

Major Welfare Changes and Public Opinion, 1965-2010

Alex Schulz, Xavier University '15

Between 1965 and 2010, welfare policy changed drastically in the United States. The modern welfare system was created under President Johnson in 1965 and rolled back as a result of the 1996 welfare reform legislation. This study uses a nationwide representative sample of voters from the American National Election Survey between 1965 and 2010 to examine the transformation of public opinion both before and after major changes in U.S. welfare policies. This study also looks at how economic conditions, race, and income affect public opinion of the welfare system.

On January 8, 1964, Lyndon Baines Johnson gave his first State of the Union Address, announcing the creation of the Great Society and the War on Poverty. The War on Poverty increased federal support by assisting the unemployed and helping the handicapped through the creation of the Social Security Act of 1935. The creation of the Social Security Act of 1935 was also the start of the United States welfare program. The welfare program was later expanded by President Johnson. Through his presidency, President Johnson extended the power and influence of the United States welfare system to help the impoverished and disabled (Johnson 1964; Brauer 1982, 117). The Great Society's anti-poverty measures included an increase in the minimum wage, and a broader number of people who receive food stamps and public housing (Johnson 1964; Brauer 1982, 116).

Since the expansion of the welfare state under President Johnson, there has been an increasing amount of criticism about the system. Under Johnson, welfare spending increased from around 10.3% to about 14.7% of gross national product. The welfare system continued to expand as new programs were introduced and older programs were expanded, increasing welfare spending even further until it reached its height in 1983 at 19.5% of total GNP (Bixby 1990, 22). With the increase in spending also came an increase in criticism.

The Welfare system has continued to face criticism since its creation. Joe R. Feagin (1972, 922) explains that peoples' stereotypes of welfare participants have been a contributing factor in the anti-welfare sentiment. These people believe that those on the welfare system are lazy and have illegitimate children to get money (Feagin 1972, 921). This has caused an increase in support for a stricter welfare system that focuses on the "primacy of the family and the importance of work" (Gueron 1990, 79). This increase in criticism has led to multiple attempts to change the system, and limit the amount of people using the system. Attempts to change and limit the size of the welfare state eventually occurred under President Reagan and later under President Clinton (Shapiro 2009). The change in the welfare system may have been caused by the decrease in public support for the system.

Researchers have long noted that public opinion helps to shape policy. In addition, the policies themselves shape public opinion. The time in which both public opinion and policy change is very similar, with the change in public opinion often happening shortly before the change in policy occurs (Page and Shapiro 1983, 177; Monroe 1988, 8). In most situations, there is a lag between the change in public opinion and the eventual change in policy (Page and

Shapiro 1983, 185). This is also the case with the welfare program. The welfare reforms may have been caused by the continual change in public opinion toward welfare. The reason for these changes happening in such a specific pattern and order is because elected officials have to listen to the public in order to get reelected. If public opinion and the creation of policy are related, then it could mean that the limitations set on the welfare system could have been caused by different congressional representatives trying to get votes by listening to their constituents' public opinion on welfare.

Many researchers have looked at the reasons for why the public support for welfare has decreased since 1965. These reasons range from the economic belief that one will not benefit from welfare, to the racial attitudes that people have when looking at the welfare system and those on welfare (Gilens 1996, 594). Many people also believe that the welfare system spawns dependency, while others believe that alcohol and drugs are prevalent in the welfare system (Metsch and Pollack 2005, 67-68; Mulia and Schmidt 2003, 499). While these questions have been looked at in some depth, it is important to look at other factors that affect public opinion of welfare, such as how different races have had different opinions of the welfare system. The change in public opinion of the welfare system during different periods of economic difficulties is also important to look at in order to find a possible reason for the public's change of opinion from the Great Society of President Johnson to the modern system under President Obama.

The Four Periods of Welfare

Welfare policy in the United States can be divided into four different periods of time: the New Deal/Social Security Act of 1935, President Johnson's War on Poverty, President Reagan's attack on the welfare system, and the 1996 welfare reform act (Shapiro 2009, 3-5).

In the 1930s, the United States faced the Great Depression, forcing the Federal Government to take action. To face the Depression, President Roosevelt came up with the New Deal, an expansion of the government through domestic programs in an attempt to help reinvigorate the economy. In 1935 he signed into law the Social Security Act, which "established two social insurance programs on a national scale to help meet the risks of old age and unemployment" ("Amending the Social Security Act"). *The Social Security Act did increase support for the old and unemployed, but it did not help all groups that needed support. The Act excluded agricultural and domestic labor, which caused the majority of black workers to not qualify for the assistance (Quadagno 1984, 643; Davies and Derthick 1997, 218-219). Even though the Social Security Act didn't help everyone it was "the beginning of a forty-year process via which the United States developed the stratified welfare system that we know today" (Davies and Derthick 1997, 218).*

While the New Deal helped to create the welfare system, it wasn't until the war on poverty under President Johnson that welfare truly expanded. With the election of President Johnson, the war on poverty had begun. In order to confront poverty, he expanded programs by increasing benefits, increasing minimum wage, and broadening the food stamp program (Johnson 1964; Brauer 1982, 117-118; Shapiro 2009, 4). He also changed the Aid to Dependent Children program to the AFDC, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, which greatly increased public assistance so that more African Americans in need of public assistance could acquire it (Shapiro 2009, 4). The welfare programs that he instituted were also focused on education, with a focus on equal education for African Americans, passing the Secondary Education Act of 1965 that provided more funding for minority students. It was during this time that President Johnson signed the 1964 Civil Rights Act to help advance the rights of minorities (Kantor and Lowe

1995, 8-9). This period was filled with drastic change and enlargement of the government programs, which came along with the public support. In comparison to the changes which occurred during this period of time, the third period was very different.

In 1981 Ronald Reagan took office, facing economic problems that had been plaguing the country. President Reagan saw the problems as being caused by the large government and began downsizing the government; a major part of this downsizing was the welfare system (O'Connor 1998, 37-38). He attacked the welfare program through three main pieces of legislation: The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 (OBRA), the Social Security Amendments of 1983, and the Family Support Act of 1988. OBRA reduced AFDC, Food Stamps, and Medicaid along with a multitude of other social programs. One of the other key things that President Reagan worked to change was transforming welfare itself into a workfare system. This system would force the able-bodied welfare recipients to work for their benefits (O'Connor 1998, 38-42). Not only did he attack the welfare programs through legislation, but he also attacked it through his rhetoric. He used this rhetoric to sway public opinion toward a more anti-welfare attitude. He often spoke of "welfare queens," which was aimed at pushing the belief that the welfare system was being exploited by able-bodied blacks (Shapiro 2009, 4). This exercise of his rhetorical power eventually led to the fourth period.

When President Clinton came into office, he promised to end welfare as people had known it. This change to the welfare system came in 1996, but instead of coming from President Clinton it came from the Republican-held Congress. Originally President Clinton had threatened to veto the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 but eventually he signed it into law starting the fourth period (Shapiro 2009, 5). The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 limited the cash supports, gave more power over program design to the states and also placed more work requirements on participants. The bill created the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant, giving states control over the designs of their own public assistance programs. With these changes, the states still had to follow national work requirement mandates, and the money that the states got for their programs was limited to a fixed number instead of being a blank check like the AFDC had previously been (Blank 1997, 170-171).

The drastic change of the welfare system, from the New Deal and Johnson's Expansion to the rollbacks during the Reagan and Clinton years, may have been caused by the change in public opinion toward welfare and welfare recipients. Many studies have examined this connection between public opinion and public policies.

Literature Review

There is a close connection between public opinion and policy creation. Page and Shapiro (1983, 179) explain that there is "rather substantial congruence between changes in opinion and policy." While it is not surprising that politicians respond to public opinion, the role of public opinion is particularly important for policies that affect a large number of people (Monroe 1998, 7). In some cases, the possibility of the policy affecting opinion has been completely ruled out, while in others the policy can be viewed as affecting public opinion (Page and Shapiro 1983, 185-186). Page and Shapiro (1983, 187-188) explain that in close to "half the cases of congruence between opinion and policy," the policy affects public opinion. The policy change or the rhetoric that accompanies policy can affect how the public views the policy. Rhetoric used by Ronald Reagan was one of the reasons for the backlash against the welfare system in the 1980s, eventually leading to the 1996 welfare reform (Shapiro 2009, 4-5).

Public opinion has played a key role in debates about welfare reform and welfare spending. Peter Taylor-Gooby (1982, 319-320) explains that there is a contradiction when it comes to public opinion and welfare: “Many surveys demonstrate a high level of satisfaction with and support for the welfare state services.” Other surveys show a preference for reduction of state services. Some articles discuss how there has been stronger support for the private sector, with a majority in 1978 supporting the private sector, while other articles have again shown continual support for the welfare system (Taylor-Gooby 1982, 320-321). One of the possible reasons for the difference between the surveys is the differences in the political parties. In states with more Democratic Party control, there was greater support for welfare (Brown 1995, 28-29). Shortly after 1978, the Republicans took the presidency, reflecting the change in public opinion toward the private sector, as well as toward the welfare system.

There are many factors that contribute to the decrease of public opinion for the welfare system. One of the main reasons for the negative perception of welfare and the participants was the substance abuse that people believe welfare users partake in. “Substance use and mental health problems among welfare recipients have become important themes in the broader public discourse about welfare reform” (Jayakody, Danziger, and Pollack 2000, 624). Many surveys have been done to estimate rates of drug use in regard to welfare participants. These surveys have been done by National Longitudinal Survey Youth, the National Household Survey of Drug Abuse, and the National Survey of Drug Use and Health (Jayakody, Danziger, and Pollack 2000, 625 – 626; Metsch and Pollack 2005, 68-69; Cheng and McElderry 2007, 156). Rodriguez, Lasch, Chandra, and J. Lee explain that “studies have found that alcohol use may aggravate marital difficulties leading to separation or divorce, and alcohol problems may have an indirect effect on earnings and marriage” (2000, 172). These indirect effects can lead to people being and staying on welfare as well as creating distrust of where the money is being used.

Questions are raised about how welfare money is spent, because of the people in the welfare system with substance abuse problems. Pollack and Metsch (2005, 880) explains that people on welfare are at no more of a risk for substance abuse than people not on welfare and that there is no support for widespread substance abuse among those on welfare (Jayakody, Danziger, and Pollack 2000, 644). While this is the case for some studies, NLSY showed that those using drugs before the survey increased their chances of going on welfare. The article also discusses how the people using drugs are less likely to leave the welfare system (Cheng and McElderry 2007, 156-157). In addition to substance abuse, creation of dependence on the welfare system was another perception that people had about the welfare system.

Welfare dependence is another contributing factor to the change in public opinion toward the welfare system. This is due to the possible problem that welfare dependency has become and how it affects people who are disadvantaged (Ellwood and Summers 1985, 22; Gottschalk and Moffitt* 1994, 38). Some believe that social welfare creates welfare dependency and that welfare itself is addictive (Plant 1984, 673). This can be described as a welfare trap. There are different theories that explain the increased dependence on the system including the deterioration of skills, and that people with short spells on welfare have more human capital than people with long spells. The people with long spells lose skills and don't have the opportunities that short term participants have (Gottschalk and Moffitt* 1994, 38). The different studies look mostly at non-whites and, more specifically, unwed non-white mothers (Gottschalk and Moffitt* 1994, 40). Even though most of the studies focus purely on these groups, they do look at the overall welfare trap. Even though the welfare trap is weak at best, a way to avoid it is to limit the length of a family's eligibility so that dependence entrapment doesn't happen (Plant 1984, 683).

One of the other aspects of welfare that has been continually and thoroughly explored is race, specifically blacks and whites. Black and white citizens have continually disagreed over stances on national policy (Kinder & Winter 2001, 439). These disagreements include stances over the social welfare policy (Kinder & Winter 2001, 448). Some believe the reason for white people disliking the welfare system is because of racial ideas. Whites' view of the welfare system and their support for it is dependent upon racial stereotypes (Peffley, Herwitz & Sniderman 1997, 44). Studies investigate the idea that many white people believe the welfare system is being used primarily by African Americans. This stereotypical view reflects the rhetoric used by President Reagan who attempted to attack the welfare system (Shapiro 2009, 4). It is this negative view of African Americans that causes whites' opposition to welfare; whites believe that there are more blacks on welfare than there actually are. This is regardless of the true statistics which show that blacks do not make up the majority of the welfare participants (Gilens 1996, 594 – 595; Bartels 1999, 46). This is another belief that negatively shaped public opinion of the welfare system. Eventually these negative views and opinions of the welfare system and its participants caused the Welfare Reform of 1996.

In 1996, the Republican Congress pushed through the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act which was signed into law after President Clinton had stopped threatening to veto the bill (Shapiro 2009, 5). Many different studies have been done to examine public opinion of the 1996 welfare reform. The reason for this was because of how AFDC had become a very unpopular social program by 1994. The different articles look at whether or not public opinion of the welfare system changed from a negative view to a positive view after the welfare reform (Daguerre 2011, 391-392; Hetling, McDermott, and Mapps 2008, 336). While public opinion changed, some believe that it did not change as much as had been anticipated (Soss and Schram 2006, 21; Shapiro 16-17). Others believe that after the passing of the welfare reform, there was a dramatic shift of public opinion in favor of the welfare system instead of the hostility that the public had felt toward it in the mid 1990s (Hetling, McDermott, and Mapps 2008, 342-343). Whether or not public opinion changed as much as some had anticipated, the fact remains that public opinion did shift toward a more positive view of the welfare system after the reform was enacted. The change in public opinion toward the welfare system changed in part because of what the reform had achieved.

A more positive view of the welfare system may be due to the benefits that came from the reform. One way that the reform was a success is that the caseloads decreased drastically since the reform was passed (Chaudhary and Gathmann 2009, 2; Schoeni and Blank 2000, 3-4). The 1996 welfare reform limited cash support and required there to be more work requirements. It also gives more power to the state to design the program (Blank 1997, 170). This caused more people to get back to work because they had to follow the work requirements. Not only did the caseloads decrease but there was an increase in the labor force participation. Over 66% of the people who left the welfare system held at least one job after leaving (Blank 2002, 51). This means that more people were getting back to work and actually getting jobs even if they weren't completely stable jobs. These positives brought about by the welfare reform of 1996 can possibly have been a reason for the shift in public opinion of welfare. In recent years, the welfare system has again changed.

The welfare system has changed again under President Obama. The comparison has been made between the Great Depression and the recession under Obama, which leads to comparisons being drawn between Obama and FDR. Instead of creating new programs though, he increased tax cuts, Medicaid and food stamps. He has extended the time period for people who had used up

their state benefits and gave more funding to the public assistant programs (Daguerre 2011, 399-402). Obama attempted to remake the political economy by focusing on higher education, health care and taxation (Mettler 2010, 803). He has expanded the programs already around, and negated some of the requirements that were put in place by the 1996 welfare reform: such as the time allowed per person on the welfare system. This has all taken place during a recession, which may cause an increase in support for the welfare program.

As all of this research shows, welfare has been examined from all directions and in many different ways and contexts. My research will fit in with this existing variety of research on the topic. It looks at different variables that affect the public's opinion of welfare over time. It looks specifically at how the public opinion changes due to different unemployment rates. It will also examine how different independent variables such as wealth and race affect people's opinions of welfare. This is different than previous research that looked at things that the welfare system may cause and how they shape welfare opinion, such as welfare dependence. The many different variables that I will be examining will give a better grasp of how public opinion toward welfare is shaped and how different outside variables can change public opinion over time.

My research question is as follows: how has public opinion of welfare changed since its expansion under President Johnson? How did public opinion toward welfare change during periods of economic difficulty, and periods of increased rhetoric against welfare? How does the support for welfare differ between people living in cities and people living in rural and suburban America? How have changes in public opinion about welfare been impacted by other factors, such as race, income, political party affiliation, employment status and the condition of the economy?

Research Design

This study examines public opinion of welfare from 1965 until 2010. While the federal welfare system can be traced to the Social Security Act of 1935, it wasn't until 1965 that the welfare state was expanded under President Johnson. To look at the change in public opinion in regard to welfare, I will be using the American National Election Study (ANES). This study provides data on voting, public opinion, and political participation. ANES conducts surveys that help to point out election behavior and see the views of citizens whose actions determine who is elected.

Voters' opinions about welfare are likely to be affected by a number of different factors. Accordingly, I examine how different variables, such as race, employment status, area of living, connection to political party and economic situation, cause an increase or decrease in the public's opinion of welfare. To see why public opinion of welfare may have changed, it is also important to look at the economic conditions around the time of welfare reform and how the changing economy influences public opinion. This is especially important when looking at times of economic trouble, such as the early 1980s and early 1990s when the United States was going through economic recessions. In addition, I look at how implementation of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act affected public opinion of the welfare system and the people who utilize it.

There are many different types of variables when looking at public opinion and welfare reform. The dependent variables that I will be examining will be public opinion of welfare and the thermometer measure of public opinion of people on welfare. The main independent variables are the periods of welfare reform and economic conditions as measured by the unemployment rate. Control variables include race, income, the region in which the voter grew up (whether they are from the South or not), political party, employment status, number of children under the age of six, education, and age.

The different variables also will be operationalized in different ways. Race will be looked at categorically, splitting respondents by whether they are black or not. It will have two categories: black and other. Public opinion of welfare will be looked at as categorical with one category being people who want an increase in welfare, a second being people who want welfare to stay the same, and the last being people who want to decrease welfare. It will also be viewed on a time scale, going from 1965 to 2010, so that it shows how public opinion has changed since welfare expansion in 1965. Family income will be ordinal, going from 0-16 percentile, 17-33 percentile, 34-67 percentile, 68-95 percentile, and 96-100 percentile. The economic conditions will also be ordinal with it being based on unemployment. One way to look at this will be the different unemployment rates that have occurred from 1965 to 2010. I will also have a categorical unemployment rate economic variable with the unemployment rates being put into three categories of Low, Medium and High. I also will have a category looking at 1981, 1982, 1995, and 1996, representing time periods of increased rhetoric against the welfare system and its applicants, as well as time periods of increased attempts at welfare reform within Congress.

The intervening and confounding variables will also be operationalized in a similar way. Living locations of the people giving their opinions will be categorized rural, urban, and suburban; this is because people living in these different locations will have different views of helping the poor. Political leanings will also be nominal: from 1 being Strong Democrat to 7 being Strong Republican. Age will be a nominal variable being split into 7 groups: 17-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65-74, 75-99. Employment status will be categorical, looking at those who are employed and those who are unemployed. The South variable will be similar with it being split into South and non-South. All the variables will be viewed over the time from 1965 to 2010 so that the change can be seen over the time from the expansion of welfare up until present day.

By testing the variables, we will be able to understand how the different types of people view welfare differently. Looking at race, African Americans are more likely to support an increase in welfare than other races. People with high income will also be less likely to support the welfare system than people who have lower levels of income. People in cities will be more supportive of welfare than people who live in suburbs and in rural areas. Likewise, people who are unemployed will be more likely to support welfare increases than people who are employed. People who are strongly Democrat will be more likely to support increases in welfare than people who are more strongly Republican. Families in lower income brackets will also be more supportive of welfare than will be people of higher income brackets. People who are younger will be more supportive of the welfare system than older people will. During times of economic difficulty people will be less supportive of the welfare system. Similarly, during time periods of increased rhetoric there will be a decrease in support for the welfare system and those using it.

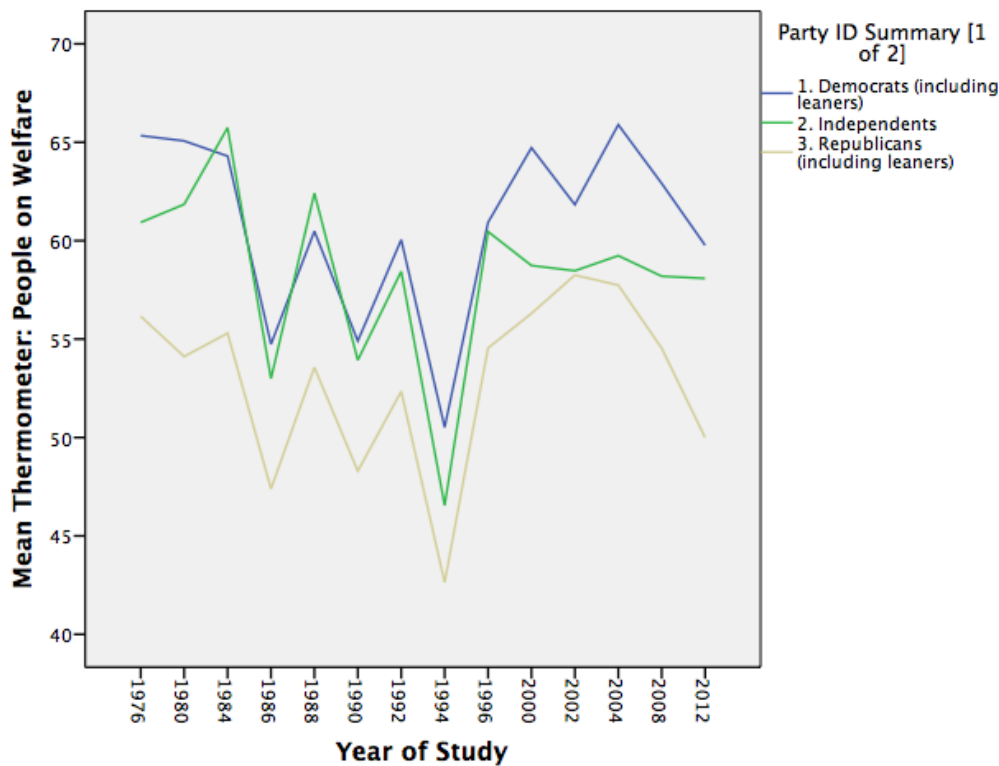
To examine these hypotheses, I will use information from the American National Election Study (ANES). ANES has done a multitude of different studies and surveys that look at different information changes over the years. One of the sections contains a different group of tables that looks at Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior. This will allow me to look at different opinions that relate to the variables and hypotheses. For example, there is a list that looks at the race of respondents since 1948 until 2008. There is a subsection that looks at public opinion on public policy issues, including Social Welfare. One of the tables looks at government services and spending. I can look at this to see how the pattern changes over the years, and look at years of economic difficulty to see if there is a shift in support. There is another subsection specifically on race with tables about aid to Blacks/Minorities and Open Housing. There is also a subsection on the Economy that can be used to look at the economic conditions and whether or not the

economic conditions have gotten any better. The data that I will be using will be from the ANES Time Series Cumulative Data File that has data dealing with all of the variables that I intend to look at.

Analysis

I looked at a few different variables in order to examine the change of public opinion toward welfare since 1965. The dependent variables that I used were the Mean Thermometer: People on Welfare and Mean Welfare Opinion. The Mean Thermometer: People on Welfare shows the feelings people have toward people on welfare. The higher the number the better the feelings toward people on welfare are, while the lower numbers show a more negative view toward the people on welfare. Mean Welfare Opinion shows the average public opinion toward the welfare system. The lower numbers show a lower level of support for the welfare system while higher numbers show a higher support for the welfare system. The Independent Variables that I looked at are Race, specifically a comparison between Blacks and other races, Party ID that is split into three groupings: Democrats (including Leaners, Independents, and Republicans (including leaners)), and Time from 1965 and 2012. By looking at time, I will be able to look at specific times of increased rhetoric against welfare such as 1981 - 1982 and 1994-1995. Looking at the different groups' opinion of welfare and opinion of people on welfare during specific time periods will show how the rhetoric and events at the time period may have affected public opinion.

Figure 1: Opinion of People on Welfare, by Party, 1976-2012

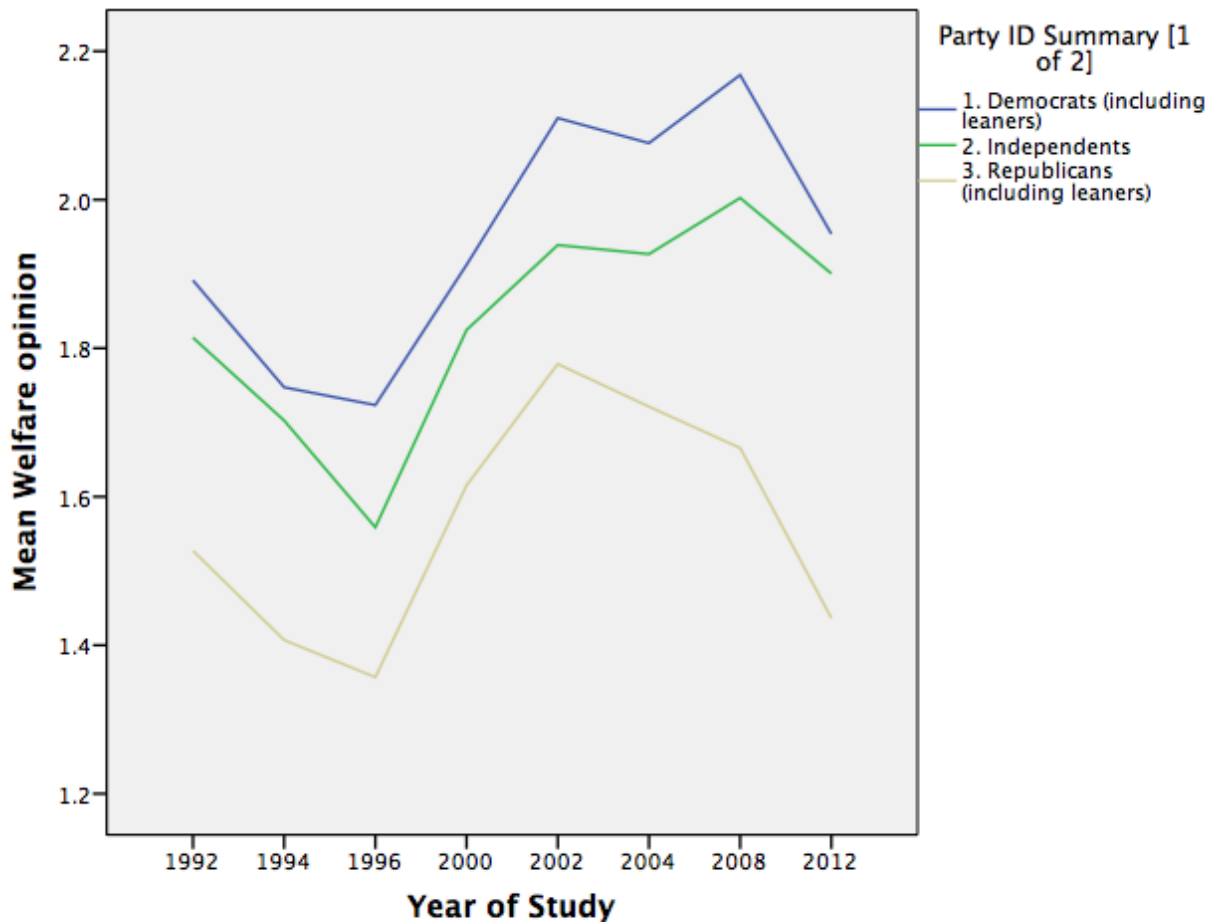


Cases weighted by CDF Weight: 1970 type 0 - 2012 FTF sample

Figure 1 shows the change in the Mean Thermometer: People on Welfare of Democrats, Independents and Republicans between the years of 1976 and 2012. As expected, Democrats have a higher opinion of people on welfare than Republicans do. It also shows that early on Independents are more closely connected to the Democrats, but this changes around 1996 when they dip down and have an opinion that is closer to the Republicans' opinion. This chart also shows that between 1980 and 1986 there is a sharp decline in voters' thermometer ratings of people on welfare; similarly, there is also a large decrease in thermometer ratings between 1990 and 1994. The evidence here points toward a rapid decrease in the opinion about people on welfare that coincides with negative rhetoric against people on welfare that were put forward by Ronald Reagan in the early 1980s and Republicans in Congress in the early 1990s.

Looking at a public opinion of people on welfare when controlling for the respondents' race, the pattern is very similar. Blacks have a higher opinion of people on welfare than those of other races, but the general trend for all races drops sharply in the early 1980s and early 1990s.

Figure 2: Public Opinion of Welfare, 1992-2012



Cases weighted by CDF Weight: 1970 type 0 - 2012 FTF sample

As Figure 2 illustrates, public opinion of the welfare system turned sharply negative in the years preceding the 1996 welfare reform bill. The decrease in mean welfare opinion during the early 1990s supports the argument that negative views of the welfare system developed prior to the passage of welfare reform legislation in 1996. The dramatic increase in support for the welfare system in all groups directly after 1996 suggests that reform strengthened public support for the welfare system in general.

When controlling for race, black respondents' opinion of the welfare system increased slightly between 1994 and 1996, while other groups' support sharply declined. Black support for the welfare system increased more sharply than other groups after passage of the 1996 welfare reform legislation.

Figure 3: Impact of Economy and Welfare Rhetoric on Public Opinion of People on Welfare

	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	17.095	3.678		4.648	0.000***
Periods of Increased Rhetoric	2.945	1.489	0.021	1.977	0.048*
Unemployment Rate (binned)	-9.097	.808	-0.304	-11.255	0.000***
# of Children under 6	0.451	0.434	0.01	1.04	0.299
Race Variable	9.153	0.806	0.122	11.351	0.000***
South	1.296	0.577	0.023	2.247	0.025*
Employment Status	6.484	0.806	0.082	8.046	0.000***
Unemployment Rate	8.56	0.794	0.287	10.774	0.000***
7-pt Scale Party	-1.466	0.138	-0.112	10.652	0.000***

Dependent Variable: Thermometer: People on Welfare

* p<.05; ** p<.01, *** p<.001

R Square: 0.062

Adjusted R Square: 0.062

Next, I conducted two regression analyses to assess the impact of multiple variables on public opinion of people on welfare and public opinion of the welfare system. I find that the same independent variables were statistically significant in both models. Number of children is not significant in either model. The periods of increased rhetoric (1981, 1982, 1995, and 1996) were statistically significant in both models. Periods of sharply negative rhetoric coincide with an increase in support for people on welfare as well as a decrease in support for the welfare system itself. It was less statistically significant in affecting the opinion of people on welfare, being only 0.048, while for the public opinion of the welfare system the periods of increased rhetoric is statistically significant at 0.000. Both do reject the null, but the B value (slope) shows that there is an increase in positive views of people on welfare but a decrease in support for the welfare system during periods of increased rhetoric.

The regression analyses show that many different factors can cause increases and decreases in the opinion of people using the welfare system as well as the opinion of the welfare system as a whole. From the employment status of people to the rhetorical attacks on the welfare system, public opinion is shaped by what is happening to people at a given time and the actual lives that the people have had. When looking at Age, Unemployment Status, Education, Race, Employment status, the 7-Party Scale, and family income, I found that even though they were statistically significant, Lambda and Chi-Squared show that the relationship between these variables and the public opinion of welfare is only weak or moderate. The R Square and Adjusted R Square shows that the independent variables used only account for 0.62% of people’s feelings toward people on welfare. So 99.38% may be explained by other variables. This strengthens the idea that many different factors affect a person’s opinion of welfare as well as the people using it.

Figure 4: Impact of Economy and Welfare Rhetoric on Public Opinion of Welfare

	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	3.259	0.341		9.548	0.000***
Periods of Increased Rhetoric	-3.91	0.046	-0.186	-8.473	0.000***
Unemployment Rate (binned)	0.187	0.077	0.234	2.422	0.016*
# of Children under 6	0.029	0.025	0.024	1.153	0.249
Race Variable	0.084	0.047	0.039	1.798	0.072
South	0.034	0.33	0.021	1.009	0.313
Employment Status	0.276	0.048	0.118	5.747	0.000***
Unemployment Rate	-2.85	0.075	-0.365	-3.77	0.000***
7-pt Scale Party	-0.082	0.008	-0.219	-10.252	0.000***

Dependent Variable: Public Opinion of Welfare

* p<.05; ** p<.01, *** p<.001

R Square: 0.109

Adjusted R Square: 0.106

Discussion

This study is important in a multitude of ways. By looking at the study of public opinion, we can see how this factor affects the different policies being created. This includes policies that already exist, like welfare, and how these policies change because of the different political officials’ vote based on how the public feels about the issue. It is important to see how the opinion of welfare has changed since its expansion and what factors are most influential in a person’s opinion of welfare. It is also valuable to see how the different groups—race, income group, and living location—view the welfare system, and how their opinions differ based on their different characteristics, such as the differing of opinion of blacks and other races. By looking at public opinion during different economic periods, we can learn how the economic situation in the

country can change the view of welfare that people have. This is important in understanding how the different attempts to change welfare came about and why they were so important to the different administrations.

The information that I have found shows that there are many different factors that affect a person's opinion of welfare and that one single variable doesn't affect a person's opinion in a major way. It is the combination of the different variables that helps to form people's opinions. These opinions can be affected by the rhetoric of public figures as it was during the 1980s and later in the 1990s. This is important to know when looking at every type of opinion that people have about different things. The understanding of public opinion of welfare can help to explain the change in welfare that has happened since 1965.

While this study can be used to examine many different facets of public opinion and the welfare system, it still has limitations. One limitation that I found was the use of the time variable. Looking at the different variables over time, especially the economy, reveals that the study was very limited and made it difficult to answer some of the questions that I had about public opinion over time. One reason for this is because much of the studies don't go all the way back to 1965. This forced me to look purely at later time periods when welfare went through more changes. While the American National Election Study had many of the variables I needed, it didn't have all of the ones that I wished to examine. To fix this problem, other surveys would be useful to use along with the ANES.

The next step will be to review different variables that may cause public opinion to differ. It also would be good to look at the effect on the poor that the different welfare reforms and bills have had, at how important welfare was at the time of the welfare reform and at how more current changes to the welfare system have changed public opinion. These variables will be important to the understanding of how the public opinion of welfare is formed and changes.

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