

2 June 2012

Chris Weible & Peter deLeon
policystudiesjournal@gmail.com
Policy Studies Journal

Dear Chris and Peter

We have now completed a significant set of revisions to our article based on the comments you solicited from two reviewers and your own remarks from your letter of May 16.

We made several improvements to the manuscript.

Most importantly, in response to R1, we have revised our discussion of the “underclass” and the “social disorder” frames. In fact, we have completely changed the way we refer to “underclass” (now called “misery and neglect”), in response to the confusion that the use of that term created. We think this reads much more easily.

Second, the reviewer made a good point about the two possible ways of responding to the “social disorder” frame: Piven and Cloward suggest riots signal to society that we need to pay more attention to the poor, but others have argued that the public response to rioting might be less sympathy, even anger. Indeed, we find mixed correlations with this frame and believe the reviewer is right in suggesting the meaning of that frame may have changed from the riots of the 1960s to those of LA in 1992 for example. At the same time, we think we made the right decision in how we coded this. We have revised the text to make clear the point the reviewer suggested, and also explained that our coding is the most conservative with respect to our hypotheses; if we were to incorporate a shift in the meaning of this frame it would simply show an even more rapid acceleration of the “stingy frame” we document.

On the third major point that the reviewer brings up, the use of key-word searches, we believe that reviewer perhaps misunderstood our empirical approach. We have improved the explanation in the revised text. To be clear, we did indeed read the full text of a sample of the articles, and found that both the identification of poverty-related articles and the assignment of individual articles to one of the five frames was accurate (92 or 93 percent of the time, as indicated in the article). Based on these high validity scores where we compared our qualitative judgment based on the full text of the article to the key-word results in a sample of approximately 500 cases, we then use the full results from the key-word searches. These searches themselves do not require any inter-coder reliability scores as the reviewer seems to be requesting because they are fully automated. So, we believe we have addressed this concern by improving the clarity of our explanations in the text. If you as editors disagree and want a second coder to go through the text to provide an inter-coder score for the validity tests, please let us know. However, note that we are looking at validity here, not reliability. Once we determined that the searches are valid, as we think we have done, there is no need to test for reliability as the ProQuest search is presumably going to report the same findings each time, being perfectly reliable.

We appreciate the detailed comments of R1 and believe that we have made the article much more legible, clear, and important by addressing these concerns.

Reviewer 2 made a number of very helpful but smaller suggestions and we have taken all of those into account in the revision.

We believe that manuscript is not substantially improved and look forward to your final decision. Of course, if you want some further clarifications or would prefer that some aspects of the paper be moved to a web-appendix, we can make those changes very quickly and to your specifications.

With best wishes,

Frank Baumgartner and Max Rose