

The End of Welfare As We Know It?
The Effect of Welfare Reform on Racial Stereotypes and Welfare Attitudes

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ABSTRACT: The work of Gilens in the 1990s suggested that opposition to welfare was explained in large part by racial animus. Individuals likely to favor decreases in AFDC were not just conservatives, Republicans, and those guided by individualistic predispositions. Symbolic racism was strongly linked to negative evaluations of both welfare recipients and support for welfare programs. The explanation for this phenomenon was media coverage – a survey of the nations leading news publications indicated that welfare was an overwhelmingly black and overwhelmingly bad social program. Since the reform of 1996, welfare has become a less salient issue. While there are many critics of the reform, many more declare it a success, and these elites are both Republican and Democrat. And, opinion polls indicate that individuals in a post-PRWORA world are more receptive to putting funds into the program. The question is then begged: in post-welfare reform America, do negative attitudes about blacks continue to color people's willingness to spend money on welfare programs? We take up this question in the pages to follow by using causal models to predict opposition to welfare spending in the 1996, 2000, and 2004 American National Election Studies, respectively. We find that while racial animus is still an important factor in 1996, public opinion on welfare spending has become de-racialized in the subsequent years.

Americans hate welfare, and they hate it because of their negative attitudes about welfare recipients, and especially about blacks (Gilens 1999). This was the bold conclusion reached by researchers during the 1990s. The data from which this conclusion emerged, however, were collected during a time when welfare was a salient political issue and was viewed by the public as a broken system that needed to be fixed. In 1996 Congress and President Clinton enacted a major reform bill that appeared to address much of what Americans claimed to detest about welfare. Political elites have touted the new system's success at moving people from welfare to work, the public thinks the law is working well, and the welfare issue has become considerably less visible in both elite discourse and mass opinion (Shaw and Shapiro 2002). Though changes in the welfare law do not appear to have affected the extent to which Americans cling to the stereotype of blacks as lazy (Shaw and Shapiro 2002), research has not yet examined whether perceptions of blacks' work ethic remain relevant to welfare attitudes now that most welfare recipients are required to work. This analysis poses the question: given recent changes in welfare policy and the abatement of controversy surrounding this issue, do racial attitudes continue to predict opposition to welfare spending? We present data that suggest the link between racial animus and opposition to spending on welfare programs has diminished considerably since the passage of welfare reform. We attribute this decrease not to changing attitudes about race, but rather to changing understandings about the way welfare works, such that racial stereotypes are no longer activated by questions about welfare policy.

Re-evaluating the linkage between racial attitudes and welfare attitudes is important and timely for both scholarly and policy-oriented reasons. Academically

speaking, this policy change gives a unique opportunity to examine how a dramatic policy shift resonates in the political attitudes of citizens. Given the historically reported low levels of political awareness of the average American citizen (Campbell et. al 1960, Converse 1962, Converse 1964, Page and Shapiro 1992, Zaller 1992, Delli Carpini and Keeter 1995) we have some reason to question whether people are even aware that the policy has changed, and thus to doubt the extent to which attitudes have changed.

From a pragmatic, policy-oriented standpoint, this question is important in light of the conversation initiated by the American Political Science Association Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy (2004), and the questions that still loom about the future of welfare as Congress faces the issue of reauthorizing welfare reform. From this perspective, this analysis will help to gauge the extent to which race is still a barrier to garnering public support for spending more public resources on current programs. Granted, public opposition to the old AFDC entitlement system had been so strong and the role of racial stereotypes so substantial (Gilens 1999) that we cannot begin to expect that a weakened relationship between racial and welfare attitudes would leave us hopeful for the return of a sturdier public safety net. Accepting that “welfare” is, for now, a program focused on moving recipients into employment, additional resources could at least be used to ensure that former welfare recipients get the support they need to hold onto their jobs and meet their families’ needs.

Why Americans Hate Welfare

Americans’ historic antipathy toward “welfare”, commonly defined as means-tested cash assistance for able-bodied adults (Gilens 1999), has long interested political scientists. Traditional explanations such as an individualistic political culture, ideological

opposition to big government, and pure self-interest on the part of high and middle income Americans have received some empirical support (Campbell et al. 1960; Cook and Barrett 1992; Feldman and Zaller 1992; Kluegel and Smith 1986), but clearly leave much to be explained and do not account for the American public's more generous support of government spending on other welfare state programs such as education, health care, programs for the elderly and even "assistance to the poor" (Cook and Barrett 1992; Gilens 1999; Smith 1987; Weaver, Shapiro, and Jacobs 1995).

What sets "welfare" apart from other government assistance programs appears to be its clientele and how "deserving" of assistance they are deemed to be. Here, considerations of how much individuals really need the assistance, how wisely they will spend the assistance, and the debate over the role of circumstances versus personal choices in causing poverty factor heavily, with able-bodied adults, single mothers, and blacks judged most harshly (Avery and Peffley 2003; Cook and Barrett 1992; Gilens 1999; Iyengar 1990; Katz 1989; Williams 2003). Perhaps not coincidentally, the political backlash against welfare picked up in the wake of the Great Society, when the absolute and relative numbers of welfare families headed by never-married black women swelled due to changes in program rules and crackdowns on discrimination in state and local welfare offices (Katz 1989; Piven and Cloward 1993; Williams 2003).

Over time, research has suggested that prejudice had changed its form, having less to do with segregation and old beliefs about blacks' biological inferiority and more to do with "matters of moral character." Among these matters, first and foremost, was blacks' supposed failure to live up to the expectations of American individualism (Kinder and Sanders 1996, pp. 105-106). Using data from the 1991 National Race and Politics Study,

Martin Gilens' major finding in *Why Americans Hate Welfare* (1999) was that adherence to the historical stereotype that blacks are lazy strongly predicts opposition to increased welfare spending. This effect operates directly as well as indirectly: those who tend to view blacks as lazy are also increasingly likely to view welfare recipients as undeserving, and this latter sentiment is the largest and most immediate predictor of opposition to welfare spending.

Gilens attributed this link between attitudes about blacks' work ethic and attitudes about welfare recipients and welfare spending to the public's grossly distorted beliefs about just how many welfare recipients really are black (see also Kluegel and Smith 1986).¹ After conducting a content analysis of three major newsweeklies over 1950-1992, he concluded that the media feed these misperceptions. The individuals pictured in stories about welfare and antipoverty programs are overwhelmingly black, especially when the tone of the story is negative. Other studies of both print and television media concur (Clawson and Trice 2000; Entman 1995; Gilens 1999).

Though not given as much attention by Gilens, other scholars have blamed political elites for construing welfare as a "black" program. Debates about welfare, in which the Cadillac-driving "welfare queen" looms large as a symbol, proceed on the assumption that the typical welfare recipient is black (Dowd 1997; Quadagno 1994; Secombe 1999; Solinger 2001). As early as 1965, with the publication of Daniel Patrick Moynihan's pessimistic report *The Negro Family*, discussions about welfare have proceeded in tandem with discussions about nonmarital births and the alleged breakdown of the black family (Schram 2003). The three-tiered structure of the American welfare

¹ But see Schram 2003, whose calculations indicate that blacks have outnumbered whites among welfare recipients since about 1980. Americans may still overestimate how many welfare recipients are black, but not by as much as previously believed.

state enforces a form of program segregation as well—blacks are not nearly so well protected as whites by social insurance and the “hidden welfare state” of privately provided, publicly underwritten fringe benefits, so they are more concentrated in “welfare” programs (Williams 2003).

Further support for Gilens’ thesis comes from his experimental findings indicating that whites’ perceptions about black welfare mothers more strongly predict opinions toward welfare and the poor than do their perceptions about white welfare mothers, especially when those perceptions are negative (Gilens 1996). When whites think about welfare, Gilens concluded, they think about blacks, and these attitudes drive welfare opinions.

Welfare has thus become a “racialized” or “race-coded” issue, an issue on which race is used to influence attitudes on policy matters that are on their face race-neutral. Race coding is an appeal to whites’ racial sentiments, carefully crafted so as not to arouse the suspicion that an explicitly racial appeal would raise. It works by triggering whites’ latent stereotypes about blacks (Gilens 1996; Hurwitz and Peffley 1997; Mendelberg 2001).

An important point about the relevance of racial stereotypes to political attitudes is that images must be consistent with a stereotype in order to activate that stereotype and make racial attitudes relevant to public opinion. A criminal’s black face will matter for attitudes on crime and punishment only if his purported crime is a stereotypical “black” (read: violent) crime—assault, for example, rather than embezzlement (Hurwitz and Peffley 1997). As we discuss below, welfare policy after 1996 changed in ways that may undercut its ability to activate old stereotypes about blacks. This should make perceptions

about blacks' work ethic less relevant as predictors of welfare attitudes in subsequent years.

Welfare Reform

Welfare reform, formally entitled the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, was enacted to "end welfare as we know it." It was the culmination of years of clamor on the part of political elites as well as the mass public that welfare (more specifically, the cash assistance component then known as Aid to Families with Dependent Children) was a broken system. It served people who could otherwise be working, encouraged dependency, out-of-wedlock childbearing, and other ills, and was moreover riddled with "fraud, waste, and abuse."

Initiated by the new Republican congressional majority but ultimately backed by a bipartisan coalition and signed by a Democratic president, PRWORA responded to many of the public's concerns. Significantly, the law ended AFDC's status as an entitlement and changed its name to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Strict work requirements, time limits on the receipt of benefits, a state option to discontinue the custom of increasing a mother's check with each additional child she bore, sanctions on noncompliant families, and greater state and local flexibility rank among its more salient provisions. In short, the new law virtually outlawed welfare dependency.

Leading up to and in the months after the passage of PRWORA, the public was highly supportive of the proposed welfare reform and several of its core provisions, even if not quite as supportive as members of Congress made them out to be (Page and Paden 2003; Shaw and Shapiro 2002; Weaver, Shapiro, and Jacobs 1995). Elites in politics and

the media have provided ample cues that welfare reform has been a success. In each State of the Union address over 1997-2000, President Clinton highlighted the plummeting welfare rolls as a sign of the country's strength. Another theme was the success of the law and Clinton's Welfare-to-Work Partnership at "replacing welfare checks with paychecks." The limited studies of media coverage post-PRWORA indicate that stories' tone has been more positive than before welfare reform. Coverage has emphasized the declining welfare rolls and success stories of newly employed former welfare recipients, judging the reform a tentative success (Avery and Peffley 2003; Bullock, White, and Williams 2001). Looking at welfare and poverty articles in nine major U.S. newspapers over three months of 1999, Bullock, Wyche, and Williams (2001) found the media's treatment of welfare recipients to be more balanced and less overtly stereotyped than before welfare reform. While some negative images of welfare recipients and specifically of minority welfare recipients persisted, the majority of the articles acknowledged their hard work and the obstacles they still faced—albeit superficially.

The limited amount of polling data available after 1996 indicates that the public is satisfied with the new law and how it is working (Bowman 2003; Shaw and Shapiro 2002). It is less clear whether reform has changed public opinion toward welfare. Shaw and Shapiro (2002) report that in the post-PRWORA years welfare has lost salience as a public issue and the edge appears to have been taken off the conflict. Support for welfare spending has returned to levels comparable to those seen in the early 1990s, before the welfare reform debate heated up during the Republican Party's 1994 congressional campaign. The public views welfare recipients somewhat more favorably after PRWORA. They are also somewhat less likely to perceive blacks as lazy, but Shaw and

Shapiro indicate that this appears to be part of a trend that continued through the 1990s and was not disrupted by the welfare reform debate.

Our knowledge about public opinion on welfare and race after reform is limited to these descriptive statistics. While these statistics appear to tell a story of stability, no one has yet examined the linkages among them. Further, since both the ends and means of welfare have changed to encourage financial independence through employment, the possibility remains that a slightly different cast of characters may be supporting increases or decreases in welfare spending. Whites who favored decreasing welfare spending under the old regime may be more willing to spend money on a welfare program more to their liking. Though less plausible, previous supporters of increasing welfare payments could change positions as well, if they take increased spending to represent support for the new law. Now that an allegedly successful welfare reform has required the (lazy, black) welfare recipients to find jobs, are racial stereotypes still relevant for those who oppose spending?

There are some counter-intuitive ideas here that create a classic theoretical puzzle. On the one hand, it is possible that the relationship between perceptions about blacks and opposition to welfare spending may strengthen. This might happen if those who opposed welfare spending for ideological reasons voiced more support for spending under this more conservative policy regime, leaving behind a group of individuals who oppose welfare for less “rational” reasons, such as stubborn stereotypes about blacks and/or welfare recipients. Additional findings in *Why Americans Hate Welfare* would not support this expectation, however. Consistent with a larger body of literature arguing that “symbolic racism” has displaced overt racial prejudice in Americans’ consciousness

(Sears et al. 2000), Gilens found that attitudes about welfare spending were not statistically related to beliefs in blacks' inferiority or negative attitudes about blacks more generally.

Theories of race coding and the stereotypes about blacks likely to be activated by welfare politics instead lend themselves to a contrary expectation: *after PRWORA, the perception of blacks as lazy may no longer be a significant predictor of opposition to welfare spending*. If we agree with Gilens on the key role that the media's coverage of welfare plays in getting the public to think about blacks when they think about welfare, opinions about blacks' work ethic and welfare spending may become unlinked under a couple of scenarios.

We know that media coverage of welfare and poverty has been more positive and sympathetic after reform, but we do not yet know about whether welfare recipients continue to be disproportionately depicted as black or whether this is related to the tone of the story. Since Gilens found that whites tended to be pictured more often in sympathetic stories, it is possible that more media coverage of welfare now features whites. Thus when Americans are asked to evaluate welfare spending, the typical welfare recipient they will picture will now be white, rather than black. Stereotypes about blacks' work ethic are not activated.

A second possibility is that the media may continue to disproportionately feature blacks in stories about welfare, though the stories are now more positive in tone and focus on the theme of work. Since those blacks do not fit the prevailing stereotype about blacks' work ethic, the stereotype is not activated and racial attitudes do not affect welfare attitudes.

Finally, it is possible that as welfare has become a less salient issue in the public discourse, people are simply not being primed to think about welfare recipients in such detailed and controversial terms. If Gilens' argument about the media cueing individuals and activating their negative preconceptions about blacks is correct, we would expect that while perceptions about blacks work ethic might not change, the cues are not there to activate these perceptions as an appropriate symbol to apply to welfare policy.

Research Design

The main hypothesis to be tested in this analysis is as follows: more negative perceptions about the work ethic of blacks will lead to a increasing probability of supporting a decrease in welfare spending. We expect that this effect will be true through 1996, but will whither away over time. We therefore expect to have much greater cause, statistically and substantively, for rejecting the null hypothesis using pre-1996 data, than post-1996 data. A simple frequency analysis shows at least prima facie evidence that this is correct.

[Table 1. About Here]

In Table 1, we present the frequency distributions of the question on the work ethic of blacks, as well as the welfare spending question from the 1996, 2000, and 2004 American National Election Studies, respectively. The frequencies demonstrate what much of the current literature has already suggested – attitudes about the work ethic of blacks are relatively stable over time. Attitudes about the hard work/laziness of blacks are distributed normally over the 7-point scale, with a mean of approximately 4. However, the absolute number of individuals supporting a decrease in welfare spending has decreased to a sub-majority level after 1996. It should be noted, however, that a

larger percentage (48.1% to 39.9%) advocated decreasing welfare spending in 2004, than 2000. What is of particular note is that the chi-square test indicates statistical significance only for the 1996 data.

While somewhat compelling, a simple bivariate test fails to capture the complexity of why individuals would choose to support a decrease in welfare spending. Not only are there several important alternative explanations to consider, but previous research has also suggested that given the high level of multicollinearity between several of the most important competing explanations, path analysis has yielded the clearest set of results linking attitudes about blacks as lazy both directly to welfare spending opinions, and indirectly, mitigated by the strong correlation between negative attitudes about blacks and perceptions about the poor as undeserving, and the subsequent relationship between perceptions of the poor as undeserving and negative attitudes about welfare spending. The model we present is a recursive causal model, similar to that used by Gilens (1999), and is diagrammed in Figure 1.

[Figure 1. About Here]

The logic of the model, presented in Figure 1, is relatively simple. Independent variables may exert their own direct effects on welfare spending attitudes while also indirectly influencing these attitudes by affecting the values of more proximate predictors. Each variable in each stage of the model can affect each variable in each subsequent stage of the model, either directly, or indirectly through their effect on another variable. The model we present has five stages: demographic and socioeconomic factors, political orientations, perceptions about the work ethic of blacks, an individual's characterization of welfare recipients as undeserving, and opposition to

welfare spending. The model assumes that each stage is caused by the previous stage. For instance, we are predicting that demographic and socioeconomic factors affect partisanship, ideology, and individualism, and the subsequent stages in the model. And, likewise, political orientations along with beliefs about individualistic values, in the model, predict the perceptions about the work ethic of blacks, as well as the subsequent stages of the model.

The primary explanatory variable of interest is a respondent's evaluation of the work ethic of blacks on a 7-point scale. We expect that this relates not only directly to welfare spending attitudes, controlling for a host of rival explanations, but also that perceptions about the work ethic of blacks is mitigated by its relationship with evaluations of people on welfare. In a simple regression model, the effect of attitudes about the work ethic of blacks might wash out because of its high degree of correlation with attitudes about welfare recipients. And attitudes about welfare recipients no doubt will explain some, if not all of the variation in attitudes about welfare spending. Furthermore, the effects of partisanship, ideology, and individualism, which we expect would all be related to welfare spending attitudes, may also be related perceptions of blacks and welfare recipients. Therefore, path analysis allows us to tease out the intricacies of a highly multicollinear model.

Our model of welfare spending attitudes uses data from the 1996, 2000 and 2004 American National Election Studies (ANES). Our dependent variable is respondents' preference for federal government spending on welfare. A value of 0 indicates a preference to increase spending, 50 indicates a preference to keep spending the same, and a value of 100 is assigned to those who want to decrease welfare spending. Our measure

of racial stereotypes is respondents' placement of blacks on a 7-point scale between "hardworking" (1) and "lazy" (1). We proxy a perception of welfare recipients as undeserving with a 100-point "feeling thermometer" along which respondents are asked to rate their affect toward welfare recipients. Previous studies, performed with specific survey instrumentation have designed multi-part questionnaires to get at this theoretical construct. Theoretically and practically speaking, however, the welfare feeling thermometer gives us similar variation. Feeling thermometers tap into very general feelings about the respondent in question. Within the context of candidate elections, relative feeling thermometer perceptions have been found to be very reliable estimates of vote choice (Abramson and Aldrich 2002). There are also two practical reasons for using this measure. First, because this question has been asked across several iterations of the data, we are able to test the exact same model for several years. Secondly, if the measure is a bad proxy, then we should expect results in the 1996 model that deviate substantially from those found using 1991 data in Gilens (1996; 1999). We will show, in fact, that the results from 1996 mirror those from previous analyses, but deviate only in subsequent years, in line with our theoretical expectations.

Our other explanatory variables include age, sex, region of residence, marital status, family income, partisan affiliation, ideology, and orientation toward individualism. We measure this latter variable with four questions about governmental vs. individual or private power, which we scale into an individualism index (Cronbach's alpha = .65). Exact wording and coding of all questions are included in the appendix. We also limit this portion of our analysis to white/Caucasian respondents only. The analysis is performed using AMOS, an add-in to SPSS 11.0.

Results

A majority of the whites continued to believe in 1996 that the United States was spending too much money on welfare, but this group's numbers deteriorated rapidly such that by 2000, the percentage stating that too much was spent on welfare had dipped 20%. And while more whites believed in 2004, than in 2000, that the government was spending too much on welfare, these numbers were not at the 60% majority levels of 1996. This confirmed our expectation that American opposition to welfare is weaker post-PRWORA. As sentiment for decreasing welfare spending has subsided, so too has the bivariate correlation between negative attitudes about welfare spending and negative attitudes about the work ethic of blacks. The results of a multivariate, multistage causal model are presented in Table 2².

[Table 2. About Here]

Our statistical model allows us to test for changes in this relationship in the presence of controls for other theoretically important predictors of welfare spending attitudes. While we are most interested in results in the post-welfare reform era – those from the 2000 and 2004 ANES – 1996 results provide an important benchmark of public opinion right around the time of PRWORA's enactment. They also provide a corollary to previous results from a similar model (Gilens 1999).

The most striking result from Table 2 is its confirmation of the chi square test presented in Table 1, now with all of the relevant controls in the model. In 1996, we observe a significant effect both directly and indirectly between the perception of blacks

² Here we present the direct effects of each independent variable on the dependent variable, as well as the total indirect effects summed through each path. The results are presented in their entirety, including each individual direct effect not only on welfare spending but on the intermediary stages, in Appendix Table A1.

as lazy and welfare spending attitudes, controlling for demographics, socioeconomic circumstance, and political orientations. In 1996, the total effect (presented as standardized coefficients in Table 2) of negative perceptions of blacks' work ethic is among the largest significant predictors of negative attitudes about welfare spending, behind only conservative ideology, a strong sense of individualism, perceptions about people on welfare and income. From a substantive perspective, the difference between classifying blacks' work ethic as hardworking (1) and lazy (7) is about 20 percentage points in the direction favoring a spending decrease in welfare programs, with all the relevant controls specified in the model.

In 2000 and 2004, however, there is not a statistically significant direct effect for the work ethic variable on the dependent variable. In 2000, a significant indirect effect exists which approximates the effect in 1996. In 2004, the direct effect is negative, although not statistically different from zero, while the indirect effect is statistically significant, but half of what it was substantively in 2000 and 1996.

Other important predictors demonstrate a consistency of other effects on welfare spending attitudes that *did not change* between the pre- and post-reform periods. Conservative ideology, orientations towards individualism, and negative assessments of people on welfare show up consistently as the strongest predictors of opposition to welfare spending.

Party identification loses importance as a predictor of welfare spending attitudes over the course of our study, and quite strangely has a negative effect on welfare spending attitudes in 2004. Strong Republicans are significantly more likely to oppose welfare spending in 1996. By 2000, party identification is statistically irrelevant to

welfare spending attitudes when we control for the other relevant factors. This may be because the bipartisan support and credit-claiming associated with PRWORA has contributed to both Republican and Democratic satisfaction with the law. The 2004 finding likely reflects an increasing degree of polarization – with conservatives attitudes and ideology explaining most of the difference³.

Ideology, perhaps, has supplanted party as the major political driver of attitudes toward welfare spending, as the effect of conservative ideology on opposition to spending on welfare policy is substantively greater in 2004 than either 1996 or 2000. We take this as evidence of increased polarization among the electorate.

Respondents with strong individualist orientations (as measured by their beliefs that government had intruded on functions more properly within the domain of individuals and private businesses), are significantly more likely to oppose spending on welfare. This coefficient is fairly stable across all years, indicating that a general ideological opposition social welfare exists among some respondents, regardless of the policy shift.

Finally, we find that the bulk of our demographic and socioeconomic predictors exert no direct effect on welfare spending attitudes, with the exception of income and marital status in 1996 and 2000. However, many of these variables do exert their effects indirectly, as detailed in table A1.

Discussion

Those Americans most inclined to decrease welfare spending in 1996, 2000 and 2004 continue to be more politically conservative and individualistic than those desiring to maintain or increase welfare spending. They generally enjoy higher family incomes

³ Party ID and Ideology correlate at about .5 in 2000 and .65 in 2004.

and they assess welfare recipients more negatively than the rest of the public. However, the variable that has historically coincided with these explanations – the perception by whites of blacks as lazy – seems to have lost some of its explanatory power. The racial component explaining opposition to welfare spending, while present in the 1996 model, decreased by 50% in 2000, and lost all explanatory power in our 2004 model.

We are careful not to assume that this evidence suggests that the American public has become any less polarized or more race-conscious over the last decade. Negative opinions about blacks' work ethic appear to be relatively stable over time, and the links between political orientations (conservative ideology and individualism) and opposition to welfare spending remain strong.

Yet, with policy change, declining media coverage and political discussion of welfare as a hot-button political issue, and welfare's subsequent diminishing salience in the public mind, something seems to have changed. People no longer seem to be evaluating spending on this issue in a way that would suggest reflections of symbolically racist opinions. To be sure, those heuristics still exist to be activated, but they simply are not being activated. This has occurred in spite of evidence that blacks are increasing as a proportion of welfare caseloads, due to whites' quicker exits from the welfare rolls (Schram 2003; Williams 2003). Americans, it seems, may no longer be thinking so automatically about blacks when they are asked to make a judgment about welfare spending.

How did this happen? We regrettably conclude with the all too often call for more research. However, there are some clues in the existing literature. The most likely story is that this group of welfare reformers reframed the public debate over welfare.

Since the passage of PRWORA, we appear to see partisan dilution over preferences on welfare spending, and probably with that some dilution of racial views as well.

A question ripe for future research is whether political awareness may mediate relationships among blacks' work ethic, the deservingness of welfare recipients, and attitudes toward welfare spending. Considerable variation in public awareness exists among the public, and this has been associated with numerous political attitudes and aspects of political behavior (Zaller 1992). The core of the mass public that still supports reductions in welfare spending may have had just enough exposure to changes in the framing of the welfare reform debate that familiar racial stereotypes are no longer activated when individuals are asked about welfare spending. On the other hand, they may have had too little exposure to changes in the content of welfare policy to change their underlying perceptions about blacks and welfare recipients. Thus persistent beliefs about the undeservingness of welfare recipients dwarf perceptions of blacks' work ethic as predictors of welfare reform.

Our results are not evidence of any decline in racism. Racist stereotypes can still linger while blacks become more invisible when people think about welfare policy and whom it helps or hurts. Following PRWORA, if people are inclined to think of welfare in terms of poor families trying to work their way out of poverty despite their barriers to employment, and if they are thus inclined to think of welfare as more of a "white" program, and if this chain of thought indeed explains higher levels of support for welfare, we obviously still have a race problem. Though our analysis of these data suggests that welfare may no longer be so race-coded as it was a decade ago, it may not be long before a "black" version of welfare is developed once again.

Finally, while expressing our own ambivalence about the success of welfare reform, we believe that there are silver linings here for both proponents of the reform, and opponents. Proponents can cite the public's general support of their approach to welfare reform. For opponents of the reform, since symbolic racism does not appear to be tapped under the new program, we are optimistic about the extent to which proposals to increase spending on welfare policies, albeit under the new system, might be met with widespread public acceptance.

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Table 1. Changes in Racial and Welfare Attitudes 1996, 2000, & 2004

		1996	2000	2004
Blacks are	1	24 (1.8%)	51 (3.7%)	15 (2.0%)
Hardworking (1)	2	89 (6.8%)	79 (5.7%)	53 (6.9%)
to Blacks are	3	222 (16.9%)	223 (16.0%)	121 (15.7%)
Lazy (7)	4	582 (44.4%)	622 (44.5%)	372 (48.4%)
	5	243 (18.5%)	267 (19.1%)	144 (18.7%)
	6	121 (9.2%)	109 (6.5%)	54 (7.0%)
	7	30 (2.3%)	46 (2.8%)	10 (1.3%)
Welfare	Increased	140 (9.4%)	259 (16.0%)	83 (9.6%)
Spending	Kept the Same	464 (31.1%)	714 (44.1%)	357 (41.5%)
should be	Decreased	890 (59.6%)	647 (39.9%)	421 (48.1%)
	Chi-Square Statistic	44.592**	20.368	13.590

Data are from the 1996, 2000, and 2004 American National Election Studies, respectively. *p < .05, **p < .001

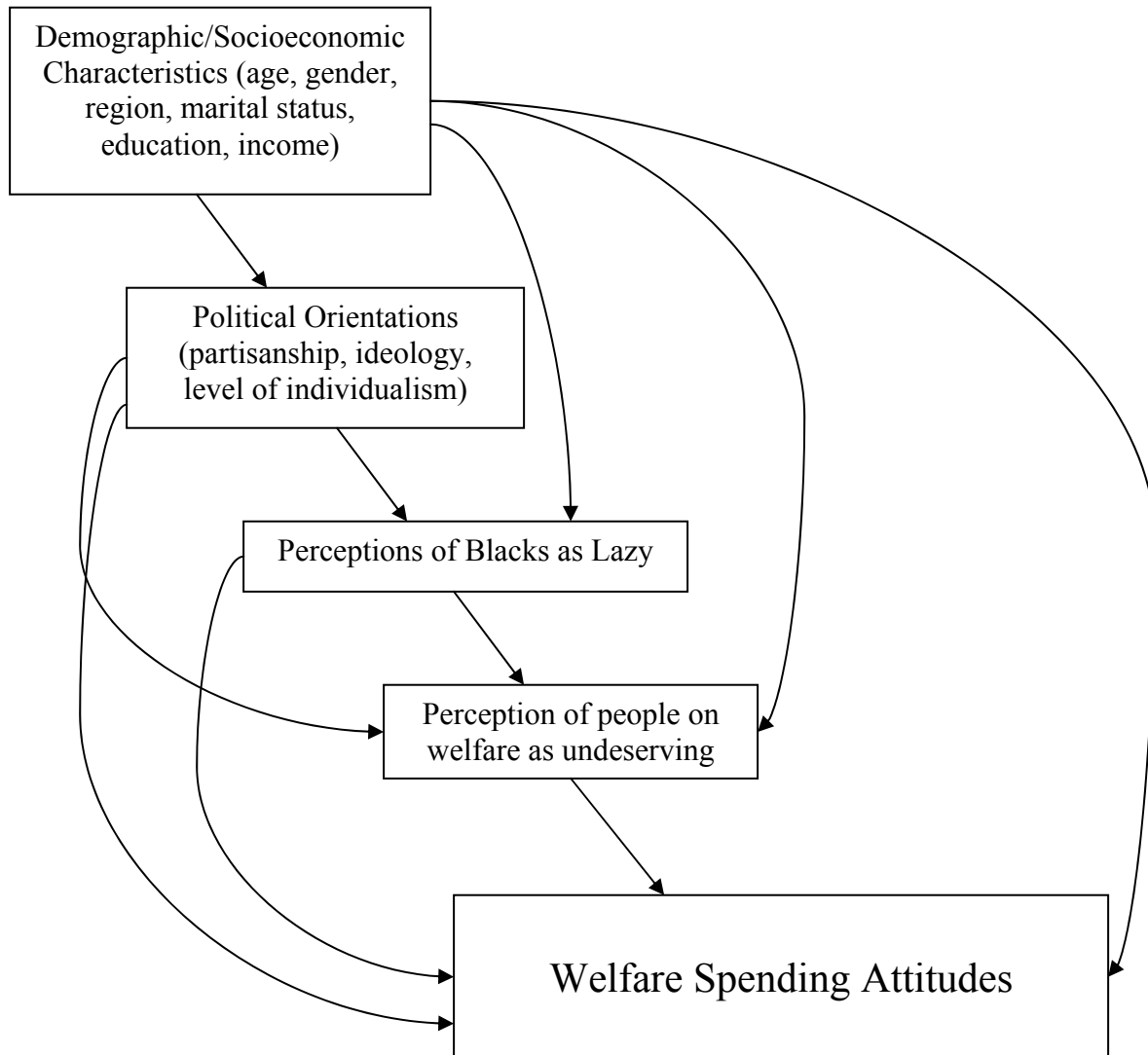
Figure 1. Causal Model of Welfare Spending Attitudes

Table 2. Causal Model of Opposition to Welfare Spending for 1996, 2000, 2004

		<u>1996</u>			<u>2000</u>			<u>2004</u>		
		Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect
I.	Age	0.041	0.008	0.049	0.005	-0.008	0.003	0.061*	0.014	0.073
	Gender	0.021	-0.071	-0.050	0.028	-0.073	-0.045	-0.014	-0.051	-0.064
	South	-0.007	0.004	-0.002	0.029	0.025	0.054	-0.078**	0.018	-0.061
	Education	0.033	-0.012	0.021	0.033	-0.047	-0.014	-0.061*	-0.029	-0.090
	Marital Status	0.061**	0.004	0.065	0.056**	0.010	0.066	-0.013	0.022	0.022
	Family Income	0.071***	0.087	0.157	0.058**	0.055	0.113	-0.008	0.078	0.068
II.	Ideology	0.149***	0.029	0.178	0.140***	0.002	0.142	0.193**	0.015	0.206
	Party ID	0.074***	0.002	0.076	-0.013	0.031	0.018	-0.079**	-0.003	-0.082
	Individualism	0.193***	0.052	0.245	0.158***	0.058	0.217	0.152***	0.015	0.168
III.	Perception of black as lazy	0.047*	0.053	0.100	0.007	0.061	0.068	-0.034	0.033	-0.002
IV.	Perception of people on welfare	-0.254***	---	-0.254	-0.339**	---	-0.339	-0.168***	---	-0.168

Source: 1996 and 2000 American National Election Studies (ANES). N for 1996 = 1454; N for 2000 = 1515; N for 2004=876. Coefficients are standardized regression coefficients. For coding of variables, see Appendix. Significance tests provided for direct effects only: *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01. Total indirect effects are the total effects of statistically significant paths from a single variable.

Appendix

Question Wording and Response Coding for Questions from the 1996, 2000, and 2004 American National Election Studies

Opposition to Welfare Spending: “If you had a say in making up the federal budget this year, for which of the following programs would you like to see spending INCREASED and for which would you like to see spending DECREASED? . . . Should federal spending on welfare programs be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?”
0=Increased, 50=Kept about the Same, 100=Decreased.

Perception of Welfare Recipients as Undeserving: “I’d like to get your feelings toward some of our political leaders and others people who are in the news these days. I’ll read the name of a person and I’d like you to rate that person using something we call the feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the person. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don’t feel favorable toward that person and that you don’t care too much for that person. You would rate the person at the 50 degree mark if you don’t feel particularly warm or cold toward the person. . . . How would you rate . . . people on welfare?” Coded on 0-1 scale, where 0 is least favorable is 1 is most favorable.

Perception of Blacks as Lazy: “Now I have some questions about different groups in our society In the first statement a score of 1 means that you think almost all of the people in that group tend to be “hard-working.” A score of 7 means that you think most people in the group are “lazy.” A score of 4 means that you think that most people in the group are not closer to one end or the other, and of course, you may choose any number in between. . . . Where would you rate blacks?” Coded on a 0-1 scale, where 0 is most hardworking and 1 is most lazy.

Age: Ages 18-97, where 97 includes all respondents over age 97. Coded on a 0-1 scale by dividing by 100.

Sex: 0=male, 1=female.

Region: 0=non-South, 1=South, where South is defined as the 11 former Confederate states.

Education: 0=8th grade or less and no diploma or equivalency, 0.2=9-11 grades, no further schooling (incl. 12th grade without diploma or equivalency), 0.4=High school diploma or equivalency test, 0.6=Junior or community college degree, 0.8=B.A. degree, 17+ years, no advanced degree, 1= Advanced degree, including LLB.

Marital Status: 0=not currently married, 1=currently married.

Family Income: 13 categories evenly spaced on 0-1 scale: None or less \$4,999; \$5,000-\$9,999; \$10,000-\$14,999; \$15,000-\$24,999; \$25,000-\$34,999; \$35,000-\$49,999;

\$50,000-\$64,999; \$65,000-\$74,999; \$75,000-\$84,999; \$85,000-\$94,999; \$95,000-104,999; \$105,000-\$114,999; \$115,000 and greater.

Liberal/Conservative Ideology: Seven-point branching measure ranging from strong liberal (scored 0) to strong conservative (scored 1). Respondents who do not think of themselves as liberal or conservative are assigned the middle position along with moderates (scored 0.5).

Party Identification: Seven-point branching measure ranging from strong Democrat (scored 0) to strong Republican (scored 1). Respondents who express no partisan preference are assigned the middle position along with independents (scored 0.5).

Individualism: Scale ranging from 0-1 where 0 is least individualistic and 1 is most individualism, created from the following four questions (Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient = 0.65): "Next, I am going to ask you to choose which of two statements I read comes closer to your own opinion. You might agree to some extent with both, but we want to know which one is closer to your views. ONE, the less government, the better; or TWO, there are more things that government should be doing? ONE, we need a strong government to handle today's complex economic problems; or TWO, the free market can handle these problems without government being involved. ONE, the main reason government has become bigger over the years is because it has gotten involved in things that people should do for themselves; or TWO, government has become bigger because the problems we faced have become bigger. ONE, it is more important to be a cooperative person who works well with other; or TWO, it is more important to be a self-reliant person able to take care of oneself." Note: The 2004 pre-release did not include the final question on cooperation/self-reliance. Therefore, the index was created from only the 3 available variables, scaled 0-1.

Table A1. Recursive Causal Model of Welfare Spending 1996, 2000, 2004

	1996	2000	2004
Age → Ideology	0.124***	0.097***	0.053
Age → Individualism	0.080***	0.048*	0.121***
Age → Party Identification	0.016	-0.027	-0.060*
Gender → Ideology	-0.104***	-0.073***	-0.080**
Gender → Individualism	-0.173***	-0.187***	-0.163***
Gender → Party Identification	-0.092***	-0.078***	-0.075**
South → Ideology	0.055**	0.076***	0.130***
South → Individualism	0.011	0.098***	0.013
South → Party Identification	0.023	0.118***	0.096***
Marital Status → Ideology	0.058**	0.134***	0.152***
Marital Status → Individualism	0.040	-0.004	-0.002
Marital Status → Party Identification	0.012	0.070***	0.127***
Education → Ideology	-0.073***	-0.042*	-0.113***
Education → Individualism	0.075***	0.030	0.044
Education → Party Identification	0.048*	0.072***	-0.018
Income → Ideology	0.105***	0.059**	0.187***
Income → Individualism	0.103***	0.099***	0.174***
Income → Party Identification	0.193***	0.093***	0.149***
Ideology → Blacks' Work Ethic	0.041	0.027	0.040
Individualism → Blacks' Work Ethic	0.045	0.043	0.119***
Party Identification → Blacks' Work Ethic	0.049*	0.043	0.028
Age → Blacks' Work Ethic	0.107***	0.051*	0.035
Gender → Blacks' Work Ethic	-0.069**	-0.010	0.011
South → Blacks' Work Ethic	0.037	0.030	-0.017
Marital Status → Blacks' Work Ethic	0.005	-0.010	0.047
Education → Blacks' Work Ethic	-0.092***	-0.131***	-0.073**
Income → Blacks' Work Ethic	-0.010	0.034	-0.053
Blacks' Work Ethic → Undeserving Poor	-0.208***	-0.179***	-0.195***
Ideology → Undeserving Poor	-0.099***	-0.001	-0.091**
Individualism → Undeserving Poor	-0.186***	-0.163***	-0.087**
Party Identification → Undeserving Poor	0.011	-0.084***	0.016
Age → Undeserving Poor	0.180***	0.103***	0.133***
Gender → Undeserving Poor	-0.013	0.060**	0.079**
South → Undeserving Poor	0.052**	0.033	0.020
Marital Status → Undeserving Poor	0.068***	0.026	-0.009
Education → Undeserving Poor	0.045*	0.118***	0.083**
Income → Undeserving Poor	-0.116***	-0.062**	-0.131***
Undeserving Poor → Decrease Welfare Spending	-0.254***	-0.339***	-0.168***
Blacks' Work Ethic → Decrease Welfare Spending	0.047*	0.007	-0.034
Ideology → Decrease Welfare Spending	0.149***	0.140***	0.193***

Individualism → Decrease Welfare Spending	0.193***	0.158***	0.152***
Party Identification → Decrease Welfare Spending	0.074**	-0.013	-0.079**
Age → Decrease Welfare Spending	0.041	0.005	0.061*
Gender → Decrease Welfare Spending	0.021	0.028	-0.014
South → Decrease Welfare Spending	-0.007	0.029	-0.078**
Marital Status → Decrease Welfare Spending	0.061**	0.056	-0.013
Education → Decrease Welfare Spending	0.033	0.033	-0.061*
Income → Decrease Welfare Spending	0.071***	0.058**	-0.008

Cell entries are standardized direct effect coefficients. ***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10