causes (Eulau 1957 qtd. in Pitkin 1967 pp. 111)

Therefore, while belief in the legitimacy of government is critical for a comprehensive definition of representation, the process for achieving legitimacy is equally as critical.

Also underlying the symbolic representation view is the Rousseauian notion of the impossibility of representation. This idea is particularly important in the context of particular groups in the U.S. political system, including the American poor. Rousseau argues that representation (in the context of self-governance) is only present when it is guaranteed that the will of the represented and the representative align. However, in a free, self-governing society (i.e., where consent is not engineered) alignment of wills is impossible in almost all instances. Further, in the U.S., marginalized minority groups are more likely to experience greater divergence between their interests and the interests of resource-rich, re-election seeking (who do not rely heavily on marginalized groups for votes) legislators. While the forthcoming empirical examination focuses on the extent to which the poor *do* achieve representation, under the Rousseauian criteria, it is unclear as to whether marginalized groups really receive representation *at all* in the U.S. system.

In summary, the symbolic representation view provides key elements of a comprehensive concept of representation--the notions of political consensus and

government legitimacy. However, it becomes evident that our idea of representative government is not simply based on the idea of political consensus or consent but on the processes by which the consent is formed and granted.

**Conclusions about “Standing For” Views of Representation.** The descriptive and symbolic views of representation add two additional key dimensions to our concept of representation, particularly as it applies to political representation of the American poor. The key insight we gain from applying the descriptive view to the U.S. context is that particularly for marginalized groups, descriptive representatives may add value to the substantive aspects of political representation of the poor. Under the symbolic view, we gain the notion of political consensus and the more attitudinal or affective aspects of representation, which may play a heightened role in the context of representation of the poor—a historically marginalized group. While both views inform our understanding of the concept of representation, we turn now to the final concept of representation—representation as an “acting for.”

#### **“Acting For” Views of Representation**

**Overview.** While the authorization, accountability, descriptive and symbolic views of representation provide valuable components of a comprehensive definition of political representation, the missing puzzle piece is an explanation of how representatives are supposed to act and how we can judge their actions. Pitkin states the following:

The represented thing or person is present in the action rather than in the characteristics of the actor, how he is regarded or the formal arrangements which precede or follow the action. (Pitkin 1967 pp. 144).

We take from this comment the idea that the substance of political representation is crucial to our understanding of what it means to be represented. Further, this substance gives us a meaningful tool to assess, from a normative perspective, whether a person or group is being “acted for” in a truly representative manner.



Our understanding of this view of representation comes from what it means to “substantively act for” an object, person or group. The meaning is gained by exploring three fundamental questions:

- (1) What does it mean for one to “act for” another?
- (2) What is the nature of the relationship between represented and representative (i.e., How does a representative “act for” the represented to promote their interests?)
- (3) What is the nature of the interest being represented?

**What Does it Mean to “Act For”?** There are numerous, even conflicting definitions of what it means to “act for” another. One definition suggests that acting for someone is to act as his or her **agent**. There is more than one type of agent—we may think of the notions of a “free” versus a “mere” agent. As an agent, one does not act autonomously but on behalf of someone else. The level of discretion granted to the agent determines the type of agent (free or mere). A second definition is to act as **trustee**. As a trustee one acts on someone’s behalf, for that person’s benefit, in a fiduciary role. A third definition is to act as a **substitute** or fill-in for another. Alternatively, we can define “acting for” as acting as a person’s **delegate**. A delegate is given explicit instructions and is, by definition, a subordinate. Finally, we can think of “acting for” as acting as a **specialist** for someone else. As a specialist, one can act for someone else with greater expertise of the issue at hand.

It is critical to differentiate between these roles because it is the “‘perspective of the actor’, the representative’s own concern with what is required of him by his role” (Tussman, qtd. in Pitkin 1967 pp. 142) that will determine how he “acts for” his constituents.

**Relationship between Represented and Representative.** Each of the varying definitions of what it means to “act for” translates into different directives for the ascriptive relationship between representative and the represented—or for how one person can represent another person (Griffiths, 1960). These conflicting directives are at the heart of the historical

mandate-independence controversy in political representation theory. At the independence end of the spectrum, representatives are free to use their judgment and act accordingly.

Typically, this view is characterized as elitist in nature since the representative is not required to consult his or her constituents. At the mandate end of the spectrum, representatives are expected to act on explicit orders from constituents.

The varying points on the mandate-independence spectrum reflect different levels of discretion granted to representatives by constituents. A comparison of Edmund Burke and John Stuart Mill's views of the role of the representative highlight the nature of the mandate-independence debate in representation theory. Burke (advocate of independence view) believes that men have no natural right to govern themselves. He believes that men do not know what is in their best interest and as a result should be governed by the virtuous and wise members of the natural aristocracy in society. Burke argues the following:

Government is a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human *wants*. Men have a right that these wants should be provided for by this wisdom...Men have no right to what is not reasonable and to what is not for their benefit. (Burke 1790 in Pitkin 1969 pp. 157, 160).

In Burke's conception, the representative is a trustee for the people. A representative is a trustee (versus a delegate or agent) because no power is vested in a representative for the representative's sake, but rather for the sake of people (from whom the power of the representative originates). Burke contends that even groups outside of the political franchise (i.e., groups that do not have actual representation in the legislature) can be represented virtually. Through virtue and wisdom, Burke argues, representatives can determine the interests of those they represent and can represent those interests virtually--without requiring people to participate in their own representation. Pitkin summarizes the independence view as follows:

If the situation is such that we can no longer see the representative acting, but rather we see the constituents acting directly for themselves, then there is no representation, and where he merely carries out their

orders they seem to be acting directly for themselves. (Pitkin 1967 pp. 153)

John Stuart Mill (advocate of the mandate view) conceives of representatives as agents of the people. Under this view, the representative acts in the manner that the represented would act, if they were representing themselves. He argues that popular government is the ideal form of government as it vests authority in the entire community of those represented, or the *whole* people. Mill conceives of this government as follows, “every citizen not only having a voice in the exercise of that ultimate sovereignty, but being, at least occasionally, called on to take an actual part in the government” (Mills, 1861 in Pitkin 1969 pp. 177). Under Mill’s conception, humans are self-protecting and self-dependent and are the appropriate guardian of their own rights and interests. Further, he argues for the participation of every citizen in their own governance. Pitkin summarizes the mandate view as follows:

If the situation is such that we can no longer see the constituents as present then there is no representation, and if the man habitually votes the opposite of their wishes we can no longer see them as present in his voting. (Pitkin 1967 pp. 153)

So, where is the optimal point where we can safely claim that government is truly representative? The insight we have gained is that our determination of how “representative” a government is depends on the nature of what or who is being represented. In other words, the optimal point on the mandate-independence spectrum is a function of the type of interests being represented. Interests can either be attached (personal, private) or unattached (objective, rational). The more unattached the interests of the represented, the more likely it is that a representative can determine the best course of action through deliberative processes. In contrast, optimal representation of attached interests can not be achieved through deliberation alone. Descriptive representation, or at a minimum an “intent to depict,” is required for actions (related to attached interests) to be

substantively informed. We turn now to a discussion of the nature of the interests of the poor in the U.S. in order to determine where on the mandate-independence spectrum representatives of the poor can be considered truly “representative.”

**The Nature of the Interests of the Poor.** As the leading proponent of independence theory, Edmund Burke, views interests as relatively fixed and “unattached” in nature. He distinguishes between “actual” and “virtual” representation by arguing that some constituencies within the nation are actually or literally present (actual representation) in the legislative assembly. Other constituencies are virtually present since their interests are deliberated upon in assembly, despite their physical absence. He views virtual representation as a relationship in which:

There is a communion of interest and sympathy in feelings and desires between those who act in the name of any description of people and the people in whose name they act, though the trustees are not actually chosen by them. (Burke, qtd. in Pitkin 1967 pp. 173)

Unlike the utilitarians, who believe that every person is the best judge of his or her own interests, Burke believes that upon enough deliberation, knowledgeable, justice-seeking representatives can determine what is in the best interest of their constituents. Burke assumes that perfect information about constituent interests can be obtained for use in deliberations. Burke would disagree with the claim that descriptive representatives provide valuable information about the interests of their constituents. The following quote summarizes his view:

The most poor, illiterate and uninformed creatures upon earth are the judges of a practical oppression. It is a matter of feeling; and as such persons generally have felt most of it, and are not of an over-lively sensibility, they are the best judges of it. But for the real cause, or the appropriate remedy, they ought never to be called into counsel about one or the other. (Burke, qtd. in Pitkin 1967 pp. 183)

Therefore, as it relates to representation of the poor, under Burke’s line of reasoning the poor obtain genuine representation through virtual representation of their interests. This

representation is considered genuine because a representative can reach a conclusion about what is in the best interest of his or her constituents through objective reasoning.

In contrast, I would argue that the nature of the interests of the poor in contemporary society are not unattached or objective. If anything, they are deeply personal and attached interests. The following quote of John Kenneth Galbraith supports this argument in the American context:

In part [poverty] is a physical matter....But...it is wrong to rest everything on absolutes. People are poverty-stricken when their income, even if adequate for survival, falls markedly behind that of the community. Then they cannot have what the larger community regards as the minimum necessary for decency; and they cannot wholly escape, therefore, the judgment of the larger community that they are indecent. They are degraded for, in the literal sense, they live outside the grades or categories which the community regards as acceptable." (Galbraith, 1958)

I argue that certain interests, including the interests of the poor in the U.S., can not be entirely understood through objective reasoning. Therefore, if we apply Burke's criteria for whether or not a government is representative, we would mistake virtual representation for genuine representation of the interests of the poor.

James Madison offers an alternate view of the nature of interests. His view, that people have distinct and diverse interests, may better characterize the nature of the interests of the poor in the U.S. Madison argues that every person has a *personal* right to representation in government. Of course, from a practical perspective, not every individual's personal needs can be met by the government. While we may expect diverse and conflicting interests to result in gridlock, Madison believes these conflicting interests will offset one another and those pursuing common goals will prevail. For Madison, politics are a matter of will, not deliberation.

Following this line of reasoning, the point on the mandate-independence scale where we can conclude that U.S. government is genuinely representing the poor is where: (i)

representatives have ample discretion to “act for” the poor, and (ii) those actions are informed by a representative’s ability to “stand for” the interests of the poor. As we mentioned previously, if a representative consistently votes against the will of his or her constituents, he no longer resembles his constituents and no longer “stands for” their interests. Therefore, ability to “act for” the poor and ability to “stand for” the poor are two interrelated dimensions of any normative framework for assessing how well the interests of the American poor are represented in the U.S. political system.

### **Conclusions / Normative Benchmark for Measuring Representation**

The preceding survey of formalistic, descriptive, symbolic and substantive views of representation provides the requisite guidance for developing a normative framework to examine the nature of representation of the poor in the U.S. political system. Political representation is a multi-dimensional concept and the appropriate application of certain representation concepts depends on the context in which they are being applied. The key ideas that comprise our definition of representation--consent, accountability and government responsiveness, resemblance, legitimacy, and substantive action--are each, in their own way, concerned with how much control citizens have over their government, not how much control government has over its citizens. A combination of the major theories of and concepts relating to representation are used to establish a normative benchmark for examining the nature of representation of the poor in the U.S.

The normative benchmark for measuring representation of the American poor contemplates the relevant representation concepts discussed in Section 1 in the specific context of representation of the poor in the U.S. system. The normative framework is comprised of three primary dimensions, as described below:

**Dimension #1.** The poor should have arrangements and mechanisms to **grant consent** (authorization component) to representatives and to **evaluate** representatives (accountability

component). Consent should be formed and granted through free political deliberation (not coercion or agenda manipulation). In addition, government should be responsive to evaluation processes.

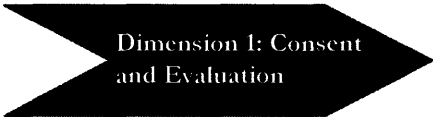
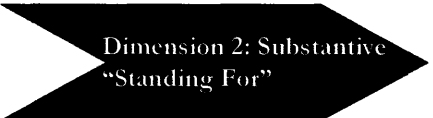
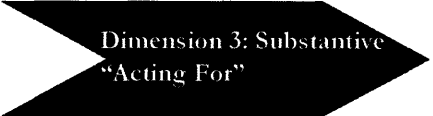
**Dimension #2.** Representatives should substantively “stand for” the interests of the poor.

**Descriptive** representation can be accomplished through a combination of resemblance to the represented and “intent to depict.” **Symbolic** representation is accomplished when the poor believe in the legitimacy of government and the effectiveness of leadership (this belief must be formed through consensus, not coercion or manipulation).

**Dimension #3.** Representatives should substantively “act for” the interests of the poor.

Specifically, the represented should simultaneously be present and not present, representatives of the poor must have ample discretion to “act for” the poor and representatives’ actions should be “substantively” informed. Because interests of the poor are attached, personal interests, they can not be determined by deliberative processes alone (substantive information is obtained through resemblance and “intent to depict”).

**Figure 1.1 Dimensions of Normative Benchmark for Measuring Representation**

 <p>Dimension 1: Consent and Evaluation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor should have mechanisms to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grant consent (authorization component)</li> <li>- Evaluate representatives (accountability component)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
 <p>Dimension 2: Substantive “Standing For”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representatives should substantively “stand for” the poor:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Descriptive representation can be achieved through combination of resemblance and “intent to depict”</li> <li>- Symbolic representation is accomplished when poor believe in legitimacy of government and effectiveness of leadership (belief derived freely, not through coercion or manipulation)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
 <p>Dimension 3: Substantive “Acting For”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representatives should substantively “act for” the poor:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Actions of representatives should be substantively informed</li> <li>- Because interests of the American poor are attached/ personal, they can not be determined through deliberative processes alone</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

A key concept implicit in this normative benchmark is that the interests of the poor in the U.S. are attached and personal in nature. This claim motivates the original empirical analysis presented in Section 3 and drives the discussion (see Section 4) of the implications of the findings of this research.

This normative framework can be used to examine the nature representation of the poor across formal and informal mechanisms. In Section 2, I evaluate the extent to which the nature of political representation of the American poor meets or falls short of the normative benchmark across formal and informal mechanisms based on this existing empirical research available. While both formal and informal mechanisms are evaluated in Section 2, I turn in Section 3, to a deeper examination of the informal mechanism of public opinion. Public opinion as a mechanism for the poor to obtain representation has not been examined as closely as other mechanisms, providing the impetus for additional exploration.



## **SECTION 2. NATURE OF REPRESENTATION OF THE POOR IN THE U.S.: EXISTING RESEARCH**

---

In this section I assess the nature of representation of the poor across formal and, to a lesser extent, informal mechanisms by exploring existing empirical research about elections, political participation and public opinion in the U.S. In order to evaluate the nature of representation of the poor across varying mechanisms, I examine how each concept in the normative framework--consent, evaluation, accountability/government responsiveness and substantive "standing" and "acting for"--is realized empirically in the U.S. political system. This process allows us to draw conclusions about the nature of political representation of the poor, based on what we know from existing research and points to the increased importance of certain aspects of representation as it relates to the American poor.

The forthcoming survey of existing empirical research suggests that the American poor are meaningfully underrepresented across formal and, to a lesser extent, informal representation mechanisms. From a normative perspective, this result implies that representation of the American poor falls short of the benchmarks for essentially all relevant concepts--at least across formal mechanisms. These findings provide the impetus and direction for the original research in Section 3 which attempts to extend the existing research by examining informal mechanisms in greater detail. The combined results of the existing and original research allow for a more comprehensive evaluation of the current status of representation of the poor in the U.S. and the implications for its future.

### **Dimension #1**

**Overview.** Consent and evaluation are the two primary concepts of Dimension 1. Consent and evaluation processes utilize both formal and informal mechanisms. Therefore, to measure the extent to which the American poor express consent and have ample

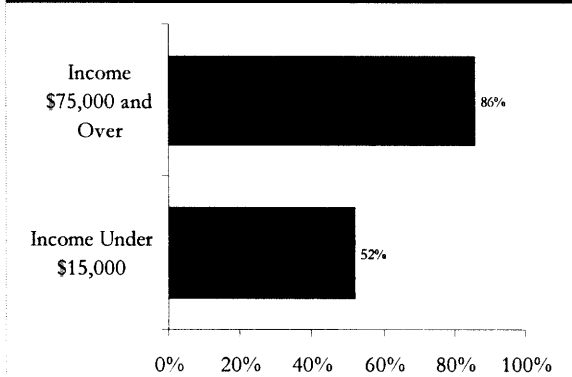
opportunity to evaluate representatives, I frame the discussion by examining the realization of the formalistic views (authorization and accountability views) of representation in the U.S. political environment. However, the discussion also moves beyond the traditional formalistic views to examine the nature of the informal consent and evaluation processes used by the poor and advocates of the poor to obtain, maintain and/or increase political representation.

**Realization of Authorization View.** In the discussion of the authorization view in Section 1, the question arises as to whether elections--the focal point of the authorization view--truly constitute a grant of authority. If we accept for the moment that elections do constitute a grant of authority for representatives, then it follows that voting Americans have no valid claim that their interests have been misrepresented. Under the authorization view, once authority is granted, the onus lies with the represented (the voters) to accept responsibility for the actions of government. But what about those who do not vote? If elections are the mechanism for granting authority, then non-voters have not participated in the authorizing activity. Do non-voters therefore have the right to claim that their interests have not been properly represented? One could argue that since all citizens have the “right” to participate in the authorizing activity then the decision not to vote implies complicity. However, if we assume that only voters have granted authority to their representatives then it follows that any non-voter is being ruled by a non-representative government (under strict adherence to the authorization view). This assumption raises interesting implications for representation of the American poor.

In its December 2004 publication, “American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality”, the APSA Task Force reported that low-income groups vote at significantly lower rates than their higher-income counterparts. Figure 2.1 provides an overview of these findings.

As Figure 2.1 shows almost 9 out of 10 individuals in families with annual incomes over \$75,000 reported voting in presidential elections while slightly more than 5 out of 10 individuals in families with annual incomes under \$15,000 reported voting in presidential elections<sup>2</sup>. A range of research attributes this differential in voting behavior to the fact that low-income voters lack, by virtue of their lower levels of educational and occupational attainment, the political resources (including skills, motivation and relevant networks) enjoyed by their higher-income counterparts (APSA Task Force Report, 2004).

**Figure 2.1: Percentage of Americans Who Vote: High- and Low-Income Groups**



Source: 1990 Citizen Participation Study (Verba et al., 1995)

Under a strict interpretation of the authorization view, nearly half of the American poor do not participate in the authorizing activity in the U.S. political system--elections. Further, the evidence that lack of resources plays a significant role in non-participation of low-income voters means that assuming complicity among non-participating, low-income voters would be misguided. Under this line of reasoning then, we would conclude that a large segment of the poor are not being represented under the authorization view. Further, more affluent voters, who meaningfully outweigh less affluent voters play a larger role in defining the boundaries of authorization (again, assuming elections are the authorizing mechanism). In reference to political representation of the poor, we conclude one of two things, (i) representatives are acting outside of the range of their authorization, or more literally, (ii) the non-voting poor receive no true representation in the U.S. political system.

<sup>2</sup> The APSA Task Force Report states that “This pattern of stratification has also been documented in a variety of analyses, including those based on census data and validated votes” (APSA Task Force Report 2004 pp. 656).

While political representation of the poor falls short on the formal consent granting processes, the poor may grant consent through informal consent granting processes--such as participation in public opinion polls (See Urbanati, 2000). In the context of the poor in the U.S. political system, evidence of a potential “exclusion bias” (Berinsky, 2004) in U.S. public opinion polls suggests that the voice of the poor may not be equally represented through this deliberative mechanism. Berinsky (2004) found that U.S. public opinion concerning economic redistribution over the past thirty years has had a conservative bias. He states the following:

I demonstrate that inequalities in politically relevant resources and the larger political culture surrounding social welfare policy issues disadvantage those groups who would be natural supporters of the welfare state. (Berinsky 2004 pp. 12)

Evaluation of Urbanati’s moderate authorization theory in light of Berinsky’s findings raises meaningful implications for representation of the poor in the U.S. Both the voice of the poor and their advocates may be excluded from non-institutional authorizing mechanisms such as public opinion polls.

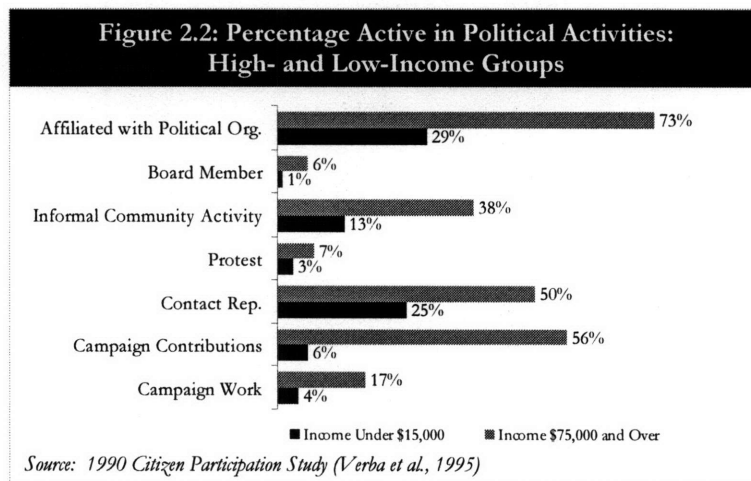
The evidence from the empirical research highlighted above suggests that the American poor are meaningfully underrepresented in both formal and informal authorizing and consent granting processes--both critical to meeting the criteria of Dimension 1 of the normative benchmark.

**Realization of Accountability View.** The second key aspect of Dimension 1 is the notion that the poor must have effective mechanisms for evaluating and holding representatives accountable. Elections are a primary tool for the electorate to express evaluations of representatives and to hold representatives accountable. In his 1981 work, *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*, Morris Fiorina provides evidence of retrospective voting in the U.S. electoral system. Therefore, American voters use elections to hold the government responsible for its actions. As mentioned above, low-income groups vote at lower rates than

their higher-income counterparts. Of course, members of low-income groups have equal voting rights. However, due to evidence of exclusion of low-income groups from electoral activities due to resource constraints, we can reasonably argue that the poor may not have equal opportunity to hold the government accountable through the electoral process.

Alternatively, we could argue that the threat of mobilization of the non-voting poor is a sufficient mechanism for holding government accountable to the interests of the poor. However, throughout recent history low-income voting groups have generally failed to mobilize, with the exception of senior citizens (Campbell, 2003). Therefore, the threat of mobilization of the non-voting poor is likely viewed as remote.

In non-electoral activities, low-income groups are also less likely than their higher-income counterparts to participate. Figure 2.2 provides a comparison of political participation amongst individuals in households earning less than \$15,000 annually and individuals in households earning \$75,000 or more.



As shown in Figure 2.2, almost 75% of the more affluent group belongs to a political or advocacy organization, compared to less than 30% of the less affluent. In addition, members of the more affluent group were twice as likely to contact their representatives, and more than twice as likely to informally coordinate to address community issues. Finally,

even in protests, 3% of members of low-income groups participate, compared to 7% of members of higher-income groups.

As mentioned above, U.S. representatives are known to respond not only to the interests of constituents expressed through active political participation, but also to the interests of constituents as expressed through public opinion polls. Through a systematic study of the relationship between U.S. public opinion and representation of political interests, Bartels (2002) finds that views of constituents in the upper third of the income distribution received about 50% more weight than those in the middle third, while the views of the bottom third received **no weight** in the voting decisions of senators.

**Conclusions about Dimension #1.** Existing empirical research findings about the presence of the poor in elections, participatory activities and public opinion polls raise concerns about (i) the extent to which the poor grant consent to their representatives, and (ii) the ability of low-income groups to hold their government accountable through both electoral and non-electoral mechanisms (both in absolute terms and relative to their higher-income counterparts). Therefore, when applied in the context of political representation of the American poor, the two formalistic views based on authorization and accountability (the two main components of Dimension 1), respectively, raise concerns about potential under-representation of the interests of the poor. The poor experience challenges or deficiencies in both the evaluation and the consent processes--which are both critical to Dimension 1 of the normative framework for evaluating representation of the poor in the U.S. political system.

**Dimension #2.** Dimension 2 focuses on the extent to which representatives substantively “stand for” the interests of the poor. The concepts of resemblance, intent to depict and belief in legitimacy of government are primary to the notion that a representative “stands for” a represented group. In order to assess representation of the poor across Dimension 2,

I discuss the realization of the descriptive and symbolic views of representation in the U.S. political environment.

**Realization of Descriptive View.** Dimension 2 suggests that descriptive representation can be accomplished through a combination of resemblance and intent to depict. Before assessing whether the representatives of the poor resemble and intend to depict the poor, I highlight some relevant challenges we face in determining whether a certain group has achieved descriptive representation.

The first challenge when applying the descriptive view to actual political systems is how to determine which characteristics are political relevant for reproduction. If the value-added of descriptive representatives lies in their ability to supply information about the interests of their constituents, how do we know what information is relevant to supply? Each constituent has multi-dimensional interests, so which characteristic should be reflected by his or her elected representative?

In the context of the poor in the U.S., at first glance it may seem that the relevant characteristic is obvious--income level or socioeconomic status. However, the characteristics of the American poor are multi-dimensional--they also have racial, ethnic, political and a wide variety of other characteristics. For instance, if we examine who is poor in America, we learn that, in absolute terms, the majority of our nation's poor are Caucasian American. However, racial minority groups, particularly African Americans and Hispanic Americans experience significantly higher incidence of poverty relative to Caucasian Americans. For example, while whites comprise over 48% of our nation's poor (total poverty population is approximately 30 million), African Americans comprise only 27%. However, the incidence of poverty among African Americans is 22% compared to 7% for whites<sup>3</sup>. Vast empirical research has found that often the higher incidence of poverty in certain racial groups is tied,

---

<sup>3</sup> Statistics from John Iceland's *Poverty in America* (2003). Statistics based on 2000 U.S. Census Data.

in multi-dimensional ways, to race. Therefore, can a low-income white representative adequately serve as a descriptive representative of a low-income African American or Hispanic? Under the descriptive view it is unclear how to appropriately weigh magnitude versus intensity of the characteristics to be reproduced.

Another question that arises when we apply the descriptive view in the context of representation of the poor is: Do representatives with similar characteristics to their low-income constituents, just by virtue of resemblance, most effectively represent the poor? Verba, Scholzman and Brady (1995) found that while low-income groups participate politically less often than middle- and upper-income groups, the low-income individuals who do participate tend to hold more conservative views than their non-participating, low-income counterparts. Therefore, if the main strength of descriptive representation is to ensure equal voice in political deliberations, this finding suggests, similar outward characteristics may not always translate into similar political views or interests.

The findings of the existing research suggest that, at least through formal mechanisms, the poor do not achieve descriptive representation through resemblance or intent to depict. Without opining on whether economic or racial characteristics of the poor matter most, there is evidence to suggest that representatives fail to resemble the poor across both dimensions. For example, the salary of a U.S. representative in the House of Representatives is over \$165,000<sup>4</sup> suggesting that from an income perspective, a national representative does not resemble an average poor American. In addition, the percentage of African American and Hispanic legislators is less than 9% and 6%, respectively<sup>5</sup>--again, suggesting a lack of resemblance between the populous and our governing bodies. In addition, low-income Americans represent a disproportionately small portion of the electorate suggesting that the electoral body is not descriptively representative (Verba et al.,

---

<sup>4</sup> Source: <http://www.rules.house.gov>.

<sup>5</sup> Source: <http://www.thisnation.com/congress-facts.html>.



1995). Finally, based on the above-referenced findings of Verba et al. (1995) we can conclude that even descriptively similar representatives of the interests of the poor may not accurately depict the interests of the poor.

As a result, the poor do not achieve adequate descriptive representation through resemblance or “intent to depict” (at least through formal representation mechanisms). A more detailed examination of the extent to which the poor achieve descriptive representation in the primary informal representation mechanism--public opinion--is the focus of the original research in Section 3.

**Realization of Symbolic View.** In the context of representation of the poor in the U.S., the application of symbolic representation theory raises more concerns than assurances. As was argued in the prior discussion about descriptive representation, the feeling of legitimacy of government can have an important impact on more substantive aspects of representation, particularly for marginalized groups. However, under the symbolic view, as long as the poor *feel* that the government is legitimately representing their interests, they have obtained true representation in government. Therefore, even if the consent of the poor was engineered through agenda manipulation or other coercive processes, the presence of consent is a sufficient condition for us to argue that their interests are being represented. As argued by Gaventa, and many other political scientists, the possibility of agenda manipulation, particularly of the poor and less-educated in the U.S., is a valid concern. In addition, the mechanisms by which we judge the level of agreement between representative and represented--elections, political participation, public opinion--may also, to a certain extent, exclude the views of the poor. If the views of the poor are excluded from these mechanisms we may be overstating or mischaracterizing their level of consent of government.

While symbolic representation is the second major concept in Dimension 2 of the normative framework and can enhance political representation, it is worth noting that it is

less critical than descriptive representation given its lack of connection to the *actions* of representatives. Douglas Imig, in his 1996 book, *Poverty and Power* cautions us to remember that increased symbolic representation of an issue in government does not necessarily translate into outcomes. Imig evaluated response levels of poverty advocates in the wake of passage of the economic measures of the Reagan administration throughout the 1980s. While he observed an increase in Congressional hearings related to poverty issues connected with Reagan administration policies, there were no corresponding policy changes. Imig recognizes that perhaps these hearings prevented passage of additional policies that would have negatively impacted the poor, but did not see any measurable positive change as a result of the increased symbolic representation of the issues in Congress.

**Conclusions about Dimension #2.** Dimension 2 suggests that representatives should substantively “stand for” the interests of the poor. The presence of both descriptive and symbolic representation enhances the extent to which representatives substantively “stand for” the represented group. However, descriptive representation is the more critical dimension in the context of representation of the poor (given the attached, personal nature of their interests) because it impacts how well a representative “substantively acts for” a represented group. While symbolic representation is also important, it is difficult (particularly in the context of the American poor) to empirically assess whether it is present due to issues surrounding potential agenda manipulation and coercion that may disproportionately impact the poor (by virtue of the fact that poor, on average, have fewer politically relevant resources).

The existing research suggests that across formal representation mechanisms-- elections, direct political participation, membership in a legislative body--the poor lack descriptive representation. The controversy surrounding the 1996 welfare reforms, highlights the consequences of the lack of descriptive representation in formal mechanisms.

Without representatives who resemble or intend to accurately depict the interests of the poor we are left in a quandary about what the true interests of the poor are and whether or not they are being represented. Despite the lack of descriptive representation in formal mechanisms, the presence of descriptive representation in informal mechanisms, could inform our understanding of what the true interests of the poor are and whether or not they are being adequately represented. What the existing research fails to adequately address is whether and to what extent the poor achieve descriptive representation in the primary informal representation mechanism--public opinion surveys (to be examined in Section 3).

**Dimension #3.** Dimension 3 suggests that representatives should substantively “act for” the interests of the poor. The concept of a representative substantively acting for a represented group entails some level of distance between the representative and the represented. At the same time, however, the distance must not be too great, because the representative may then lack ample information to act on behalf of the represented group. Of primary importance to Dimension 3 is the notion that information is required for a representative to substantively “act” on the part of its constituents. In the context of the American poor, descriptive representation plays an important role in providing substantive information about the personal and attached interests of the poor (i.e., a representative can not become informed about the interests of the poor through deliberative processes alone).

The lack of descriptive representation of the poor in formal mechanisms suggests that political representation of the poor fails to adequately meet the criteria of simultaneously being present and not present (i.e., presence of the poor is limited in representative bodies). In addition, it raises the question of whether representatives of the poor have ample direction to develop policies designed to assist the poor (i.e., representatives do not have enough of a mandate from the poor).

**Conclusions from Existing Research.** The existing empirical research suggests that across formal, and to a lesser extent, informal mechanisms, representation of the poor falls short of essentially every criterion comprising the three primary dimensions of the normative evaluation benchmark. Given that the poor are underrepresented across all of the formal mechanisms of representation, we must acknowledge that to a large extent their interests are being represented by “independent” representatives or trustees (at least across formal mechanisms). This result is arguably negative from a normative perspective because of the attached, personal nature of the interests of the poor in the U.S., which makes the optimal point on the mandate-independence spectrum closer to the mandate end than to the independence end of the spectrum.

In the context of the representation of the American poor in an age of rising economic and political inequality, the concept of substantive acting in Dimension 3 is closely tied to the concept of descriptive representation in Dimension 2. The substantive actions of representatives determine the fate of anti-poverty programs in the U.S. As a result, persistent or increasing economic inequalities arguably further attenuate the ability of “independent”, non-descriptively similar representatives to substantively act to advance the interests of the poor. We have seen that the poor lack descriptive representation in a formal sense and therefore we are left with the remaining relevant question of how descriptively similar representatives or advocates of the poor are across informal representation mechanisms--the topic to be addressed in Section 3.

## **SECTION 3(A). PUBLIC OPINION AND THE NATURE OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF THE POOR**

### **Introduction**

As discussed in Section 2, while a significant amount of research has examined political participation of the poor through formal mechanisms, less research has focused on public opinion as a mechanism for representation of the interests of the poor. In this subsection, I explore what existing public opinion research suggests about: (i) Equality of the political voice of the poor in the U.S. political system, and (ii) The nature of public opinion surveys as a communication tool for groups with low economic and political resources and for advocates of these groups. These topics raise the questions of who is voicing the concerns of the poor in public opinion surveys, and how the political voice of the poor has changed over time. The original empirical analysis presented in the following subsection is designed to address these unanswered questions about political representation of the poor in public opinion surveys.

### **Overview**

The intersection of poverty, public opinion and policy has been a topic of interest to many scholars. At the heart of this pursuit is the desire to understand Americans' attitudes towards the poor and to gauge what Americans think the government ought (or ought not) to do about it. It is a topic of great intrigue in the wealthiest country in the world--a country in which "we possess the means to provide all citizens not only with life's necessities, but with material abundance" (Gilens, 1999 pp ix.) but where over 35 million people (13% of our population and 17% of our children) experience material deprivation<sup>6</sup>. While the existing research aims to inform our understanding about Americans' attitudes about poverty, inequality and anti-poverty/social welfare policy, it also tells us a great deal about

---

<sup>6</sup> Source: U.S Census Bureau: 2005 statistics.  
[http://pubdb3.census.gov/macro/032006/pov/new01\\_100\\_01.htm](http://pubdb3.census.gov/macro/032006/pov/new01_100_01.htm).

public opinion surveys as a tool for political representation of the poor. Further, the research about poverty and public opinion raises concerns about the equality of political voice in the realm of poverty-related issues.

### **Attitudes about Poverty in the U.S.**

In *Why Americans Hate Welfare*, Martin Gilens (1999) examines the pervasive anti-welfare sentiment in the U.S. and how Americans--citizens in an affluent society--would prefer to respond to issues of poverty. Gilens sets out to test the validity of the conventional wisdom that Americans dislike welfare because it runs counter to "Americans' preferences for small government, personal freedom and individual responsibility" (Gilens, 1999 pp.1). Prior research by Feldman and Zaller (1992) suggested that diversity in political value sets--comprised of the (sometimes competing) values of individualism, equalitarianism, humanitarianism and opposition to big government--leads to a high level of ambivalence in opinions about social welfare policies. Gilens' key finding undermines the conventional wisdom by revealing that Americans do not oppose government support for the poor, in *principle*. Instead, Americans resent welfare because these policies are perceived as subsidizing the "undeserving" poor. Gilens provides evidence that perceptions of the undeserving poor are deeply entangled with historical racial stereotypes about African Americans<sup>7</sup>.

Gilens' findings reveal three dimensions of U.S. public opinion about poverty that become relevant as we contemplate the nature of public opinion as a mechanism for representation of the poor. First, Gilens reveals that the politics of race and the politics of poverty in the U.S. are deeply interconnected. Second, Gilens finds that lower income survey respondents are more likely to support welfare policies than their higher income

---

<sup>7</sup> Gilens shows that most Americans think that the majority of welfare recipients are African American (while in reality less than a third are African American) and that the American public (in general) thinks that African Americans (as a group) have a weaker work ethic than other groups.

counterparts (35% of respondents making less than \$10,000 supported an increase in welfare spending, compared to 10% of respondents earning over \$70,000<sup>8</sup>). However, he finds that this difference is not produced by the values of individualism or economic self-interest, but by differing perceptions of the nature of poverty and the impact of welfare assistance on the poor<sup>9</sup>. The third relevant finding is that the public, across all income groups, is more supportive of welfare policies in “hard” economic times. In these times, the public is more likely to believe that poverty is due to circumstances beyond the control of the poor.

The main implication of Gilens’ findings is that differences (or distance) in Americans’ experiences and perceptions impact their attitudes about (i) the poor and (ii) the nature of anti-poverty policy. This is a subtle, but extremely important, distinction from the idea that support or opposition to welfare spending stems from values of individualism and economic self-interest. Racial stereotypes are a product of *social* distance--i.e., they are generalizations based on impressions and perceptions, rather than on concrete, systematic examinations. Further, *economic* distance between the poor and the nonpoor produces divergent experiences--which translate into divergent perceptions. Thinking back to the normative framework for evaluating the nature of political representation of the poor, these findings suggest that a respondents’ descriptive similarity (or dissimilarity) to a poor American meaningfully impacts the way he or she represents the interests of the poor in opinion surveys. Gilens’ finding that more Americans support welfare policies in hard economic times (when they see the poor as more deserving) reveals the powerful role that common experience (arguably a form of descriptive similarity) plays in shaping attitudes about poverty and anti-poverty policy.

---

<sup>8</sup> Family income figures reported in 1995 dollars. Source: General Social Survey, 1972-1994. See Gilens (1999) Figure 2.5.

<sup>9</sup> More specifically, the nonpoor are more likely to believe that jobs are available for anyone who wants to work and are more likely to think that job training is an effective way to fight poverty. The nonpoor are also more likely to view poverty as a permanent state (i.e., that people are “trapped” in poverty) and that welfare assistance leads to dependence--which perpetuates, rather than eliminates, poverty (Gilens, 1999).

Research on Americans' attitudes toward inequality and economic redistribution further supports the view that descriptive similarity (or dissimilarity) impacts the opinion formation process in the context of poverty-related issues, such as economic justice. Support for redistribution is strongest among the poor, the unemployed and blue-collar workers (Hochschild, 1981). Further, as the income levels of respondents increase, support for redistribution decreases. Also, African Americans are more likely than whites to support economic redistribution. These results further support the idea that descriptive similarity (or dissimilarity) meaningfully impacts Americans' attitudes toward anti-poverty policies, which in turn impacts the nature of representation of the interests of the poor in opinion surveys<sup>10</sup>.

#### **Nature of Public Opinion as a Mechanism for Representation**

Public opinion surveys arguably serve as the most equalitarian mechanism for obtaining political representation. “[B]y underwriting the direct costs of participation, opinion polls ensure that disparities in politically relevant resources will not discourage the expression of politically relevant values and interests.” (Berinsky 2004 pp. 4) Therefore, for members of society with the fewest economic and political resources, public opinion surveys represent the “lowest cost” form of political participation. As a result, while we may expect inequalities to manifest themselves in “higher cost” forms of political participation, we would expect more equality in public opinion as a tool for political communication.

While public opinion surveys may be a relatively lower cost mechanism for obtaining political representation, scholars of public opinion illustrate that polls are not cost-free. The primary purpose of polls is to gauge what Americans think about political issues, candidates, and government performance. Carmines and Stimson, in their research on issue-based

---

<sup>10</sup> Hochschild's research is aimed at understanding why the effects of varying descriptive characteristics are not stronger. Her research suggests that some combination of ambivalence, the emotional reactions of respondents to their own beliefs and alternative patterns of belief affect citizen opinions about redistribution. While Hochschild uses the presented findings to suggest that support levels are lower than expected amongst the descriptively similar, I simply reference these findings to show that descriptive characteristics play a role in shaping Americans' attitudes about poverty-related issues, such as economic justice.



voting, distinguish between “hard” and “easy” issues. Hard issues are technically complicated, whereas easy issues are more likely to be symbolic in nature. Easy issues are more likely to deal with policy ends than with the more complicated aspects of policy means. Finally, easy issues are those that have been on the political agenda for a long period of time and elicit a “gut response” from the well-informed and not well-informed alike. Applying concepts of Downs’ (1957) economic theory of democracy to the survey response process, a survey respondent incurs greater costs (in the form of cognitive costs) when asked to respond to a hard issue question (Berinsky, 2004). Therefore, opinion surveys are not entirely cost-free for respondents.

Berinsky (2004) builds on Carmines and Stimson’s model by developing a two-dimensional framework that distinguishes between cognitive and expressive complexity. Cognitive complexity of a given issue impacts the attitude formation process, while the social complexity of an issue impacts the expression process. Social complexity surrounding an issue is a product of social norms about particular issues. These norms may lead respondents to conceal their true attitudes in the expression phase.

Particularly relevant to public opinion about poverty in the U.S. is the notion that the cognitive and/or social complexity of a given issue may vary depending on whether it is conceived of at the *principle* or at the *policy* level (Berinsky, 2004). In the context of public opinion about the poor, a majority of Americans, in *principle*, feel the government should assist the poor. At the *principle* level, poverty is a cognitively easy issue--most Americans would prefer to eradicate poverty and to help the poor. However, at the *policy* level, issues surrounding poverty carry an extremely high level of cognitive complexity. People may agree that the government should help the poor, in principle, while disagreeing vehemently about what policies should be employed to do so. One example from the wording experiments conducted in the 1984, 1985, 1986 General Social Surveys is that 63-65% of

Americans agreed that too little was being spent on “assistance to the poor”, while only 20-25% agreed that too little was being spent on “welfare” (Rasinski, 1989).

The costs associated with “hard” survey questions have significant implications for equality of political voice in the realm of poverty-related issues. Because public opinion polls are not a “cost free” form of political communication between elites and the masses, resulting inequalities ensue--as they do in other forms of political participation. Berinsky (2004) offers evidence that increased cognitive or social costs can lead (i) respondents with fewer politically relevant resources, and (ii) natural supporters of the welfare state to respond with “don’t know” to the cognitively and socially “hard” questions surrounding anti-poverty policy. This reaction results in an “exclusion bias” which has produced a conservative penchant in U.S. public opinion concerning economic redistribution over the past thirty years. These findings imply that the voice of the poor is muted even in the most equalitarian form of political participation.

Other scholars of public opinion (see Bartels, 1996 and Lau, 1997) have employed somewhat similar “projection” methods as Berinsky in order to inform our understanding of what the muted voices in public opinion surveys *would* sound like if we could measure them without error. However, this line of work reveals the difficulty of projecting the preferences of the politically inactive or silent.

### **Conclusions from Existing Research**

The examination of Americans’ attitudes about poverty reveals that survey respondents who are descriptively similar to the poor, in terms of income and race, have been more likely (historically) to support welfare and redistributive policies. From a normative perspective, this is a positive result since descriptive similarity (through resemblance or intent to depict) is critical for effective representation of the interests of the

poor. That being said, the (i) presence of inequalities in the political voice of the poor in opinion polls, and (ii) the complexity (if not the impossibility) of determining the true attitudes and preferences of the silenced voices and their advocates reveals that even in the lowest cost representation mechanism the interests of the poor may be muted, misrepresented or distorted. By attempting to measure the attitudes toward the poor with survey questions plagued by social and cognitive complexity it becomes very difficult to get a clear measurement of public opinion about poverty. Of course, the complexity of survey questions is a function of the complexity of the issues at hand. The empirical research presented in Section 3b attempts to circumvent some of these complexities while still advancing our understanding of the nature of representation of the interests of the poor in public opinion surveys.

## SECTION 3(B). ORIGINAL RESEARCH: DESCRIPTIVE REPRESENTATION IN PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS

### Introduction

While existing public opinion research provides compelling evidence that the voices of the poor and their advocates are muted, it also highlights the complexities associated with projecting what their political voice *would* sound like if we could hear it. The purpose of my research is not to attempt to project the muted voices (see Berinsky, 2004), but to examine who *is* advocating for the poor in opinion polls and what those advocates are saying. I therefore evaluate two primary dimensions of public opinion about poverty in the U.S. -- salience and direction. These two dimensions of public opinion (as a mechanism for representation) map directly into the political representation process. In order to gain representation, a group (and/or its advocates) must first get its issues onto the political agenda (i.e., the issues must be *salient*). Once on the agenda, a group (and/or its advocates) communicates to its representative(s) the preferred course of government action (or inaction) which best advances its interests (i.e., group and/or advocates provide desired *direction* for political action).

As a first step, I examine the characteristics of those who find poverty to be a salient issue--varying characteristics of advocates have varying implications for representation of the interests of the poor. To accomplish this, I examine responses dating back to 1960 to the open-ended question, "What do you think are the most important problems facing this country?" By first examining open-ended responses I circumvent some of the complexities of unpacking complicated responses to cognitively difficult questions about anti-poverty policy. This analysis provides information related to the first order questions about the salience of poverty and the characteristics of advocates for the poor in public opinion surveys over time.

I then examine the second order question of: What are advocates of the poor saying? While analysis of the open-ended Most Important Problem (“MIP”) question provides information about the relevant first order issues, it does not provide any information about direction of response (i.e., whether government involvement and spending should expand or retract). A respondent may believe poverty to be an important issue but think that the onus for eradicating it lies with the poor themselves, local church or community groups or non-governmental organizations, not the federal government. Alternatively, a respondent may feel that poverty is an important issue but existing programs are inefficient and should be retracted, not expanded. Most American National Election Study (“NES”) surveys (the primary data source for the forthcoming analysis) do not ask a follow-up to the MIP question about how respondents feel the government should address the named issues. As a result, I am constrained from performing a direct analysis of what poverty advocates (in open-ended survey questions) believe should be done about poverty.

As a result of the data constraints, I examine responses to directional questions about federal spending on assistance to the poor. I first examine the level of support for assistance to the poor over time and compare, at a high-level, the relationship between salience and direction of opinion about poverty over time. Next, I examine the characteristics of respondents who believe federal spending on assistance to the poor should be increased and compare these results to those of the salience analysis. This analysis provides information about the direction of opinion about poverty in the U.S. over time and about the characteristics of those who support expansion of existing programs.

### **Salience: Overview of Most Important Problem Analysis**

To examine salience of poverty as important issue in opinion surveys, I focus on responses to the American National Election Study’s “Most Important Problem”

Question<sup>11</sup>. The open-ended MIP question allows respondents to identify poverty as a major problem in the U.S. without requiring respondents to comment on what the government should do about it. Responses to the Most Important Problem question can function at either the principle or the policy level as it relates to poverty-related issues.

The Most Important Problem question represents a cognitively and socially easy question that can be easily answered by (i) respondents with high or low political resources, and by (ii) advocates of the poor who may otherwise be hindered by the cognitive and social complexity of survey questions about anti-poverty policy solutions. The only potential cognitive difficulty associated with Most Important Problem question is the potential difficulty of choosing between multiple considerations that may be salient at the time of survey. While the question answering process is extremely complicated and has been the subject of vast empirical study, a leading model (set forth by Zaller, 1992) suggests the following:

One point that does, however, appear reasonably clear is that, in the course of making decisions, including those involving political matters, individuals rarely canvass their minds for all relevant thoughts. (Zaller, 1992, pp. 38)

Zaller's model suggests that survey questions, especially open-ended survey questions which do not force competition between considerations, will likely produce the most salient consideration(s) in a respondent's mind at the time of survey. To the extent that poverty or social welfare issues are of primary salience in a respondent's mind, it is reasonable to conclude that the respondent is either experiencing issues of poverty or has the interests of those experiencing poverty at the forefront of their mind (for one reason or another).

---

<sup>11</sup> The Most Important Problem question has been asked in essentially every National Election Study survey since 1960. The question typically reads, "What do you think are the most important problems facing this country?" Question wording differs slightly across studies. See Appendix C, "Technical Notes" for detailed question wording.

The analysis is designed to obtain information about the first order questions of: (i) who is advocating for the poor, and (ii) how the descriptive characteristics of these advocates have changed (if at all) over time. Because of the attached and personal nature of the interests of the poor and the historical evidence that the poor are most supportive of anti-poverty programs, the descriptive qualities of those advocating for the poor in opinion surveys is the primary object of examination in the forthcoming empirical analyses. Without information about the first order questions, we are unable to move intelligibly to a discussion of the complex questions of what the true interests of the poor are and whether those interests are effectively represented.

**Data and Methods.** The primary data source for this analysis is the American National Election Studies Cumulative Data File, 1948-2002 (the “Cumulative NES Data File”). The Cumulative NES Data File is comprised of common variables from the surveys conducted by the NES every two years since 1948. Variables have been recoded to be consistent across time. The surveys are administered to between approximately 1,000 and 2,000 respondents (depending on the year). The NES sampling procedures are designed to obtain a representative sample of the U.S. population<sup>12</sup>. See Table A1 in Appendix A for an overview of the primary dependent and explanatory variables in the analysis.

One important technical note is that I recoded the MIP response categories from the Cumulative NES Data File into two categories: 1 if respondent answered “Poverty” to the MIP question (see Technical Notes in Appendix C) and 0 otherwise. Because I have a binary (1,0) dependent variable, I use a logistic model specification to evaluate the extent to which a given combination of explanatory variables influence the likelihood of respondents answering “Poverty” over time.

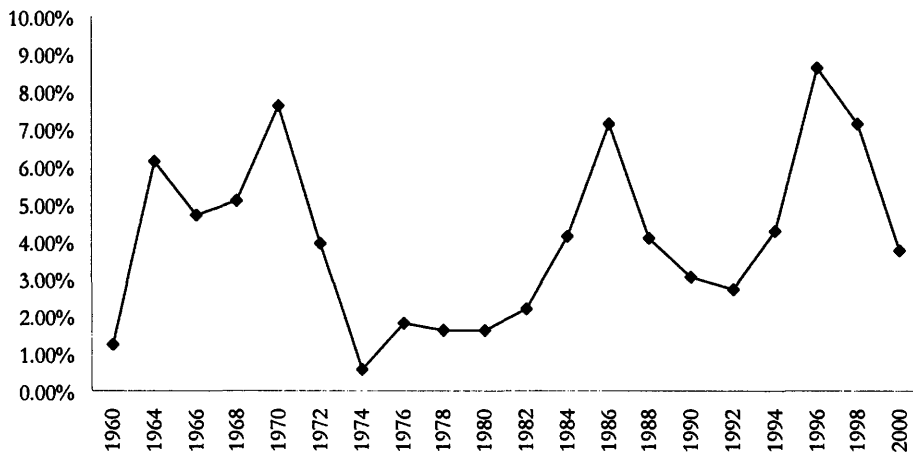
---

<sup>12</sup> See American National Election Studies Cumulative Data File, 1948-2002 Codebook for more information on sampling procedures and data collection.

**Saliience: Results**

**High-Level Trends.** I first examined some high-level trends in Most Important Problem (“MIP”) Responses over time. Figure 3.1 provides an overview of the number of respondents who answered “Poverty” to the MIP question in all years when the question was asked. As Figure 3.1 shows, the percentage of respondents answering “Poverty” increased between 1960 and 1970 and then descended to its trough in 1974. Since the mid 1970s, the saliience of poverty has essentially been trending gradually upward, with two relatively larger increases in 1986 and 1996.

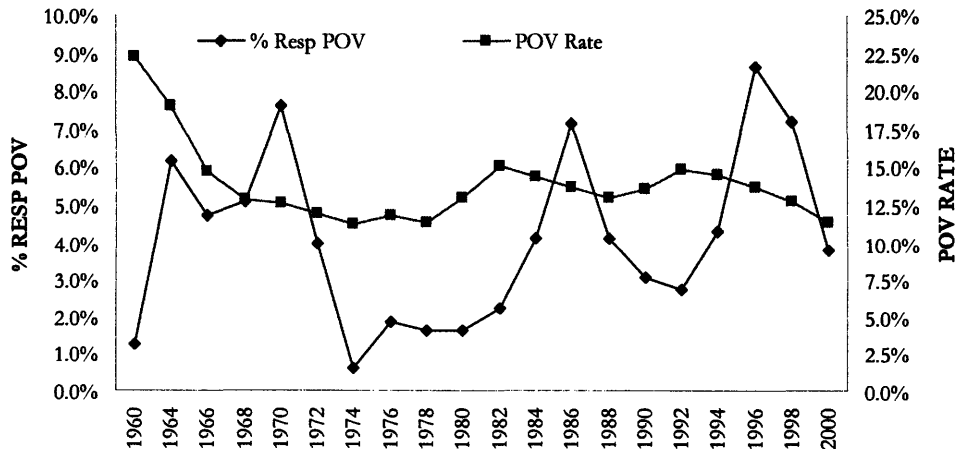
**Figure 3.1. Percent Responding "Poverty" to Most Important Problem**



Source: Cumulative NES Data File.

Figure 3.2 examines the extent to which the percentage of respondents answering “Poverty” moves in tandem with movements in the nation’s poverty rates.

**Figure 3.2. Percent Responded "Poverty" vs. Poverty Rate**

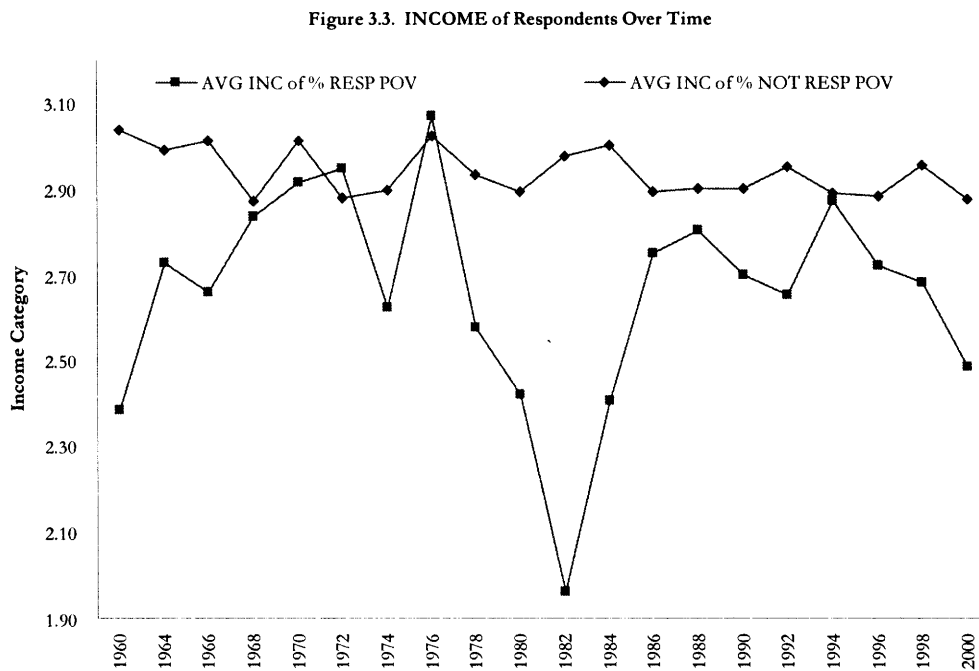


Sources: Cumulative NES Data File and U.S. Census Bureau (Poverty Rate Data).



National poverty rates and salience of poverty in MIP responses generally trend downward in the years between 1964 and 1974 (except for 1970). However, the pattern changes beginning in the mid 1970s. Between 1976 and 1982 poverty rates and salience of poverty responses move in tandem. However, beginning in 1982, salience of poverty begins to increase gradually through 1988 (with the exception of a relatively larger increase in 1986) while poverty rates decline steadily over the same time period. The same pattern occurs between 1992 and 2000 with poverty rates declining and salience of poverty increasing. However, in the interim period between 1988 and 1992, salience of poverty declines while poverty rates increase slightly. These high-level patterns suggest that more than just the level of poverty in the country drives salience of poverty in MIP.

In Figure 3.3, I compare the average income of respondents answering “Poverty” to the MIP question to the average income of respondents who did NOT answer “Poverty”.



*Source: Cumulative NES Data File. The income categories range from 1 to 5, as follows: Category 1 = 0-16<sup>th</sup> percentile, Category 2: 17<sup>th</sup>-33<sup>rd</sup> percentile Category 3: 34<sup>th</sup>-67<sup>th</sup> percentile Category 4: 68<sup>th</sup>-95<sup>th</sup> percentile and Category 5: 95<sup>th</sup>-100<sup>th</sup> percentile.*

The average income of those NOT answering “Poverty” essentially tracks the average income of the entire sample<sup>13</sup>. One interesting pattern to note is that the average income of those NOT responding poverty is higher than the average income of respondents that answer “Poverty” in almost every survey year. The difference between the average income of respondents answering “Poverty” and those NOT answering “poverty” was greatest in the early 1980s. However, large differences were also present in the 1960s, and since the mid-1990s the difference in average incomes has increased.

The average income quintile of respondents over then entire time period (1960-2000) is 2.66. This represents an average income hovering around the 25<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> percentile. In 1998, the average family income of respondents answering “Poverty” was approximately \$16,000. The poverty threshold for a single individual in 1998 was \$8,316. The threshold for a couple (two adults) was \$10,634. For a family consisting of one adult and two children, the threshold was \$13,133 and for two adults and two children it was \$16,530<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, while the average income of respondents answering “Poverty” is lower than the sample average, it is still slightly higher than the poverty threshold. However, this finding provides an initial indication that (on average) those advocating for the poor in public opinion surveys are themselves living in poverty or on the fault line of poverty.

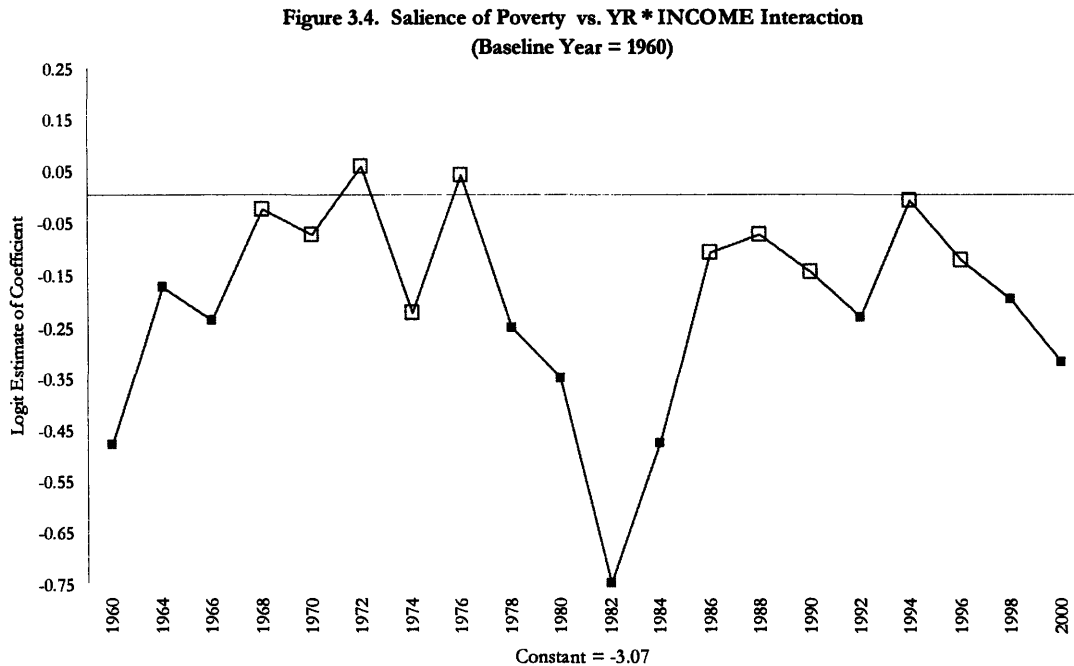
**Regression Results.** While the high-level trends provide some initial indicative information, a more detailed look is required to gain insights into who *is* advocating for the poor in opinion surveys and how relevant descriptive characteristics of advocates have changed over time. I began by examining the relationship between respondents’ income and MIP responses over time. This initial regression analysis evaluates the relationship between the dependent variable MIPR (the binary Most Important Problem

---

<sup>13</sup> Since the percentage of respondents answering “Poverty” is relatively small, we would expect the average income of the percentage of respondents NOT answering “Poverty” to move in line with the sample average income.

<sup>14</sup> Source: Almanac of Policy Issues. [http://www.policyalmanac.org/social\\_welfare/poverty.shtml](http://www.policyalmanac.org/social_welfare/poverty.shtml)

Variable) and two groups of explanatory variables. The first group of explanatory variables is comprised of YEAR dummy variables and the second group includes the interaction variable YR\*INCOME for all years (See Appendix A for more detail).



*Note: Hollow data points represent coefficients for which we can not reject the null hypothesis that the regression coefficient equals zero at the 90% significance level. Full regression results provided in Appendix B Table B1.*

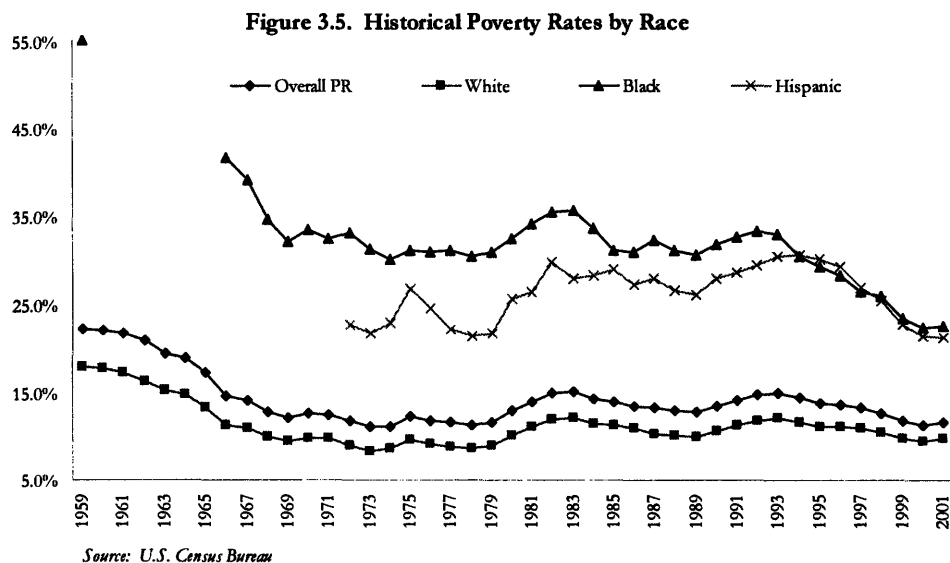
As Figure 3.4 shows, between 1960 and 1966 the inverse relationship between respondent income and the likelihood that respondents answer “Poverty” weakens. The inverse relationship strengthens between the early 1970s and 1982 (where the relationship reaches its strongest point). However, after 1982, the inverse relationship between income and likelihood that respondents answer “Poverty” weakens again. Interpreting the logistic regression coefficients, the probability that a one category increase in income decreases the likelihood of responding “Poverty” is cut in half between 1982 and 2000<sup>15</sup>. Over the entire time period, we observe an inverse relationship between salience of poverty and income (i.e., as income increases, salience of

<sup>15</sup> The change in probability that a respondent answers “Poverty” resulting from a one unit increase in income is 2.00% in 1982 compared to 1.00% in 2000.

poverty decreases). However, two patterns of interest stand out. While the relationship between income and salience of poverty generally decreases between the early 1980s and 2000, income effects strengthen between 1994 and 2000.

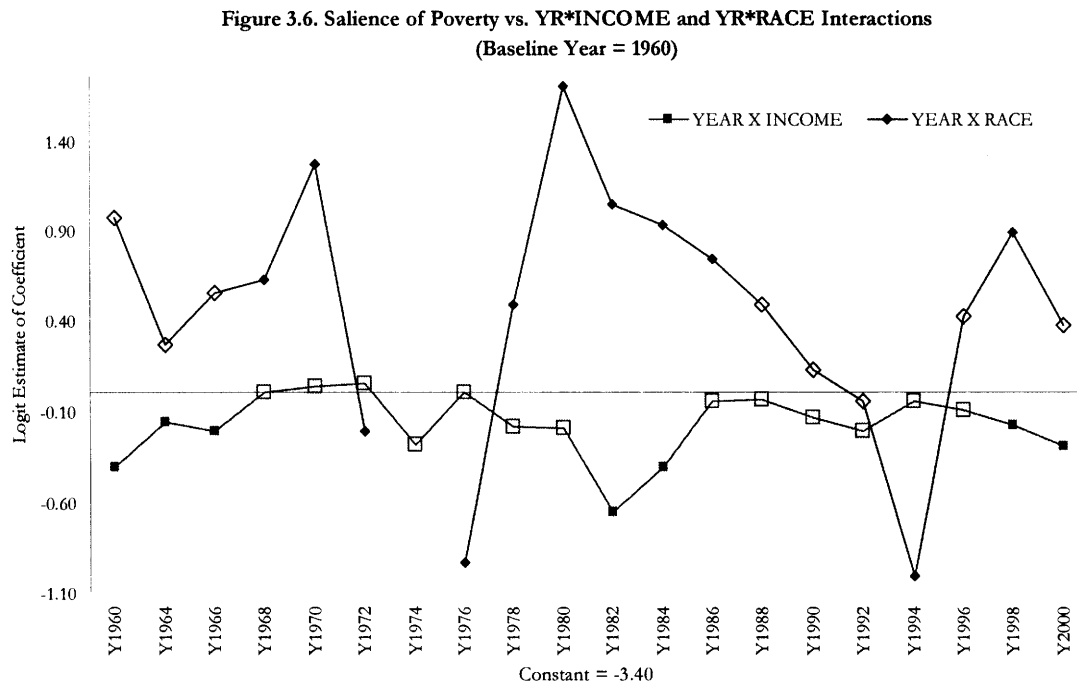
The data therefore tell two interesting stories. First, while the overall salience of poverty in opinion polls has increased since the early 1980s, the descriptive similarity of poverty advocates--on the basis of income--in opinion polls has decreased over this time period. Secondly, while income effects declined to their weakest point in 1994, they have resurged somewhat since then. Therefore, over the longer time period of 1982-2000, descriptive similarity of poverty advocates (on the basis of income has declined). This implies that absolute levels of descriptive similarity have weakened. However, in the shorter and more recent time period (1994-2000), poverty advocates in opinion polls have become increasingly descriptively similar to the poor in relative (although not absolute) terms.

I next examine the relationship of race and income on salience of poverty in MIP responses over time. Figure 3.5 provides an overview of historical U.S. poverty rates by race. While poverty rates for all racial groups have declined over time (on average),



poverty rates for Black and Hispanic Americans remain meaningfully higher than those for Whites. The higher incidence of poverty amongst Blacks and Hispanics motivates the examination of the descriptive similarity of survey respondents on the basis of race.

In order to examine the relationship between race and salience of poverty I perform a second regression analysis. This second regression analysis is comprised of the dependent variable MIPR (the binary Most Important Problem Variable) and three groups of explanatory variables. The first group of explanatory variables is comprised of YEAR dummy variables, the second group includes the interaction variable YR\*INCOME for all years and the third includes the interaction variable YR\*RACE<sup>16</sup> for all years (See Appendix A for more detail).



*Note: Hollow data points represent coefficients for which we can not reject the null hypothesis that the regression coefficient equals zero at the 90% significance level. Full regression results provided in Appendix B Table B2. In 1974, none of the 132 Black respondents answered "Poverty" to MIP question and it is therefore dropped from the specification due to perfect predication of failure.*

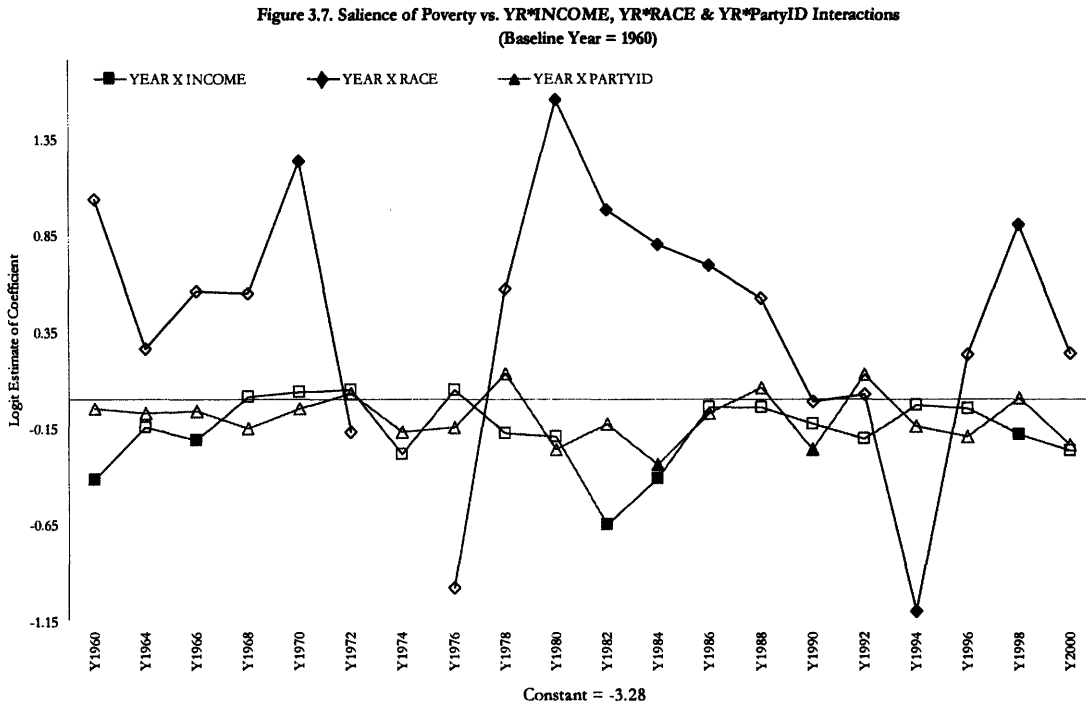
<sup>16</sup> As noted in Appendix A, RACE is a dummy variable equal to 1 if respondent is Black and 0 if respondent is not Black. A similar analysis was attempted for a RACE variable coded 1 if respondent is Hispanic and 0 otherwise. However, due to small sample sizes of Hispanic respondents over time, the analysis yielded no statistically significant results.

Figure 3.6 reveals that the role of race in predicting whether a respondent answers “Poverty” to the MIP question has fluctuated meaningfully over time. Relative to the effect of income on salience of poverty, the effect of race on salience is meaningfully larger in magnitude in almost all years. The effect of race on salience of poverty increases between 1968 and 1970, 1976 and 1980, and 1994 and 1998. However, while the relationship between race and salience of poverty was increasing and meaningfully different from zero over these time periods, that relationship has decreased in magnitude since its peak in 1980 and even reversed at times (for example in 1972, 1976 and 1994).

Therefore, on the basis of race, advocates for the poor in public opinion surveys have become less descriptively similar to the poor since the early 1980s. However, similar to the patterns seen in the analysis of income effects, the effect of race has strengthened since 1994. Therefore, the stories about race and income effects have similar plots. Poverty advocates (on the basis of income and race) have become generally less similar to the poor in absolute terms (if we look at the trend since the early 1980s), but more descriptively similar, in relative terms, since the mid 1990s.

The fluctuation in and general weakening (over the past thirty years) of the effects of race on salience of poverty in survey responses are somewhat counterintuitive results if we think back to the research about Americans’ attitudes toward anti-poverty and redistributive policies. Low-income and African American respondents have consistently been the historical supporters of social welfare policies. I therefore explored the role of party identification to determine whether these fluctuations in race effects may truly be the effects of partisanship in disguise. Historically, African American voters have overwhelmingly supported the Democratic Party (since the 1940s) warranting simultaneous examination of race and party effects on salience of poverty in MIP

responses. Figure 3.7 reveals that income and race effects are dominant over time, with party effects only present in two years, 1984 and 1990. The size of these effects is also small relative the size of race and income effects. Therefore, party effects have historically played little meaningful role in the salience of poverty in opinion polls.



*Note: Hollow data points represent coefficients for which we can not reject the null hypothesis that the regression coefficient equals zero at the 90% significance level. Full regression results provided in Appendix B Table B3.*

**Additional Salience Analysis.** Since a primary research goal is to examine the implications of this analysis for representation of the poor in the future (in an age of rising inequality), I sought to examine MIP responses beyond 2000. The Most Important Problem question was not asked in the 2002 NES survey, so I analyzed the MIP responses from the 2004 NES data set. Only 5 of over 1,000 respondents answered “Poverty” and therefore analysis of this data yielded statistically insignificant results.

To obtain more updated information, I examined a different data set, the Cooperative Congressional Elections Study (the “CCES”), a large scale survey of public opinion conducted during the 2006 mid-term elections. The CCES and NES data sets

are not directly comparable due to fundamental differences in the sampling methodologies used in the two surveys. The CCES is conducted via internet (versus the NES which collects data via phone and in-person interviews) and uses a matched random sample. While sampling methodologies differ between the NES and the CCES, question wording of the Most Important Problem questions is almost identical in both surveys<sup>17</sup>. Acknowledging the differences between the two surveys, I use the CCES data in order to obtain more updated information about salience of poverty in MIP responses. The results of the CCES analysis are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. CCES Regression Results			
Number of OBS			29,017
Likelihood Ratio Chi-Squared (d.f. = 3)			161.6500
Prob of Larger Chi-Squared			0.0000
Pseudo R-Squared			0.0833
Log likelihood			-889.9784
	Coefficient	SE	Probability
RACE	0.8698	0.2294	0.0044
INCOME	-0.0427	0.0215	-0.0001
PARTYID	-1.4328	0.1362	-0.0046
CONSTANT	-2.4431	0.2854	0.0030 <sup>(1)</sup>

The results of the CCES analysis show that party identification is the strongest predictor of whether a respondent finds poverty to be a salient issue.

*(1) Represents predicted probability at x-bar (sample average)  
Note: All figures are statistically significant at the 95% level.*

However, race also has a meaningful relationship with whether or not respondents answer “Poverty” to the MIP question. The relationship between income and salience of poverty is small, but statistically significant. These results suggest that in the current political environment, being a Democrat (or a Democratic leaner) has the largest effect on salience of poverty in open-ended MIP survey questions.

The results from both the NES and the CCES suggest that race plays a meaningful role in salience of poverty in MIP responses. Per the CCES data, being African American increases the probability of answering poverty to the MIP question by

<sup>17</sup>In most NES surveys (1972-78, 1984-2000), MIP question wording was, “What do you think are the most important problems facing this country?” CCES question wording is, “What is the Most Important Problem facing the country today? See Appendix C, Technical Notes, for greater detail.



less than 0.5%, while the effect in the NES data is closer to 1.5%. This may suggest that the relationship between race and salience of poverty, despite its resurgence since the mid 1990s, may be weakening<sup>18</sup>. At a minimum, the larger magnitude of the effect of race (compared to income) suggests that poverty advocates in public opinion surveys are most descriptively similar to the American poor on the basis of race.

**Discussion of Results.** The examination of both the high-level trends and the more in-depth regression results provides a number of relevant findings. The high-level trends suggest that since its trough in 1974 (where only between 0% and 1% of respondents answered “Poverty” to MIP questions), salience of poverty in MIP responses has increased--reaching a high of 8.6% in 1996 and settling at approximately 4% in 2000. Over the same time period, poverty rates have fluctuated from 11.2% in 1974 to a peak of 15.2% in 1983 to 11.7% by 2001. We learn from the high-level analysis that more than the national poverty rate is driving the salience of poverty in opinion survey responses.

To gain additional insight into what has historically been driving salience of poverty in opinion surveys, I examined two relevant descriptive characteristics of survey respondents--income and race. Average income of those respondents answering “Poverty” to MIP questions has remained below the sample average in almost all survey years, suggesting that advocates for the poor are either poor themselves or close to the poverty line. However, the effect of income on whether a respondent answers “Poverty” has weakened since the early 1980s, where it reached its strongest point.

Interestingly, between 1978 and 1982--when income effects increased most rapidly--poverty rates grew at their fastest historical rates over a five year period (from

---

<sup>18</sup> While I raise this possibility, the lack of comparability between the two data sets makes the results of any comparison indeterminative.

11.4% in 1978 to 15.2% in 1983, a compound annual growth rate of 5.9%). If we contrast this finding to the dynamics of the late 1980s and early 1990s, it is interesting that income effects strengthened as the nation experienced a rapid increase in poverty (between 1978 and 1982) but weakened despite high prevailing poverty rates in the late 1980s and early 1990s (the poverty rate was close to historical highs at 15.3% in 1993). Therefore, since the early 1980s, poverty advocates in public opinion surveys have become less descriptively similar to the poor, on the basis of income, despite the fact that during intervals of that time period, poverty levels were close to historical highs. This finding is surprising since we may expect poverty to be a more salient issue when a greater proportion of Americans are experiencing it or are closer to experiencing it.

On the basis of race, poverty advocates have also become descriptively less similar to the poor since the early 1980s. While African American poverty rates have declined from close to historical highs in the early 1980s, the gap between White poverty rates and African American poverty rates has remained essentially stable over that time period. Meanwhile, the importance of race in predicting whether a respondent answers “Poverty” has decreased since its peak in 1980. Also, the simultaneous analysis of income, race and party effects allows us to conclude that race effects are not party effects in disguise.

While descriptive similarity has decreased on an absolute level (on the basis of income and race) since the early 1980s, the data tells a second interesting story. Since the mid-1990s, income and race effects have strengthened. The timing is interesting given that it coincides with the timing of the prominent welfare policy reform debates of the mid-1990s. The largest, most sweeping reforms in welfare policy since the institution of the welfare state were occurring at a point when the descriptive similarity of poverty

advocates in opinion polls was at its trough. This suggests that policy makers who relied on the popularity of welfare reforms in opinion polls, were taking guidance from descriptively dissimilar poverty advocates. This result raises the question of how well informed policymakers were about the interests of the poor at the time of designing and implementing reforms which would have a greater impact on the poor than any other anti-poverty program in recent history. Moreover, the resurgence in descriptive similarity of poverty advocates in opinion polls since 1994 raises the possibility that increased salience of poverty for descriptively similar respondents came in reaction to the institution of the new welfare policies.

#### **Direction: Overview of Analysis**

The MIP analysis provided information about how the salience of poverty as an issue amongst Americans has changed over time. It also informed our understanding of who *is* advocating for the poor by assigning salience to the issue (i.e., getting and/or keeping it on the issue agenda). However, it does not offer guidance about what steps poverty advocates feel the government should take (or not take) in order to mitigate poverty in the U.S. Also, simply because the issue salience of poverty has increased since the early 1980s, this does not necessarily imply that the citizenry supports expansion of existing programs.

The forthcoming analysis is designed to provide insight into how support for existing anti-poverty programs has changed over time. It also seeks to identify how the characteristics of those who support expansion of existing anti-poverty programs align with or differ from the characteristics of those who name poverty as a salient issue in open-ended survey questions. Taken together, the two analyses (the salience and the directional analyses) offer guidance about who is putting and keeping poverty on the issue agenda and how poverty advocates are mapping their attitudes into policy preferences.

**Data and Methods.** Similar to the MIP analysis, the Cumulative NES Data File is the primary data set used for the directional analysis. In several of the NES surveys, respondents were asked about their views on a variety of federal spending measures, including their views on varying anti-poverty programs. I focus on three spending items that are asked about repeatedly: federal aid to the poor, federal food stamps and federal welfare assistance. One data limitation is that the federal spending questions were introduced in the early 1980s<sup>19</sup>. Because the most pronounced and relevant (by virtue of recency) patterns in the MIP analysis occur from the early 1980s to today, the data set for the directional analysis does indeed cover the primary time period of interest. That being said, prior historical data could add insight about the direction of opinion about poverty over time and therefore the limitation is worth noting.

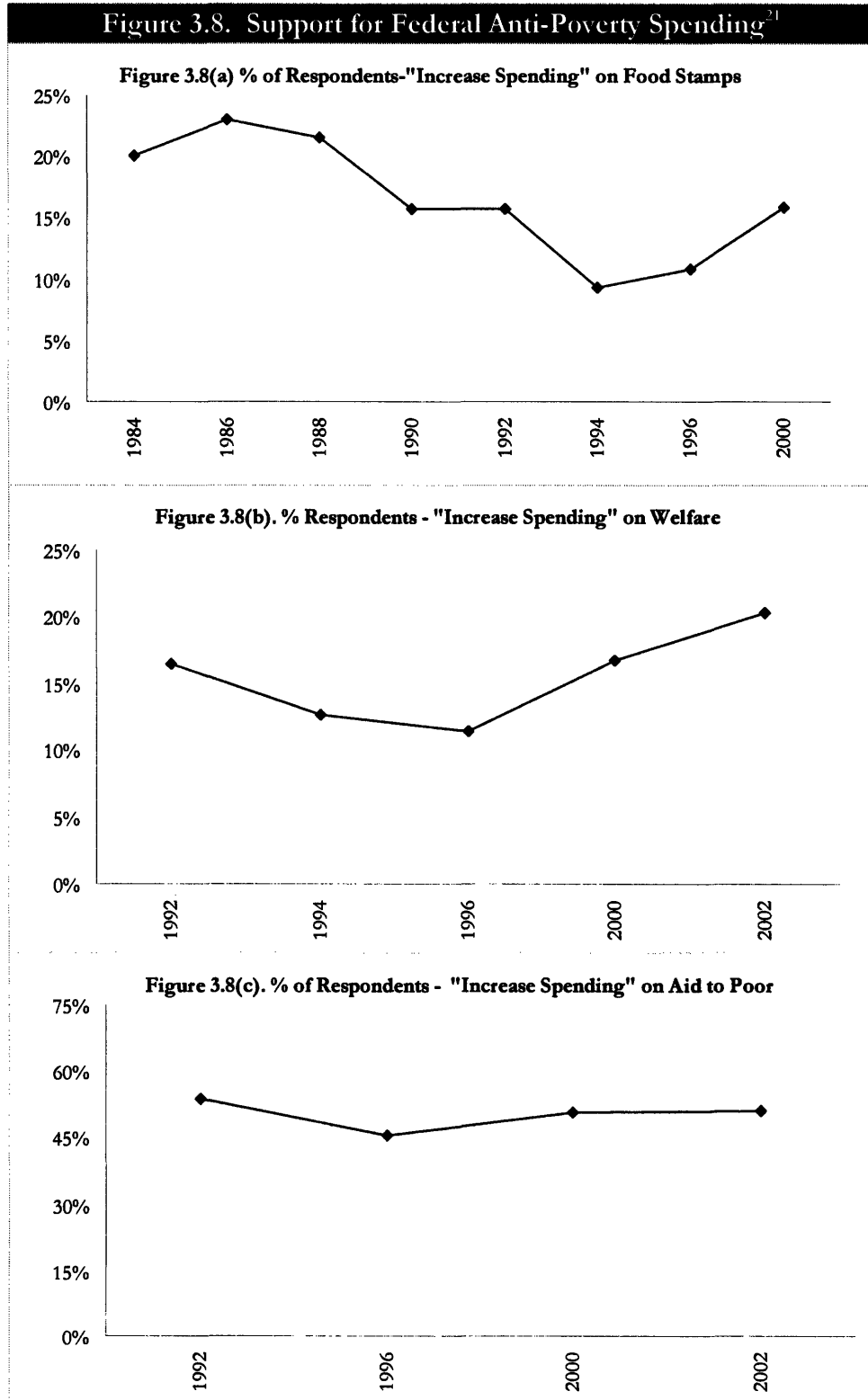
I recoded response categories from the Cumulative NES Data File into two categories: 1 if respondent answered “Increase Spending” to the relevant directional question (see Technical Notes in Appendix C) and 0 otherwise<sup>20</sup>. I divide the outcome variable into two categories (rather than looking a three category variable--i.e. increase, keep the same, decrease spending) in order to approximate the idea of a “poverty advocate” used in the analysis of open-ended responses. By analyzing respondents who want to increase spending, I can isolate those who are true advocates of the poor, from those who are simply indifferent or ambivalent (many of who I expect to respond “keep spending the same”). Because I have a binary (1,0) dependent variable, I again use a logistic model specification to evaluate the extent to which a given combination of explanatory variables influences the likelihood that respondents support expansion of existing anti-poverty programs.

---

<sup>19</sup> Earlier surveys asked questions about standard of living and government job guarantees. While these questions are those most comparable to the anti-poverty federal spending questions, they are not directly comparable. I have not performed an analysis of these measures for the lack of direct comparability.

<sup>20</sup> The primary categories are “Increase spending”, “Keep the same” and “Reduce or cut out entirely”. See Appendix C for more detail.

**High-Level Trends.** The first question of interest is: How has support for federal spending on anti-poverty programs has changed since the early 1980s?

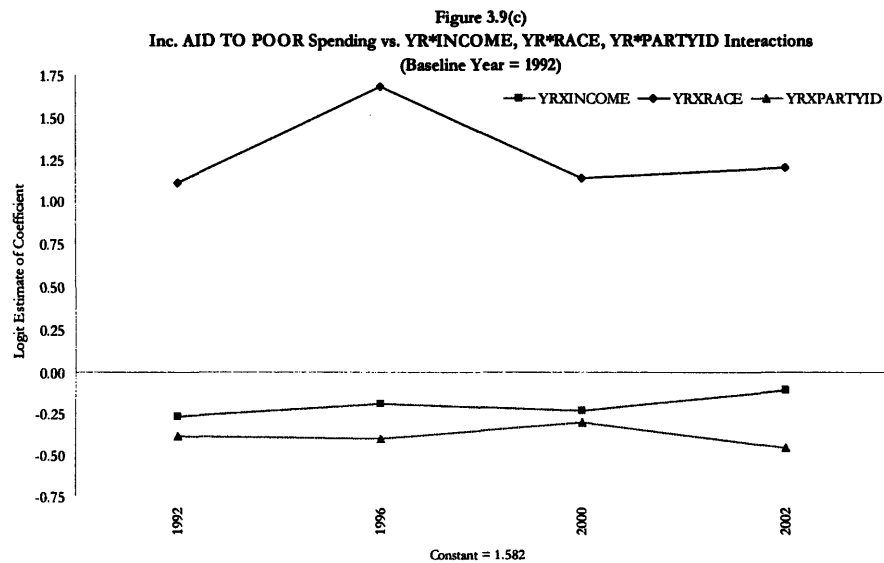
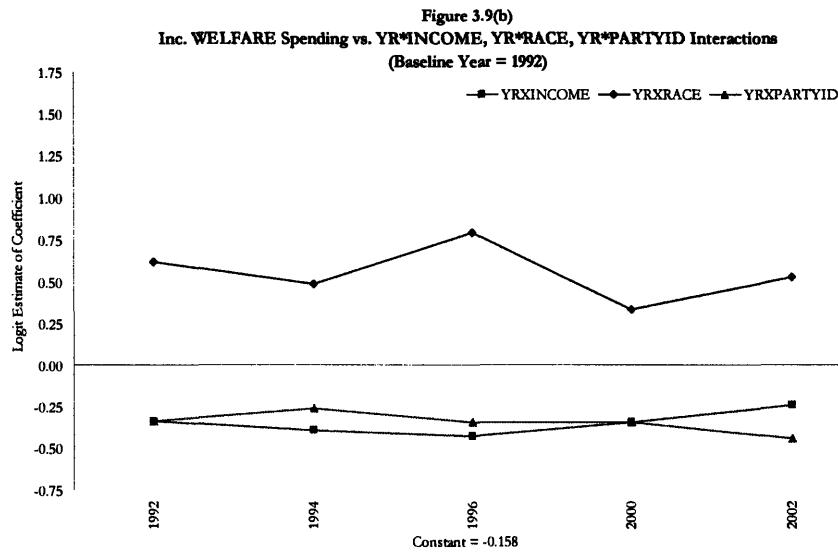
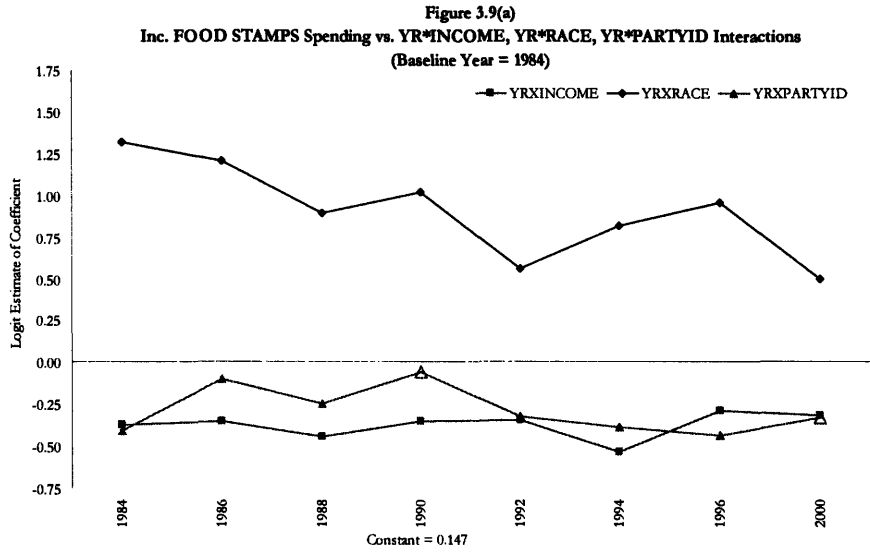


<sup>21</sup> Note: Data shown for years in which specific anti-poverty spending question was asked. Food stamps asked in all years between 1984 and 2000 (except for 1998), and aid to poor and welfare were asked in all years between 1992 and 2002 (except for 1998).

As Figure 3.8 shows, the only spending question that dates back to the 1980s is the food stamps funding question. Figure 3.8(a) shows that support for increased funding for food stamps (one of the primary federal anti-poverty assistance programs) has declined since the early 1980s. Between 1994 and 2000 there was a rebound in support for increased funding-- which also holds true for welfare spending and aid to the poor. Another interesting result is that the percentage of respondents who support increasing “aid to the poor” is meaningfully higher than the percentage of respondents who support increased spending on the existing anti-poverty programs (food stamps and welfare). Support for increasing “aid to the poor” hovers around 50% of respondents, whereas support for spending on food stamps and welfare stays essentially below 20% of respondents.

Thinking back to Figure 3.1, while support for existing anti-poverty programs has declined since the early 1980s, salience of poverty as an important issue has increased. Per Gilens (1999), we would expect that Americans’ attitudes about welfare (and to a lesser extent food stamps) may diverge from their attitudes about “assisting the poor” due to the complex racial issues surrounding the politics of welfare and social provision. Therefore, to understand the relationship between salience and direction of opinion about poverty, we need to examine, in greater detail, the characteristics of those advocating for increased spending. The extent to which income, race and party identification effect whether respondents advocate for increased spending informs our understanding of how poverty advocates are mapping attitudes into policy preferences.

Figure 3.9. Income, Race, PartyID Effects and Federal Anti-Poverty Spending<sup>22</sup>



<sup>22</sup> In Figures 3.9(a) and 3.9(c), all figures are statistically significant at the 95% level unless denoted with hollow data point. In Figure 3.9(b) all results significant at the 90% statistical significance level. 2002 income categories differ from other years; see Appendix C for details.

Figure 3.9 reveals that the effect of income on whether respondents support increased funding for food stamps has weakened slightly since the early 1980s. However, if we examine the more recent period since the mid-1990s, we see that income effects have weakened more significantly than they have over the longer time period (this is true across all three spending questions--food stamps, welfare and aid to the poor). Thinking back to the salience analysis, the effect of income on issue salience has weakened over the longer time period (from 1982 to 2000) but, in contrast, has *strengthened* since the mid-1990s. This result suggests that there is a disconnect between the descriptive characteristics of those advocating for the poor in open-ended survey questions and the characteristics of those advocating for the poor in close-ended questions which ask respondents to choose between policy outcomes. Poverty advocates in open-ended surveys have become more descriptively similar to the poor since the mid-1990s while advocates in close-ended survey questions have become less descriptively similar (on the basis of income).

Figure 3.9 also shows that race effects have declined meaningfully since the early 1980s. Moreover, race effects have followed similar patterns to income effects in the more recent time period of interest (1994 to 2000). For all three spending questions, race effects, like income effects, have declined meaningfully since the mid 1990s. Meanwhile, party effects weakened from the early 1980s through 1990 but have increased meaningfully since 1990 (this holds true for the food stamps and welfare spending questions, and to a lesser extent, the aid to poor question).

### **Direction: Summary of Results**

The directional analysis shows that overall support for increased spending on anti-poverty programs has decreased over the longer time period since the early 1980s, but more recently has increased relatively rapidly (since the early 1990s). However, since the early 1990s, while support for spending on anti-poverty programs has grown, the effects of



income and race on whether respondents support increased funding have weakened. While race and income effects have weakened, party effects have strengthened somewhat. Therefore, while overall advocacy for increased anti-poverty funding has grown, the survey respondents advocating for these increases have become less descriptively similar to the poor since the mid 1990s. This finding has interesting implications when contemplated in the context of the findings of the salience analysis. Poverty advocates in open-ended survey questions have become more descriptively similar to the poor over the more recent time period. However, it is clear that these advocates (in aggregate) are not necessarily mapping their attitudes into policy preferences for expansion of existing programs. These results raise a number of interesting implications for the current and future nature of representation of the poor in the U.S. political system--the topic of discussion in the next section.

## SECTION 4. DISCUSSION / IMPLICATIONS

---

*In a country well governed, poverty is something to be ashamed of.  
In a country badly governed, wealth is something to be ashamed of.  
-- Confucius Chinese Philosopher (551-479 BC)*

The primary questions motivating this research are: (i) How well are the interests of the poor represented in the U.S. political system; and (ii) How do we assess this? A survey of the varying theories of and concepts relating to representation suggests that any assessment of the nature of political representation of a given group depends on the nature of the interests of that group. Therefore, fundamental to both the theoretical and the empirical discussion in this thesis is the idea that being poor in the most affluent nation in the world is a deeply personal matter. As Galbraith (1958) suggests, the poor in an affluent nation live “outside the grades” of society. One of America’s founding fathers, Benjamin Franklin, made the following comment about poverty, “Poverty often deprives a man of all spirit and virtue; it is hard for an empty bag to stand upright.” In America--where the values of economic independence and mobility are held in as much esteem as the values of democratic and political equality--the lines between a person’s economic, social, political and personal realities are blurred. An understanding of the nature of the interests of the American poor as attached and personal guides our thinking about how to examine political representation of the poor.

Three primary dimensions comprise the normative framework developed to evaluate the nature of representation of the poor in the U.S. In order to be considered “represented” under the first dimension, an individual or group must grant consent and have mechanisms to hold representatives accountable. The second dimension focuses on the idea that representatives “stand for” certain groups. Under this dimension, a group can obtain representation through symbolic and/or descriptive representation--where representatives either resemble or symbolically “stand for” the represented group. The third--and most

substantively important in the context of representation of the American poor--is the criteria that representatives substantively "act for" the poor. Because of the attached and personal nature of the interests of the poor, representatives can not simply determine these interests through intellectual deliberations. Therefore, the concept of descriptive representation becomes increasingly relevant as we evaluate whether representatives' actions on behalf of the poor are "substantively informed." When representatives of the poor are descriptively similar they are equipped with more substantive information.

In an empirical sense, we can observe the varying dimensions of representation by evaluating the mechanisms through which Americans gain representation in the political system. Both formal mechanisms--including voting and other direct participation channels--and informal mechanisms--primarily public opinion--provide paths to obtaining representation of interests. The existing empirical research provides a significant amount of information about the nature of representation of the poor across formal mechanisms (and informal mechanisms, to a lesser extent). A synthesis of the existing empirical research, leads us to conclude that across essentially every criterion in every dimension of the normative framework, representation of the poor falls short of the benchmark. We conclude that representatives in formal mechanisms are closer to the independence end of the mandate-independence spectrum than would be optimal to effectively represent attached, personal interests. We conclude that, in a formal sense, the American poor are being represented by independent trustees rather than substantively informed agents. Persistent or increasing economic inequalities will further enervate the ability of "independent", non-descriptively similar representatives to substantively act on behalf of the poor.

The findings of the existing empirical research motivated the original research presented in this thesis. The original research was designed to examine the primary informal

mechanism of representation--public opinion surveys--in greater depth. If, on average, the poor possess fewer economic and political resources--which facilitate voting and direct participation--we expect that public opinion polls, which require minimal action, may offset a portion of the deficit experienced in other forms of political participation. If poverty advocates in opinion surveys are descriptively similar to the poor, they can provide substantive information that may facilitate policy decisions that more effectively represent the interests of the poor.

My examination of the primary informal representation mechanism in the U.S.--public opinion surveys--raises meaningful implications for representation of the poor, particularly in an age of rising inequality. The intersection of the results from the salience and the directional analyses provides information about the two primary dimensions of representation of interests: (i) **Intensity/Priority**--Is the issue being represented; is it on the agenda? and (ii) **Competence**--are the true interests of the represented being considered? Are interests optimally mapped into policy outcomes?

**Intensity/Priority.** The increasing salience of poverty and social welfare issues over the past three decades can be viewed as a positive result as it relates to representation of the poor. If poverty fails on the first dimension of representation--i.e., if it fails to make it onto the agenda--then the question of competence of representation becomes moot. However, increased issue intensity/priority can elicit tradeoffs. For an issue like poverty in the U.S., in which descriptive representation is important, a broadening support base may imply decreased descriptive similarity. Therefore, while the issue receives priority, we are then faced with questions concerning competence. Can descriptively dissimilar advocates determine the true interests of the poor and can they determine what policies will work to serve the best interests of the poor?

**Competence.** The findings of the salience and the directional analyses tell two interesting stories as it relates to the competence of representation of the American poor. The first story contemplates the implications for competence over the longer time period (from the early 1980s to today and beyond). The second story speaks to some recent dynamics (since the mid 1990s) and highlights the potential intensity/competence tradeoff that can arise with issues in which descriptive representation is important.

*1980-Present: Poverty advocates look less and less like the poor: Where to next?*

The results of the salience and directional analyses since the early 1980s raise both positive and negative implications for the nature of representation of the American poor. From a positive perspective, advocates for the poor in opinion surveys have remained descriptively similar to the poor in absolute terms (on the basis of income, and to a lesser extent on the basis of race). Poverty advocates tend to have lower incomes than the average survey respondent, and in most survey years are more likely to be African American (a racial group that has historically experienced meaningfully higher incidence of poverty than other racial groups). However, the magnitude of race and income effects are relatively small in magnitude and have gradually declined since the early 1980s. While poverty advocates remain descriptively similar in absolute terms, they are looking less and less like the poor over time.

What are the implications of this increasing social and economic distance for competence of political representation of the poor? By comparing the results of the salience and directional analyses, we gain some insight into the implications for competence of representation. The analysis of responses to directional spending questions about food stamps reveals that overall support for this existing anti-poverty program declined since the early 1980s. In open-ended (MIP) questions, however, poverty became increasingly salient to respondents over the same time period. This result leads to a first conclusion that a

disconnect exists between salience of poverty and direction of opinion about poverty in opinion surveys. This disconnect suggests that at the aggregate level, poverty advocates in open-ended survey questions are not mapping their attitudes into preferences for expansion of existing programs (in close-ended questions).

Examining the longer-term patterns more deeply, we see that the effect of income on whether a respondent advocates for increased anti-poverty spending has weakened slightly since the early 1980s, while race effects have weakened meaningfully. In 1984, being African American increased the probability of responding “Poverty” by almost 5%. By 2000 it had dropped to 1.5%. This suggests that those advocating for increased spending on existing anti-poverty programs have become less descriptively similar to the poor (on the basis of income and race) over time. From a competence perspective, this finding implies that advocates for the poor in opinion surveys have become less substantively informed (due to increasing lack of descriptive similarity) over time.

Thinking back to Gilens’ findings, social and economic distance (not individualism and self-interest) caused divergent perspectives about the nature of poverty and the impact of anti-poverty programs on the poor. If economic inequality continues to increase, the trends found in both the salience and the directional analyses--that income and race effects on salience and support for increased anti-poverty funding have decreased over the longer-term--suggest that poverty advocates have become more economically and socially distant from the poor over time. As a result, the perspectives of poverty advocates about the nature of poverty and the impact of policies will continue to diverge from the perspectives of the poor. Because of the importance of descriptive representation in understanding the true nature of the interests of the poor, this divergence has negative implications for the quality of representation of the poor in the U.S. political system going forward.

***Mid-1990s-Present: Representation of the Poor and the Welfare Reforms of the 1990s***

The example of the 1996 welfare reforms highlights the potential intensity/competence tradeoff that can arise with issues in which descriptive representation is so critical. The 1996 welfare reforms received strong bipartisan support. The concept of work incentives and marriage promotion resonated with middle class Americans. The policies were popular because they were designed to help what politicians in Washington and the American middle class viewed as the “deserving poor.” Liberals who opposed the reforms balked at the idea that the government or the American public should decide who is or is not “deserving.” While this example raises complicated theoretical questions, from a practical perspective, representatives of the poor must make a decision about who qualifies for assistance in order to have functioning assistance programs.

In an age of rising inequality, the descriptive qualities of the representatives who make the decision about who is “deserving” become increasingly important. Consider the following:

But whatever the apparent benefits of the economic boom, a fundamental problem remains. Behind the business cycles lies a two-decade-long trend toward widening inequality of wages, of fringe benefits like pension and health care, and wealth...We are becoming a two-tiered society. (Freeman 1999 pp. viii)

The findings of the salience and the directional analyses during the 1990s calls into question the ability of poverty advocates in opinion polls to act to advance the true interests of the poor. Descriptive similarity of poverty advocates in opinion polls reached its trough in the mid 1990s as the nation debated the merits of sweeping welfare reforms. As a result, we must question how substantively informed the 1996 welfare policies were if advocates of the poor were more descriptively dissimilar than at any other point in the last thirty years.

Moreover, since the mid 1990s, income and race effects on salience of poverty have strengthened while income and race effects on support for expansion of welfare programs

has declined. As soon as the welfare reforms took effect in 1996, poverty became a more salient issue for more descriptively similar survey respondents. Interestingly, however, the increased salience of the issue of poverty for descriptively similar respondents did not map into preferences for expansion of the new welfare policies. Put simply, the findings of the salience and the directional analyses highlight the potential issue intensity/competence tradeoff that occurred in connection with the 1996 welfare reforms.

The determination under the 1996 welfare reforms about which poor are “deserving” came at a time when poverty advocates in opinion polls had their lowest levels of substantive information about the interests of the poor. Moreover, the declining support for the new welfare policies between 1996 and 2002 amongst more descriptively similar respondents suggests that had poverty advocates been more substantively informed at the time of the 1996 welfare debates public opinion about poverty and welfare may have looked quite different.

### ***Final Thoughts***

The findings of this evaluation of the nature of political representation of the American poor in an age of rising economic inequality have meaningful consequences for political equality in the U.S.

Our review of research on inequality and political participation as well as other components of American political life demonstrates an extraordinary association between economic and political inequality (APSA Task Force Report, 2004).

The results of the salience analysis suggest that even in the absolute lowest cost form of participation (open-ended, easy questions in opinion polls), we still do not hear the voice of the poor. Over the past two and a half decades, the average incomes of those advocating for the poor have gradually increased over time. If this trend continues and economic



inequality continues to grow, then descriptive similarity of representatives of the poor in opinion surveys will continue to decline. The lack of a good measurement of the true voice of the poor in the lowest cost form of political participation should cause us to think more critically about whether popular anti-poverty programs are really serving the best interests of the poor. Further, the findings in the directional analysis of an upsurge in support for welfare programs beginning in the mid-1990s--the time when the arguably middle-class-value-centric welfare reform policies were being implemented--intensifies concerns about competence of representation of the American poor.

The goal of this research is to add some thought to our debate about Americans' attitudes about poverty, inequality and social welfare. Issues of poverty and inequality in an affluent society are extraordinarily complex. Earlier works provide valuable insights into how Americans think about these issues, but more importantly, they reveal how complicated these issues are and how difficult they are to measure. That being said, the analysis presented herein examines something we can measure--the characteristics of Americans who are advocating for the poor. The key insight of this analysis is that, increasingly, the poor are not representing themselves, even in the lowest cost form of political participation. Since the interests of the poor are not purely formulaic and economic--they are attached and deeply personal in nature--I hope these findings are considered as we contemplate the future of anti-poverty policy in an era of persistent and potentially rising economic inequality.

## REFERENCES

- American Political Science Association Task Force. 2004. "American Democracy in and Age of Rising Inequality." *Perspectives of Politics*. 2: 651-666.
- Bartels, Larry M. 2005. "Homer Gets A Tax Cut: Inequality and Public Policy in the Public Mind." *Perspectives on Politics* 3(1): 15-31.
- Bartels, Larry. 2003 "Democracy with Attitudes" in Michael MacKuen and George Rabinowitz, ed, *Electoral Democracy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Bartels, Larry. 2002. "Economic Inequality and Political Representation." *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association*.
- Berinsky, Adam J. 2004. *Silent Voices: Public Opinion and Political Participation in America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Campbell, Andrea. 2003. *How Policies Make Citizens: Senior Political Activism and the American Welfare State*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Carmines, Edward G. and James A. Stimson. 1980. "The Two Faces of Issue Voting." *American Political Science Review*. 79: 78-91.
- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper.
- Fiorina, Morris. 1981. *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Freeman, Richard. 1999. *The New Inequality: Creating Solutions for Poor America*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Friedrich, Carl J. 1950. *Constitutional Government and Democracy: Theory and Practice in Europe and America*. Waltham: Blaisdell Publishing Company.
- Gilens, Martin. 1999. *Why Americans Hate Welfare*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Galbraith, John Kenneth. 1958. *The Affluent Society*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Gaventa, John. 1980. *Power and Powerlessness*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Griffiths, A. Phillips and Richard Wollheim. 1960. "How Can One Person Represent Another?" *Aristotelian Society Supplement*. Vol. XXXIV.
- Hochschild, Susan. 1981. *What's Fair? American Beliefs about Distributive Justice*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Hoy, Terry. 2000. "Theories of the Exercise of Suffrage in the United States." (Unpublished Dissertation, 1956).
- Iceland, John. 2003. *Poverty in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Imig, Douglas. 1996. *Poverty and Power: The Political Representation of Poor Americans*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Mansbridge, Jane. 1999. "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes'." *The Journal of Politics*. Vol. 97.
- Mayhew, David R. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Page, Benjamin I. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in American Policy Preferences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel (editor). 1969. *Representation*. New York: Atherton Press.
- Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel. 1967. *The Concept of Representation*. London: University of California Press.
- Plamenatz, John Petrov. 1968. *Consent, Freedom and Political Obligation*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Polsby, Nelson. 1968. "The Institutionalization of the House of Representatives." *American Political Science Review*. Vol. 62.
- Rasinski, Kenneth A. 1989. "The Effect of Question Wording on Public Support for Government Spending." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 53: 388-94.
- Stimson, James A., Michael B. MacKuen, and Robert S. Erikson. 1995. "Dynamic Representation." *American Political Science Review*. 89.
- Stern, Simon. 1871. *Representative Government and Personal Representation*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co.
- Swabey, Marie Collins. 1937. *The Theory of the Democratic State*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Urbinati, Nadia. 2000. "Representation as Advocacy: A Study of Democratic Deliberation." *Political Theory*. Vol. 28.
- Verba, Sidney, Kay L. Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Young, Iris Marion. 2000. *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## **APPENDIX A. DATA AND MODEL SPECIFICATION INFORMATION**

---

**TABLE A1. OVERVIEW OF VARIABLES**

Dependent Variables	
Variable Name	Variable Description
<b>MIPR</b> (VCF0875a, VCF0875b) Most Important Problem	Binary dependent variable equal to 1 if respondent answered “Poverty” to Most Important Problem Question, 0 otherwise. <sup>23</sup>
<b>FEDSPFOOD</b> (VCF9046) Spending on Food Stamps	Binary dependent variable equal to 1 if respondent answered “Increase Spending” to Food Stamps spending question, 0 otherwise. <sup>24</sup>
<b>FEDSPWEL</b> (VCF0894) Spending on Welfare	Binary dependent variable equal to 1 if respondent answered “Increase Spending” to Welfare spending question, 0 otherwise. <sup>24</sup>
<b>FEDSPPOOR</b> (VCF0886) Spending on Aid to the Poor	Binary dependent variable equal to 1 if respondent answered “Increase Spending” to Aid to the Poor spending question, 0 otherwise. <sup>24</sup>
Explanatory Variables	
Variable Name	Variable Description
<b>YEAR</b> (e.g. <b>_IYEAR_1960</b> ) (VCF0004) (Year Dummy Variable)	Dummy Variable for Year of NES Study. For example, if year of study is 1960, then YEAR_1960=1, 0 otherwise.
<b>INCOME</b> (VCF0114)	Total Family Income. Variable is report in quintiles. For example, INCOME=1 if respondents’ total family income is in 0 to 16 <sup>th</sup> percentile <sup>25</sup> .
<b>RACE</b> (VCF0106a)	Dummy Variable equal to 1 if respondent is black, 0 otherwise <sup>26</sup> .
<b>PARTYID</b> (VCF0303)	Respondent’s Party Identification. Four categories include: 1. Democrats (including leaners) 2. Independents 3. Republicans (including leaners) 9. Apolitical (1966 only and “don’t know”)
<b>YR*INCOME</b>	Interaction Variable: YEAR*INCOME. Interacts income of respondents over time.
<b>YR*RACE</b>	Interaction Variable: YEAR*BLACK. Interacts race of respondents over time.
<b>YR*PARTYID</b>	Interaction Variable: YEAR*PARTYID. Interacts Party ID of respondents over time.

<sup>23</sup> See NES Cumulative Dataset Codebook for full listing of Most Important Problem Categories. See Appendix C for list of categories coded as a “Poverty” response to Most Important Problem question.

<sup>24</sup> See Appendix C for category codings.

<sup>25</sup> See Appendix C for the income ranges corresponding to percentiles across years. In 2002, income was reported in more than five categories. Detail on 2002 income categories also provided in Appendix C.

<sup>26</sup> Respondent Race (VCF0106a) has 6 categories. BLACK is a recoded variable coded 1 if respondent belongs to category 2 (Black), 0 otherwise. See Appendix B for detail on categories for VCF0106a.

## Model Specification Details – Salience Analysis

**Specification #1.** I began by examining the relationship between respondents' income and MIP responses over time. The maximum likelihood estimator used takes the following form:

$$(1) L = \prod_{i=1 \dots n} P^{Y_i} (1-P)^{(1-Y_i)}$$

where L represents the maximum likelihood function, i represents all observations 1 to n, P represents the probability function of Y given some linear combination of X variables (in this case YEAR Dummies and Interaction Variable YR\*INCOME). It follows that the natural log of the maximum likelihood function can be expressed as follows:

$$(1) \ln(L) = \sum_{i=1 \dots n} Y_i \{\ln(P_i)\} + (1 - Y_i)\ln(1 - P_i)$$

Where  $P_i$  represents the predicted values of Y based on our estimator function, F. P, depends on a variety of factors,  $X_1, \dots, X_n$ . and takes the following functional form:

$$(2) P = F(w) = \frac{e^w}{1 + e^w}$$

$$(3) w = \alpha + \beta_{1i} \text{YEAR}_i + \beta_{2i} \text{YR*INCOME}_i$$

where  $\beta_{1i}$  represents the logistic regression coefficients for each YEAR dummy variable and  $\beta_{2i}$  represents the logistic regression coefficients for the interaction variable (YR\*INCOME) for all years,  $i=1960 \dots 2000$ . Figure 3.4 provides an overview of the results for this specification.

### Specification #2.

In this specification:

$$(4) w = \alpha + \beta_{1i} \text{YEARDUMMY}_i + \beta_{2i} \text{YR*INCOME}_i + \beta_{3i} \text{YR*RACE}$$

where  $\beta_{1i}$  represents the logistic regression coefficients for each YEAR dummy variable,  $\beta_{2i}$  represents the logistic regression coefficients for the interaction variable

(YEAR\*INCOME) for all years, and  $\beta_{3i}$  represents the logistic regression coefficient for the interaction variable (YEAR\*RACE) for all years  $i=1960\dots2000$ . Figure 3.6 provides an overview of the results for this specification<sup>27</sup>.

**Specification #3.**

The specification is as follows:

$$(5) \quad w = \alpha + \beta_{1i} \text{YEARDUMMY}_i + \beta_{2i} \text{YR*INCOME}_i + \beta_{3i} \text{YR*RACE} + \beta_{4i} \text{YR*PARTYID}$$

where  $\beta_{1i}$  represents the logistic regression coefficients for each YEAR dummy variable,  $\beta_{2i}$  represents the logistic regression coefficients for the interaction variable (YEAR\*INCOME) for all years,  $\beta_{3i}$  represents the logistic regression coefficient for the interaction variable (YEAR\*RACE) and  $\beta_{4i}$  represents the logistic regression coefficient for the interaction variable (YEAR\*PARTYID) for all years  $i=1960\dots2000$ . The results of this specification are presented in Figure 3.7.

---

<sup>27</sup> I also ran this specification using HISPANIC (instead of BLACK) as the race explanatory variable. However, small sample sizes yielded statistically insignificant results.

## Model Specification Details – Directional Analysis

**Specification #1.** I examined the relationship between respondents' income, race, party identification and responses to spending questions (food stamps, welfare and aid to the poor) over time. The maximum likelihood estimator used takes the following form:

$$(1) L = \prod_{i=1 \dots n} P^{Y_i} (1-P)^{(1-Y_i)}$$

where L represents the maximum likelihood function, i represents all observations 1 to n, P represents the probability function of Y given some linear combination of X variables (in this case YEAR Dummies and Interaction Variables YR\*INCOME, YR\*RACE, YR\*PARTYID). It follows that the natural log of the maximum likelihood function can be expressed as follows:

$$(1) \ln(L) = \sum_{i=1 \dots n} Y_i \{\ln(P_i)\} + (1 - Y_i)\ln(1 - P_i)$$

Where  $P_i$  represents the predicted values of Y based on our estimator function, F. P, depends on a variety of factors,  $X_1, \dots, X_n$  and takes the following functional form:

$$(6) P = F(w) = \frac{e^w}{1 + e^w}$$

$$(2) w = \alpha + \beta_{1i} \text{YEAR}_i + \beta_{2i} \text{YR*INCOME}_i + \beta_{3i} \text{YR*RACE} + \beta_{4i} \text{YR*PARTYID}$$

where  $\beta_{1i}$  represents the logistic regression coefficients for each YEAR dummy variable,  $\beta_{2i}$  represents the logistic regression coefficients for the interaction variable (YEAR\*INCOME) for all years,  $\beta_{3i}$  represents the logistic regression coefficient for the interaction variable (YEAR\*RACE) and  $\beta_{4i}$  represents the logistic regression coefficient for the interaction variable (YEAR\*PARTYID) for all years  $i=1960 \dots 2000$ . The results of this specification (for food stamps, welfare and aid to poor spending) are presented in Figure 3.9.



## APPENDIX B. FULL REGRESSION RESULTS

---

TABLE B1. Regression Results for Figure 3.4			
Number of Observations			27,316
Likelihood Ratio-Chi-Squared (d.f.=39)			423.50
Probability of Larger Chi-Squared			0.00
Pseudo R-Squared			0.05
Log Likelihood			-4,335.56
	Coefficient	S.E.	Probability
<b>YEAR DUMMY VARIABLES</b>			
1964	0.865	0.703	0.045
1966	0.773	0.720	0.038
1968	0.195	0.717	0.009
1970	0.797	0.700	0.041
1972	-0.304	0.789	-0.008
1974	-1.498	1.114	-0.027
1976	-1.030	0.841	-0.022
1978	-0.256	0.768	-0.007
1980	-0.134	0.838	-0.003
1982	1.087	0.766	0.048
1984	1.134	0.712	0.060
1986	0.812	0.682	0.041
1988	0.182	0.724	0.008
1990	0.101	0.731	0.005
1992	0.097	0.744	0.004
1994	0.041	0.723	0.003
1996	1.048	0.731	0.061
1998	1.065	0.705	0.061
2000	0.745	0.796	0.034
<b>YR*INCOME INTERACTION</b>			
1960	-0.481	0.241	-0.014
1964	-0.178	0.097	-0.006
1966	-0.241	0.112	-0.008
1968	-0.027	0.106	-0.001
1970	-0.076	0.091	-0.003
1972	0.055	0.146	0.002
1974	-0.226	0.320	-0.006
1976	0.037	0.167	0.001
1978	-0.255	0.149	-0.007
1980	-0.353	0.201	-0.010
1982	-0.749	0.187	-0.022
1984	-0.478	0.117	-0.016
1986	-0.112	0.078	-0.004
1988	-0.078	0.112	-0.003
1990	-0.148	0.119	-0.005
1992	-0.233	0.131	-0.007
1994	-0.012	0.109	0.000
1996	-0.126	0.119	-0.005
1998	-0.201	0.101	-0.007
2000	-0.320	0.173	-0.010
CONSTANT	-3.071	0.640	0.033 <sup>(1)</sup>

(1) Represents predicted probability at  $\bar{x}$  (sample average).

Goodness-of-fit test	
Number of Covariate Patterns	100.000
Pearson Chi-Squared (60 d.f.)	69.200
Probability of Larger Chi-Squared	0.195

TABLE B2. Regression Results for Figure 3.6			
Number of Observations			27,069
Likelihood Ratio-Chi-Squared (d.f.=58)			491.93
Probability of Larger Chi-Squared			0.00
Pseudo R-Squared			0.00
Log Likelihood			0.00
	Coefficient	S.E.	Probability
<b>YEAR DUMMY VARIABLES</b>			
1964	1.137	0.779	0.059
1966	0.952	0.798	0.046
1968	0.371	0.793	0.014
1970	0.607	0.785	0.024
1972	0.071	0.861	0.002
1974	-0.886	1.164	-0.019
1976	-0.533	0.910	-0.013
1978	-0.190	0.857	-0.005
1980	-0.609	0.963	-0.012
1982	0.995	0.865	0.041
1984	1.131	0.794	0.057
1986	0.821	0.762	0.038
1988	0.349	0.804	0.013
1990	0.399	0.807	0.015
1992	0.378	0.825	0.013
1994	0.553	0.795	0.022
1996	1.242	0.810	0.070
1998	1.168	0.784	0.064
2000	0.981	0.876	0.045
<b>YR*INCOME INTERACTION</b>			
1960	-0.408	0.250	-0.012
1964	-0.166	0.098	-0.006
1966	-0.213	0.114	-0.007
1968	0.002	0.108	0.000
1970	0.034	0.096	0.001
1972	0.047	0.148	0.002
1974	-0.287	0.322	-0.008
1976	0.002	0.171	0.000
1978	-0.187	0.155	-0.005
1980	-0.200	0.210	-0.007
1982	-0.661	0.191	-0.019
1984	-0.409	0.120	-0.013
1986	-0.050	0.081	-0.002
1988	-0.044	0.115	-0.001
1990	-0.142	0.121	-0.004
1992	-0.215	0.135	-0.007
1994	-0.053	0.111	-0.002
1996	-0.096	0.122	-0.004
1998	-0.177	0.104	-0.006
2000	-0.296	0.176	-0.009
<b>YR*RACE INTERACTION</b>			
1960	0.970	0.697	0.042
1964	0.263	0.378	0.010
1966	0.552	0.371	0.024
1968	0.629	0.346	0.028
1970	1.267	0.259	0.085
1972	-0.210	0.619	-0.006
1976	-0.937	1.033	-0.019
1978	0.486	0.510	0.018
1980	1.692	0.495	0.095
1982	1.045	0.441	0.054
1984	0.932	0.313	0.049
1986	0.739	0.218	0.037
1988	0.485	0.339	0.020
1990	0.121	0.398	0.004
1992	-0.048	0.453	-0.001
1994	-1.008	0.600	-0.021
1996	0.421	0.379	0.019
1998	0.887	0.286	0.049
2000	0.371	0.520	0.015
CONSTANT	-3.403	0.716	.032 <sup>(1)</sup>

(1) Represents predicted probability at  $\bar{x}$  (sample average).

Goodness-of-fit test	
Number of Covariate Patterns	190.000
Pearson Chi-Squared (131 d.f.)	158.960
Probability of Larger Chi-Squared	0.049

TABLE B3. Regression Results for Figure 3.7

Number of Observations						26,958	
Likelihood Ratio-Chi-Squared (d.f.=78)						514.32	
Probability of Larger Chi-Squared						0.00	
Pseudo R-Squared						0.06	
Log Likelihood						-4,234.24	
		Coefficient	S.E.	Probability	Coefficient	S.E.	Probability
YEAR DUMMY VARIABLES				YR* RACE INTERACTION			
1964	1.075	0.895	0.051	1960	1.027	0.704	0.047
1966	0.956	0.922	0.042	1964	0.260	0.382	0.010
1968	0.518	0.909	0.018	1966	0.552	0.373	0.024
1970	0.583	0.899	0.020	1968	0.543	0.353	0.023
1972	-0.131	0.991	-0.006	1970	1.231	0.267	0.081
1974	-0.682	1.356	-0.018	1972	-0.173	0.625	-0.005
1976	-0.554	1.048	-0.015	1974	-0.980	1.041	-0.019
1978	-0.605	0.980	-0.015	1976	0.564	0.516	0.020
1980	-0.269	1.127	-0.007	1978	1.551	0.510	0.083
1982	1.092	1.011	0.041	1980	0.977	0.457	0.049
1984	1.619	0.918	0.085	1982	0.797	0.319	0.039
1986	0.848	0.872	0.037	1984	0.685	0.225	0.034
1988	0.113	0.922	0.002	1986	0.519	0.346	0.021
1990	0.736	0.930	0.028	1988	-0.017	0.403	-0.001
1992	-0.055	0.945	-0.004	1990	0.020	0.456	0.001
1994	0.652	0.908	0.024	1992	-1.104	0.605	-0.022
1996	1.358	0.927	0.078	1994	0.224	0.400	0.009
1998	1.043	0.902	0.050	1996	0.897	0.294	0.050
2000	1.234	1.013	0.061	1998	0.234	0.529	0.009
YR*INCOME INTERACTION				YR*PARTYID INTERACTION			
1960	-0.418	0.252	-0.012	1960	-0.053	0.180	-0.002
1964	-0.145	0.100	-0.005	1964	-0.074	0.123	-0.003
1966	-0.215	0.114	-0.007	1966	-0.065	0.125	-0.002
1968	0.006	0.108	0.000	1968	-0.154	0.122	-0.005
1970	0.034	0.096	0.001	1970	-0.052	0.106	-0.001
1972	0.045	0.150	0.001	1972	0.030	0.154	0.001
1974	-0.288	0.325	-0.007	1974	-0.173	0.335	-0.004
1976	0.048	0.177	0.001	1976	-0.146	0.199	-0.004
1978	-0.180	0.155	-0.005	1978	0.132	0.103	0.004
1980	-0.194	0.210	-0.007	1980	-0.262	0.272	-0.007
1982	-0.656	0.192	-0.019	1982	-0.129	0.215	-0.003
1984	-0.411	0.122	-0.013	1984	-0.342	0.152	-0.010
1986	-0.047	0.082	-0.002	1986	-0.077	0.081	-0.003
1988	-0.046	0.115	-0.001	1988	0.056	0.104	0.002
1990	-0.132	0.123	-0.004	1990	-0.262	0.153	-0.008
1992	-0.206	0.137	-0.006	1992	0.126	0.109	0.004
1994	-0.031	0.113	-0.001	1994	-0.142	0.129	-0.005
1996	-0.053	0.126	-0.002	1996	-0.199	0.152	-0.007
1998	-0.181	0.105	-0.007	1998	0.000	0.097	0.000
2000	-0.271	0.177	-0.009	2000	-0.239	0.218	-0.008
				CONSTANT	-3.278	0.818	0.032 <sup>(1)</sup>

(1) Represents predicted probability at x-bar (sample average).

Goodness-of-fit test	
Number of Covariate Patterns	622.000
Pearson Chi-Squared (543 d.f.)	509.570
Probability of Larger Chi-Squar	0.845

**TABLE B4. Regression Results for Figure 3.9(a)**

<b>Number of Observations</b>			<b>14,173</b>
<b>Likelihood Ratio-Chi-Squared (d.f.=31)</b>			<b>1,201.31</b>
<b>Probability of Larger Chi-Squared</b>			<b>0.00</b>
<b>Pseudo R-Squared</b>			<b>0.09</b>
<b>Log Likelihood</b>			<b>-5,820.17</b>
	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>Probability</b>
<b>YEAR DUMMY VARIABLES</b>			
1986	-0.471	0.277	-0.053
1988	0.077	0.282	0.014
1990	-0.914	0.292	-0.095
1992	-0.292	0.279	-0.041
1994	-0.489	0.337	-0.069
1996	-0.962	0.344	-0.109
2000	-0.479	0.314	-0.061
<b>YR*INCOME INTERACTION</b>			
1984	-0.375	0.060	-0.049
1986	-0.354	0.051	-0.046
1988	-0.442	0.053	-0.059
1990	-0.356	0.058	-0.045
1992	-0.343	0.051	-0.044
1994	-0.533	0.081	-0.060
1996	-0.291	0.078	-0.033
2000	-0.320	0.067	-0.040
<b>YR*RACE INTERACTION</b>			
1984	1.317	0.170	0.256
1986	1.205	0.143	0.227
1988	0.896	0.153	0.160
1990	1.020	0.165	0.176
1992	0.562	0.152	0.092
1994	0.820	0.215	0.129
1996	0.957	0.202	0.158
2000	0.496	0.196	0.079
<b>YR*PARTYID INTERACTION</b>			
1984	-0.407	0.071	-0.050
1986	-0.101	0.049	-0.013
1988	-0.250	0.058	-0.031
1990	-0.064	0.057	-0.008
1992	-0.327	0.063	-0.038
1994	-0.389	0.104	-0.046
1996	-0.434	0.106	-0.046
2000	-0.330	0.083	-0.039
<b>CONSTANT</b>	<b>0.147</b>	<b>0.211</b>	<b>0.147<sup>(1)</sup></b>

(1) Represents predicted probability at  $\bar{x}$ -bar (sample average).

<b>Goodness-of-fit test</b>	
<b>Number of Covariate Patterns</b>	<b>40.000</b>
<b>Pearson Chi-Squared (240 d.f.)</b>	<b>590.670</b>
<b>Probability of Larger Chi-Squared</b>	<b>0.000</b>

<b>TABLE B5. Regression Results for Figure 3.9(b)</b>			
Number of Observations			6,876
Likelihood Ratio-Chi-Squared (d.f.=15)			382.02
Probability of Larger Chi-Squared			0.00
Pseudo R-Squared			0.07
Log Likelihood			-2,660.51
	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>Probability</b>
<b>YEAR DUMMY VARIABLES</b>			
1994	-0.310	0.296	-0.043
1996	-0.317	0.318	-0.046
2000	0.042	0.293	0.013
<b>YR*INCOME INTERACTION</b>			
1992	-0.338	0.052	-0.040
1994	-0.398	0.070	-0.044
1996	-0.432	0.077	-0.047
2000	-0.349	0.066	-0.041
<b>YR*RACE INTERACTION</b>			
1992	0.618	0.151	0.092
1994	0.483	0.207	0.068
1996	0.793	0.200	0.118
2000	0.333	0.196	0.046
<b>YR*PARTYID INTERACTION</b>			
1992	-0.341	0.064	-0.037
1994	-0.261	0.083	-0.026
1996	-0.348	0.099	-0.034
2000	-0.348	0.081	-0.042
CONSTANT	-0.158	0.185	0.129 <sup>(1)</sup>

(1) Represents predicted probability at  $\bar{x}$  (sample average).

<b>Goodness-of-fit test</b>	
Number of Covariate Patterns	134.000
Pearson Chi-Squared (118 d.f.)	381.640
Probability of Larger Chi-Squared	0.000

<b>TABLE B6. Regression Results for Figure 3.9(b) - 2002 RESULTS</b>			
Number of Observations			1,239
Likelihood Ratio-Chi-Squared (d.f.=3)			76.81
Probability of Larger Chi-Squared			0.00
Pseudo R-Squared			0.06
Log Likelihood			-587.37
	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>Probability</b>
INCOME	-0.240	0.058	-0.038
RACE	0.529	0.216	0.094
PARTYID	-0.441	0.082	-0.068
CONSTANT	0.145	0.234	0.188 <sup>(1)</sup>

*(1) Represents predicted probability at  $\bar{x}$  (sample average).*

---

Note: The 1948-2002 Cumulative Data Set does not include 2002 Household Income data. In the 2002 NES, Summary Household Income was report in 9 categories. Those categories were not conformable to quintiles and as a result 2002 income data was excluded from the 1948-2002 Cumulative NES Data Set. Despite lack of exact comparability, I recoded the 2002 Income Data reported in the 2002 NES and ran a separate regression analysis on 2002 data. See Appendix C for more detail about recoding of 2002 income data.

<b>TABLE B7. Regression Results for Figure 3.9(c)</b>			
Number of Observations			5,264
Likelihood Ratio-Chi-Squared (d.f.=11)			611.62
Probability of Larger Chi-Squared			0.00
Pseudo R-Squared			0.08
Log Likelihood			-3,342.60
	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>Probability</b>
<b>YEAR DUMMY VARIABLES</b>			
1996	-0.645	0.236	-0.163
2000	-0.413	0.237	-0.091
<b>YR*INCOME INTERACTION</b>			
1992	-0.272	0.041	-0.067
1996	-0.193	0.051	-0.049
2000	-0.233	0.049	-0.058
<b>YR*RACE INTERACTION</b>			
1992	1.108	0.163	0.246
1996	1.679	0.209	0.347
2000	1.133	0.202	0.254
<b>YR*PARTYID INTERACTION</b>			
1992	-0.386	0.043	-0.087
1996	-0.402	0.058	-0.086
2000	-0.300	0.053	-0.071
CONSTANT	1.582	0.153	0.509 <sup>(1)</sup>

(1) Represents predicted probability at  $\bar{x}$  (sample average).

<b>Goodness-of-fit test</b>	
Number of Covariate Patterns	15.000
Pearson Chi-Squared (9 d.f.)	7.380
Probability of Larger Chi-Squared	0.598



<b>TABLE B8. Regression Results for Figure 3.9(c) - 2002 RESULTS</b>			
Number of Observations			622
Likelihood Ratio-Chi-Squared (d.f.=3)			57.07
Probability of Larger Chi-Squared			0.00
Pseudo R-Squared			0.07
Log Likelihood			-402.28
	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>Probability</b>
INCOME	-0.108	0.068	-0.026
RACE	1.201	0.369	0.263
PARTYID	-0.456	0.089	-0.113
CONSTANT	1.262	0.299	0.521 <sup>(1)</sup>

(1) Represents predicted probability at  $\bar{x}$  (sample average).

Note: The 1948-2002 Cumulative Data Set does not include 2002 Household Income data. In the 2002 NES, Summary Household Income was report in 9 categories. Those categories were not conformable to quintiles and as a result 2002 income data was excluded from the 1948-2002 Cumulative NES Data Set. Despite lack of exact comparability, I recoded the 2002 Income Data reported in the 2002 NES and ran a separate regression analysis on 2002 data. See Appendix C for more detail about recoding of 2002 income data.

## APPENDIX C. TECHNICAL NOTES

---

**Notes: American National Election Studies Cumulative Data File, 1948-2002**

- (1) For additional information on American National Election Studies Cumulative Data File, 1948-2002, Codebook is available through ICPSR at: <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu>.
- (2) Categories coded as “Poverty” response (i.e., coded 1) to Most Important Problem Question in Cumulative NES Data File. All categories not listed below are coded as 0 (or not “Poverty” responses). Note, VCF0875A represents the full response to the Most Important Problem Questions asked between 1960 and 1972. VCF0875B represents the full response to the Most Important Problem Questions asked between 1974 and 2000.

Table C1. VCF0875A (1960-1972)		
Year	Category Number	Description
1960	090	Other welfare items, vague references to welfare
	091	Combination of above items
1964	061	Poverty program, e.g. depressed economic areas, poor, underprivileged people
	80	Pro-con. For modification of social welfare programs. Help the needy but not those who can help themselves.
1966	090	Other welfare items, vague references to welfare
	091	Combination of above items
	060	Poverty; poor, underprivileged people; welfare payments; rent subsidies (include general reference to anti-poverty programs, Great Society)
1968	090	Other social welfare problems; vague references to welfare
	060	Poverty; poor, underprivileged people; welfare programs (such as ADC); welfare payments; rent subsidies (include general reference to anti-poverty programs, Great Society)
	070	Administration of social welfare programs; coddling the poor, etc.
	090	Other social welfare problems; vague references to welfare; two or more specific welfare problems mentioned together
1970	060	Poverty; poor, underprivileged people; welfare programs (such as ADC); welfare payments; rent subsidies (include general reference to anti-poverty programs, Great Society)
	090	Other social welfare problems; vague references to welfare
1972	060	Poverty; poor, underprivileged people; welfare programs (such as ADC); welfare payments; rent subsidies (include general reference to anti-poverty programs, Great Society)
	090	Other social welfare problems; vague references to welfare

**Table C2. VCF0875B (1974-2000: Codes Consistent in All Survey Years)**

<b>Category Number</b>	<b>Description</b>
060	POVERTY; aid to the poor/underprivileged people; help for the (truly) needy; welfare programs (such as ADC); general reference to anti-poverty programs; hunger/help for hungry people in the U.S. (1984-1986: POVERTY; general reference to poor/underprivileged people; welfare programs (such as ADC), general reference to anti-poverty programs; hunger/hungry people in the U.S.) (1974-1982: POVERTY; general reference to poor/underprivileged people; welfare programs (such as ADC), general reference to anti-poverty programs)
061	1984-1986: FOR {additional} welfare assistance {for help, education/jobs for the poor} {exc.#063 - assistance to specific minority group }; give {more}aid to hungry people in U.S. \merged with #060\ 1974-1982: FOR {additional} welfare assistance {for help, education/jobs for the poor}
069	1974-1986: Other specific references to poverty
090	SOCIAL WELFARE PROBLEMS; "welfare"--NFS (1974-1986: SOCIAL WELFARE PROBLEMS; vague or general reference to other social welfare problems {exc.#091,092} or other specific reference; "welfare")
091	For general or other social welfare programs; "we need to help people more"
092	Against general or other social welfare programs; "too many give away programs for the people who don't deserve it"
099	Other specific mentions of social welfare problems [1988]

- (3) Most Important Problem Question only asked to a half-sample of respondents in 1996 and 2000.
- (4) PARTYID CODES for VCF0303:
- 1) Democrats (including leaners)
  - 2) Independents
  - 3) Republicans (including leaners)
  - 9) Apolitical (1966 only: and DK)
- (5) RACE CODES for VCF0106a:
- 1) White
  - 2) Black
  - 3) Asian
  - 4) Native American
  - 5) Hispanic
  - 7) Other

(6) INCOME CATEGORIES for VCF0114 (Income data from 1948 to 2000):

<b>Table C3. INCOME PERCENTILES FOR VCF0114</b>					
<b>Category</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Percentile</b>	<b>0-16</b>	<b>17-33</b>	<b>34-67</b>	<b>68-95</b>	<b>96-100</b>
1948	none-\$999	\$1000-1999	\$2000-2999	\$3000-4999	\$5000+
1952	none-\$1999	\$2000-2999	\$3000-3999	\$4000-9999	\$10000 +
1954	none-\$1999	\$2000-2999	\$4000-5999	\$4000-9999	\$10000 +
1956	none-\$1999	\$2000-3999	\$4000-5999	\$6000-9999	\$10000 +
1958	none-\$1999	\$2000-3999	\$4000-5999	\$6000-14999	\$15000 +
1960	none-\$1999	\$2000-3999	\$4000-5999	\$6000-14999	\$15000 +
1962	none-\$2999	\$3000-3999	\$4000-7499	\$7500-14999	\$15000 +
1964	none-\$2999	\$3000-4999	\$5000-7499	\$7500-14999	\$15000 +
1966	none-\$2999	\$3000-3999	\$4000-7499	\$7500-14999	\$15000 +
1968	none-\$2999	\$3000-5999	\$6000-9999	\$10000-19999	\$20000 +
1970	none-\$2999	\$3000-4999	\$5000-9999	\$10000-24999	\$25000 +
1972	none-\$3999	\$4000-5999	\$6000-11999	\$12000-24999	\$25000 +
1974	none-\$3999	\$4000-6999	\$7000-14999	\$15000-34999	\$35000 +
1976	none-\$3999	\$4000-7999	\$8000-14999	\$15000-34999	\$35000 +
1978	none-\$5999	\$6000-10999	\$11000-19999	\$20000-34999	\$35000 +
1980	none-\$6999	\$7000-11999	\$12000-24999	\$25000-49999	\$50000 +
1982	none-\$6999	\$7000-12999	\$13000-24999	\$25000-49999	\$50000 +
1984	none-\$6999	\$7000-12999	\$13000-29999	\$30000-59999	\$60000 +
1986	none-\$8999	\$9000-14999	\$15000-34999	\$35000-74999	\$75000 +
1988	none-\$9999	\$10000-14999	\$15000-34999	\$35000-89999	\$90000 +
1990	none-\$9999	\$10000-16999	\$17000-34999	\$35000-89999	\$90000 +
1992	none-\$9999	\$10000-19990	\$20000-39999	\$40000-89999	\$90000 +
1994	none-\$11999	\$12000-21999	\$22000-44999	\$45000-104999	\$105000 +
1996	none-\$11999	\$12000-21999	\$22000-49999	\$50000-104999	\$105000 +
1998	none-\$8999	\$9999-21999	\$22000-49999	\$50000-104999	\$105000 +
2000	none-\$14900	\$15000-34999	\$35000-64999	\$65000-124999	\$125000 +

(7) INCOME CATEGORIES for V023149 (Income for Survey Year 2002):

<b>Table C5. INCOME CATEGORIES for V023149</b>	
<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	None-\$14900
2	\$15,000-\$34,999
3	\$35,000-\$49,999
4	About \$50,000
5	\$50000-\$64,999
6	\$65000-85000
7	More than \$85,000
8	Less than \$50,000
9	More than \$50,000
88	Don't Know
89	Refused
0	NA

Recoded income categories for Survey Year 2002:

<b>Table C6. RECODED CATEGORIES for V023149</b>	
<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	None-\$14,900
2	\$15,000-34,999
3	\$35,000-49,999
4	\$50,000-\$85,000
5	More than \$85,000

(8) Question Wording Information – Most Important Problem (VCF0875)

**1960:**

What would you personally feel are the most important problems the government should try to take care of when the new President and Congress take office in January?

**1964:**

As you well know, there are many serious problems in this country and in other parts of the world. The question is, what should be done about them and who should do it. We want to ask you about problems you think the government in Washington should do something about and any problems it should stay out of. First, what would you personally feel are the most important problems the government should try to take care of when the new President and Congress take office in January?

**1966:**

What do you personally feel are the most important problems which the government in Washington should try to take care of?

**1968, 1980, 1982:**

As you well know, the government faces many serious problems in this country and in other parts of the world. What do you personally feel are the most important problems which the government in Washington should try to take care of?

**1970:**

As you well know, there are many serious problems in this country and in other parts of the world. We'd like to start out by talking with you about some of them. What do you personally feel are the most important problems which the government in Washington should try to take care of?

**1972-1978, 1984 AND LATER:**

What do you think are the most important problems facing this country?  
 (IF MORE THAN ONE PROBLEM:) Of all you've told me (1996-LATER: Of those you've mentioned), what would you say is the single most important problem the country faces?

(9) **Question Wording Information for Directional Questions about Food Stamps, Welfare and Aid to the Poor.**

**General Text:** If you had a say in making up the federal budget this year, for which (1986 AND LATER) of the following programs would you like to see spending increased and for which would you like to see spending decreased.

**Alternate text:** Should federal spending on [ITEM] be increased, decreased or kept about the same?

**Note:** Order of spending items varied among study years.

(10) **Response Codes for Directional Questions about Food Stamps, Welfare, Aid to the Poor.**

<b>Table C7. Directional Question Response Categories</b>		
<b>Question Number</b>	<b>Years Asked</b>	<b>Response Categories</b>
VCF0886 (Aid to the Poor)	1992, 1996, 2000, 2002	1 Increased 2 Same 3 Decreased or Cut Entirely 8 DK 9 NA
VCF0894 (Welfare Spending)	1992-2002	1 Increased 2 Same 3 Decreased or Cut Entirely 8 DK 9 NA
VCF9046 (Food Stamps)	1984-2000	1 Increased 2 Same 3 Decreased 7 Cut Entirely 8 DK 9 NA

*Note: Categories including "Increased" Coded as 1. All other categories (except DK/NA) coded as 0.*

**Notes: Cooperative Congressional Election Study Data Set**

(1) RACE CODES for V2005:

- 1) White
- 2) Black
- 3) Hispanic
- 4) Asian
- 5) Native American
- 6) Mixed
- 7) Other
- 8) Middle Eastern
- 98) Skipped
- 99) Not Asked

(2) Original PARTYID CODES for V4304:

- 1) Democrats (including leaners)
- 2) Republican
- 3) Independent
- 8) Skipped
- 9) Not Asked

Recoded PARTYID Categories

- 1) Democrats
- 2) Independent
- 3) Republican

(3) Income Categories for V2032

<b>Table C8. INCOME CATEGORIES</b>	
<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Less than \$10,000
2	\$10,000 - \$14,999
3	\$15,000 - \$19,999
4	\$20,000 - \$24,999
5	\$25,000 - \$29,999
6	\$30,000 - \$39,999
7	\$40,000 - \$49,999
8	\$50,000 - \$59,999
9	\$60,000 - \$69,999
10	\$70,000 - \$79,999
11	\$80,000 - \$99,999
12	\$100,000 - \$119,999
13	\$120,000 - \$149,999
14	\$150,000 or more
15	Prefer not to say
98	Skipped
99	Not asked