# Title

**Subtitle**

Your Name

POLI 421, Prof. Baumgartner

UNC-Chapel Hill, Spring 2019

# Abstract

Give about 150 words here.

Keywords: framing, content analysis, etc. give 5 keywords

Draft, xxx date

# Title

Introduction here. Explain the topic, your argument, speak in general (conceptual) terms, lay out the gist of your argument. In particular, make your argument right in the first paragraph about what you are going to demonstrate. Maybe it is: “The debate on immigration was transformed by 9/11. In the pre-9/11 world, the debate focused on x. Since 9/11, it has focused on y. By documenting these trends with a content analysis of 15,000 stories in x, y, and z newspapers over 35 years, I show the impact of foreign policy even on domestic policy debates.” Whatever you decide your thesis is, you will then organize the paper to explain the thesis, compare it to previous studies of foreign policy effects, or immigration framing, and then present and explain your data collection and results. Complete the first section by a paragraph such as the following. (This is called a transition paragraph, or a road-map.)

The paper is organized as follows. The next section gives background on the issue based on historical evidence and discusses previous studies of the topic… The following section develops a set of quantitative indicators of how the media has discussed xxx. It explains in detail the methodology chosen and discusses its likely accuracy. The following section presents the results, and their analysis. In the concluding section, I explain the significance of the findings.

# Background (level-A)

Explain the relevant literature and others who have previously studied this topic. Put your study in the context of others who have come before you.

At the end, transition to your own study, based on keywords. Here is what we wrote in the “framing the poor article” you read in class. See how it transitions away from the literature review and points to how we are doing it differently. Also, note that we are NOT MODEST; we take credit for what we are doing. If we don’t believe in what we are doing, why would the reader?

Previous literature has looked quantitatively at selected periods of times, or at a single program, or at changes in the racial composition of recipients. In this study, I examine the multi-dimensional framing during an uninterrupted period of almost 50 years and present a model to connect that framing with the public policy. We see a similar shift in framing, beginning in the mid-to-late 1960s, as that identified by other authors, and show that shift continues to become more negative even to the present day. We develop a similar argument here to that used by Baumgartner and colleagues (2008) in their study of capital punishment, but we make key adjustments to their methods. Most importantly, our coding of media coverage is based on a sophisticated set of key-word counts, not manual coding from the printed *Index* as the previous authors did. We explain our coding procedures below.

# Data Collection and Measurement (Level-A)

Explain here how you did your data collection. Here is how we explained it in the “framing the poor” article. This is a good template, but obviously you will revise to explain how you did your own.

## New York Times Stories on Poverty (Level-B)

Our first task is to identify all stories from 1960 to 2008 on the topic of poverty in the United States. First, we identified the common terms used to refer to situations of poverty, such as “poverty,” “welfare,” “low-income,” and “impoverished,” and developed an initial string of search terms. We developed these terms interactively over several weeks of searching, experimenting, and paying attention to the validity of the terms in different historical periods. We examined the *New York Times Index* for years in each decade, adjusting the string of terms in each decade to reflect the changing terms used to discuss poverty. Based on becoming familiar with the terms used by perusing the annual indices over the entire time period of our study, we then used the on-line version of the *New York Times* available through ProQuest, and limited our search to the abstract or citation so as to find the articles that focus primarily on poverty. The data covers the period between 1960 and 2007, the most recent year available through ProQuest. The searches restrict the occurrence of “false hits,” those stories that do not focus on US poverty, by excluding articles that include one of a number of different terms. Like our primary keywords, the string of excluded terms varies for each decade. For example, the search for the 1980s excludes stories that mention the Cold War because they generally relate to poverty in the Soviet Union. Determining the final sets of excluded terms required 200 different searches. Our test, based on reading a systematic sample of the stories retrieved, revealed that 92.3 percent of the stories were “true hits”—stories about US poverty issues. [[1]](#footnote-1) Table 1 shows our string of search terms. [[2]](#footnote-2)

(Insert Table 1 about here)

To determine whether the *New York Times* reflected a general focus that appeared in many newspapers across the country, or followed its own idiosyncratic trends with respect to welfare and poverty coverage, we compared it to four other newspapers: *Baltimore Sun*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times* and *Chicago Tribune*. We chose those newspapers for their political and geographic diversity, as well as the availability of their archives through ProQuest (and therefore the ability to precisely replicate the methods used in *The New York Times*). The *Chicago Tribune* is traditionally identified as a conservative newspaper. By including the remaining newspapers, spread across the country, we demonstrate the existence of national trends in focus on poverty. The search terms for the other newspapers are identical to those outlined in Table 1, with a few additional exclusions to prevent counting articles multiple times.[[3]](#footnote-3) Figure 1 shows the number of stories over time.

(Insert Figure 1 about here)

Figure 1 shows the results of searching according to the terms laid out in Table 1 for five different newspapers, as indicated. The *New York Times*, in the dark solid line, peaks with over 1,000 articles in the late-1960s and declines from there. Other newspapers are available only for shorter time periods but they show remarkably similar trends, suggesting that media attention to the War on Poverty was not the invention of a single newspaper but truly reflected a national mood toward greater concern during the period of heightened governmental focus on this issue.[[4]](#footnote-4) Once we identified the total number of articles on poverty for a given year, we did additional key-word searches to identify what frames of poverty were most prominent in the debate.

## Five Frames

By reading some 560 articles in *The New York Times* that resulted from our search, we were able to see the many different arguments about poverty and group them into broad themes. We identify five distinct frames. Each of these encompasses considerable diversity, but we can summarize them as follows:

* Misery and Neglect: the poor constitute a separate society living in urban slums.
* Social Disorder: the poor commit crimes or riot in the streets, causing policymakers to focus on the dangers of failure to address the concerns of the poor.
* Economic and Physical Barriers: the poor are without money because of temporary economic conditions, disabilities, or old age.
* Laziness and Dysfunction: the poor avoid work and are content to stay at home and have children.
* Cheating: the poor take advantage of the welfare system, to get rich and reap undeserved benefits.

Each of those five frames encompasses many subframes. For example, the misery and neglect frame includes articles about homelessness and slum living. The laziness and dysfunction frame includes single mothers and welfare dependency. Through reading dozens of articles as well as a review of the relevant literature, we identified the language that most often accompanies each frame in newspaper articles. In an interactive manner similar to how we refined our searches for poverty stories in general, we developed a string of search terms for each of the five frames, and these are shown in Table 2.[[5]](#footnote-5)

(Insert Table 2 about here)

Table 2 shows the different search strings we used to identify the five ways of thinking about poverty that are common in the US discourse. Figure 2 shows the trends for the *New York Times* in how many times each frame occurred over time.[[6]](#footnote-6) (See Appendix B for a discussion of how closely the framing found in the *New York Times* data corresponds to that in other newspapers.)

(Insert Figure 2 about here)

Figure 2 shows the percent of stories identified by frame in a stacked-area format, summing therefore to 100 percent for each year. The frames are ordered with the three more generous ones at the bottom and the two stingy frames at the top. The data make very clear that the early period of media discussion of poverty was marked by a distinctly positive tone of discussion. The poor were discussed in terms of the notion of “misery and neglect;” there was significant discussion of the threat of violence and social disorder associated with hopelessness and despair; and the economic and physical barriers to rising out of poverty were important elements of the debate. Together, these positive or generous frames toward the poor constituted over 90 percent of the coverage in the first years of the series. Attention to “welfare queens” and other “cheating” or “lazy” frames was rare at first but grew significantly in the 1970s. The “cheating” frame grew especially quickly in the 1970s and declined in later years; it may never have had the numerical dominance in the debate that it may have had in some elements of popular culture and scholarship (at least not in the mainstream media sources surveyed here). The “lazy” frame grew throughout the period, from a tiny percentage of the total to the single largest element of the debate by the early 21st century.

The way in which the public views a public issue determines the possible solutions, according to Kingdon (1984). Kingdon starts with thinking about which items reach the political agenda out of all the problems on which policymakers could focus. After identifying those problems, policymakers have a number of alternatives for government action (Kingdon 1984, 4). If lawmakers believe that welfare keeps recipients from working, than they would look for alternatives that involve a stingier government, because reducing aid would solve the issue of dependency. On the other hand, if the problem with poverty stems from economic barriers, the alternatives would likely advocate a more generous government, creating jobs or investing in education. In this study, the misery and neglect and economic and physical barriers frames would likely lead to consideration of alternatives associated with more expansive government programs, so we call those “generous frames.” The laziness and dysfunction and cheating frames would result in the consideration of more restrictive alternatives, and we call those “stingy frames.”

The social disorder frame is more complex, as many scholars have debated whether rioting and protest lead to contraction or expansions in the welfare state. To Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward (1971), the welfare state expands for the purpose of maintaining social disorder, so it should be a generous frame. However, Durnam (1973) and Albritton (1979) found disorder to be unrelated to the expansion of the rolls of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). In a state-level analysis of AFDC rolls, Fording (1997) found evidence that this disorder can bring expanded relief, but that this relief is dependent on the strength of the group’s electorate and of the group’s resistance. Here, we find that the disorder frame emerged in two waves: first, with the urban riots of the 1960s and secondly, with the Los Angeles riots of the early 1990s. In the first case, the frame is associated with a large increase in government generosity, while the second wave correlates with the continuing decrease that has occurred for much of the last 30 years.[[7]](#footnote-7) In the end, we include our disorder frame as part of the generous frame but we recognize that public understanding of it may well have shifted; clearly the response to the LA riots was different from that of those of the 1960s, as Americans were much less supportive of the uprising.

There is no doubt that media discussion of the poor has shifted. While there is no single date on which we can pinpoint a shift in framing, we see a gradual movement from greater focus on the structural causes of poverty, individual barriers to moving out of poverty, and the collective dangers of having too many people living in conditions of despair. Slowly, elite conversations shifted to focus on the poor exploiting the welfare system for un-deserved financial gains and the dysfunctional nature of poverty assistance programs. This may be part of a larger process in which individual rather than collective frames have become increasingly prominent, and they may correspond to an increase in what Mark Smith has dubbed “The Right Talk” in which conservative rhetoric has simply become more prominent over the decades (see Smith 2007). Robert Cox has suggested that this shift, from social policy based on universality and solidarity to social policy based on individuality, has taken place throughout the Western world because of the collective impact of small changes to the welfare state (Cox 1998). Michael Katz cites three factors contributing to a new policy and rhetoric: the use of market models, a dispersion from federal to the states of authority for making policy, and a coordinated effort against perceived dependency (Katz 2001). Rather than focus here on where these shifting frames came from, in the next sections we address the question of what effect they may have had on public spending toward the poor.

# Next Section, maybe more Data, or maybe not, depending

In the “Framing the Poor” article we went on to measure some other things, so our data section was quite long. You may or may not have more data after your discussion of how your issue has been framed over time.

# Discussion / Analysis

No matter how long your section is where you are explaining your data collection and what you found, now comes the time to discuss its implications. Speaking in conceptual terms rather than just in terms of your keywords, how do you interpret the results? What do they show? How does this relate to the question you posed, or the thesis you presented, in the first paragraph of your paper?

Here is how we wrote it up in the “Faming the Poor” article.

# How the Poor Got Framed

In 2008, the poverty gap stood at $140 billion dollars and was growing dramatically; in 1960, before the establishment of most poverty assistance programs, the gap (measured in constant 2005 dollars) was about $60 billion and was reduced from there. There is little chance that future policymakers will move to address the poverty issue in the next decade. Conservative attacks on government spending, concerns about the size of the deficit, and “fiscal responsibility” will keep spending from growing even though we can expect poverty to increase dramatically. With unemployment hovering at over 9 percent and little prospect for a quick economic recovery, many will remain in poverty and that poverty may become deeper and deeper. Further, as Mead (2011) has shown, the new elite discourse on the poor is not simply conservative or ideologically right-wing. Rather, he argues that it has shifted from an abstract ideological stance to one more focused on more operational issues of “what works” and on a long-standing unease at the idea of recipients not working for the benefits they receive. Our data suggest that this focus on the individual, as opposed to the system, may be one of the most important elements of the general ideological ascendance of neo-liberalism in American politics since the 1970s. The “stingy” frames we have documented are part of a larger trend toward skepticism of governmental activism, especially that directed toward the disadvantaged.

All public policies incorporate many possible ways of thinking about them, and public attention can shift from one aspect of the issue to another over time. Policymakers, members of the public, and journalists once focused on aspects of poverty that are beyond the control of those who find themselves with dire economic prospects or which focus on the collective costs to all Americans from having large numbers of poor. This resulted in a large decrease in the amount of poverty in this country. From this initial focus, associated with optimistic efforts to alleviate poverty and which justified massive interventions and spending, the public has given up, tired, frustrated, and discouraged. Collectively, attention now focuses on what we have called the “stingy” frames: the poor are individually responsible for their problems, and government efforts to help them may do more harm than good. We have shifted from an overwhelming focus on one side of the coin to an equally disproportionate focus on the other side. And policy has followed the framing.

Our focus has been on a narrow definition of media framing that obviously cannot capture all aspects of public discussion. This is because we wanted to develop a single indicator of the state of public or media discussion of poverty and associate that with an indicator of the policy response to it. The two indicators do indeed correspond, indicating that measures of media framing can be very helpful in explaining government spending priorities, even in a statistical sense. The ten-year lag is a surprise, as the existing literature does not suggest that policy should take so long to follow framing changes. However, it suggests that there may be a different dynamic when dealing with issues of spending than with a policy like the death penalty. At a time like today, when there is a focus on balanced budgets and reducing the deficit, it is easy to imagine large cuts in means-tested spending with little attention to the poor. Government generosity might decrease when the media simply pays less attention, with what little there is focused on a negative social construction. Perhaps the surprise in our story is not the gradual decline in generosity, but the initial surge. Building political support for the large-scale efforts to fight poverty in the 1960s was associated with extraordinary social discussions about the need to do so; our data make this clear and also how unusual that period was. The early post-war years saw a number of bold programs designed to harness the great power of the US government, often in conjunction with the private sector, to solve a number of ills. Nuclear power was going to create electricity “too cheap to meter;” pesticides would usher in a new era a agricultural bounty and put an end to hunger world-wide (see Baumgartner and Jones 1993); the civil rights movement seemed destined to transform society; and so on. Perhaps it is best to view our collective enthusiasm about the War on Poverty in light of these other efforts. In the case of poverty, as in these others, the initial enthusiasm associated with the earlier period has given way to great pessimism. In contrast to the dangers of nuclear power or the excesses of the “green revolution,” in the case of poverty we may currently be overlooking the degree of success that the initial programs had. Poverty was decreased by a substantial degree. But enthusiasm for government action faded away nonetheless.

We make no claims that our simple indicators capture the entire story. But we do think they capture some essentials, allowing us to look over two generations of poverty policy, and contributing to an explanation of a set of conundrums, such as why the War on Poverty took place, and why it has been abandoned. While our measures of framing do not capture all aspects of the public debate, we think that readers familiar with congressional debates surrounding President Clinton’s welfare reform, those wondering why President Obama has not introduced proposals to fight poverty, those who can remember President Reagan’s claims about “young bucks” using their welfare checks to buy T-bone steaks, or those who know about President Johnson’s urgent appeals to create a “war on poverty” should be able to see a correspondence between our simple measures and a broader reality. Public focus has changed. And policy has followed.

# Tables and Figures

Table 1. Search Terms Used to Identify Poverty-Related Stories, 1960–2007.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Decade** | **Search Terms** |
| **2000s** | ENHAI(welfare OR poverty OR "low-income" OR "public housing" OR needy OR ghetto OR indigent OR impoverished) AND PDN(>1/1/2000) AND PDN(<12/31/2007) AND NOT ("endangering the welfare" OR Haiti OR Nazi OR Brazil OR China OR Africa OR India OR Iraq OR Europe OR Afghanistan OR animal) AND NOT AT(review) |
| **1990s** | ENHAI(welfare OR poverty OR low-income OR "public housing" OR ghetto OR needy OR indigent OR impoverished) AND PDN(>1/1/1990) AND PDN(<12/31/1999) AND NOT (Haiti OR "endangering the welfare" OR "Cold War" OR Iraq OR "United Nations" OR Brazil OR China OR Africa OR India OR Europe OR animal OR Soviet OR Russia OR Holocaust) AND NOT AT(review) |
| **1980s** | ENHAI(ghetto OR welfare OR poverty OR low-income OR "public housing" OR needy OR indigent OR impoverished) AND PDN(>1/1/1980) AND PDN(<12/31/1989) AND NOT (Rome OR Nazi OR Germany OR Panama OR "Central America" OR "Latin America" OR Haiti OR "Cold War" OR United Nations OR Brazil OR China OR Europe OR animal OR Soviet OR Russia OR India OR Africa) AND NOT AT(review) |
| **1970s** | ENHAI(ghetto OR (welfare AND NOT "Health, Education and Welfare") OR poverty OR low-income OR "public housing" OR slum OR needy OR indigent OR impoverished) AND PDN(>1/1/1970) AND PDN(<12/31/1979) AND NOT (Ireland OR Nazi OR Cuba OR Iran OR Germany OR Rome OR Brazil OR "Cold War" OR United Nations OR China OR India OR Europe OR animal OR Soviet OR Africa) AND NOT AT(review)For 9/5/1973 – 5/31/1978:ENHAI(ghetto OR (welfare AND NOT "Health, Education and Welfare") OR poverty OR low-income OR "public housing" OR slum OR needy OR indigent OR impoverished) AND PDN(>9/5/1973) AND PDN(<5/31/1978) AND NOT (Ireland OR Nazi OR Cuba OR Iran OR Germany OR Rome OR Brazil OR "Cold War" OR United Nations OR China OR India OR Europe OR animal OR Soviet OR Africa) AND NOT AT(front\_page OR review) |
| **1960s** | ENHAI(ghetto OR (welfare AND NOT "Health, Education and Welfare") OR poverty OR low-income OR "public housing" OR slum OR needy OR indigent OR impoverished) AND PDN(>1/1/1960) AND PDN(<12/31/1969) AND NOT (Israeli OR Japan OR Russia OR Nazi OR Europe OR Germany OR Brazil OR Rome OR "United Nations" OR China OR India OR Cuba OR Soviet OR animal OR Africa) AND NOT AT(Review) |

*Note:* The study uses two different strings of search terms for the 1970s because an error in ProQuest caused indexed in the database as “front\_page” to be counted twice. ENHAI limits the search to the abstract, and citation, not the full text.

Table 2. Identifying Five Frames of Poverty through Electronic Search Terms

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Frame** | **Search Terms** |
| **Misery and Neglect** | poverty-stricken OR "urban renewal" OR despair OR shelter OR bleak OR blight OR hunger OR ghetto OR "neediest cases" OR homeless OR slum |
| **Social Disorder** | anger OR police OR killing OR violence OR "civil right" OR crime OR gang OR riot OR demonstrator OR (strike W/3 rent OR welfare OR worker OR union) OR protest OR ("community action" AND NOT "community action agency") |
| **Economic and Physical Barriers** | (student W/1 aid OR needy OR loan OR disadvantaged) OR industrial OR wage OR economy OR "affordable housing" OR "unemployment rate" OR disabled OR "poor children" OR elderly OR aged |
| **Laziness and Dysfunction** | able-bodied OR dependency OR "work requirement" OR mother OR "welfare family" OR father OR "welfare hotel" OR (drug AND NOT Medicaid OR Medicare OR company OR prescription) OR abortion OR "child welfare" OR workfare OR "welfare to work" |
| **Cheating** | chiseler OR cheat OR fraud OR ineligible OR overpayment OR corruption OR audit |

Note: These searches were run on the results obtained after searching for poverty-related stories through the search terms reported in Table 1.

Figure 1. Attention to Poverty in Five US Newspapers.

Figure 2. Five Frames of Media Attention to Poverty.



# References

Albritton, Robert B. 1979. “Social Amelioration through Mass Insurgency? A reexamination of the Piven and Cloward Thesis.” *American Political Science Review*. 4(December): 1003–1011.

Avery, James M., and Mark Peffley. 2003. “Race Matters: The Impact of News Coverage of Welfare Reform on Public Opinion.” In *Race and the Politics of Welfare Reform*, ed. Sanford Schram, Joe Soss, and Richard C. Fording. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 131–150.

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# Appendix A. Measuring Government Aid to the Poor

These are just excerpts from the appendices in our paper. The idea is that if you do anything complicated, and it reads like along detour away from the main point, just put it in an appendix, and then explain it there. When you explain it, the idea is that if someone were to come along five years later and want to replicated exactly what you did, they could read your appendix and understand how to do it. A lot of what we put in here is called “robustness checking” (aka “bomb-proofing”) – just anticipating flaws that someone might raise, and explaining how you already thought of that, and it’s not a problem.

1. The search strings reported in Table 1 are the result of weeks of interactive adjustments to our procedures. For each year ending in 3, 6 or 9, we read 20 stories from the beginning of the year and 20 from the end. Of the 560 articles read through these procedures, 517 were true hits, reflecting a 92.3 percent accuracy of the searches. Of course, it is impossible to know how many stories we may have missed. We do believe these search terms have accurately assessed the level of attention to poverty across time, however. Even if we missed a certain percentage of all stories, trends over time would not be affected unless the percentage omitted differed across time, which we have no reason to expect. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Note that the terms listed in Table 1 represent the end product of an extensive set of tests and experiments designed to isolate a set of terms that accurately reflect poverty issues. The 92 percent accuracy attests to the refinements we made in the terms based on our initial trial-and-error efforts. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For example, the *Los Angeles Times* has many different versions, so that identical articles, which appear both in the San Fernando edition and the San Gabriel edition, often appear in a search as different articles. To eliminate this problem, the search in the *Los Angeles Times* excludes the articles in the San Fernando, San Gabriel, Orange County, San Diego, and valley editions. To mitigate this variability between newspapers, we read dozens of articles in each of the non-*New York Times* newspapers and excluded articles that contained a number of different terms. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Correlations between the total coverage in the *New York Times* and the four other papers shown in Figure 1 are: .92, .90, .84, and .92. Other newspapers correlate with each other at similar levels; the lowest correlation among all the newspapers reported is .84. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. To check the accuracy of the data, we read 20 *New York Times* articles in each decade for each frame. Out of the 500 articles, 467, or 93.7%, were positive hits. Because the positive hits represent such a majority of the framing searches, we use all of the articles. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Note that the keyword searches conducted to construct Table 2 are not mutually exclusive. An article selected through the procedures explained in Table 1 might appear in none, one, or more than one of the categories in Table 2. However, despite the non-exclusive and non-exhaustive nature of the search process used, the results do show trends over time that correspond with qualitative research in the area and with our own understandings of shifts in the nature of the debate. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Although the impact of disorder is clearly mixed, we code it as a generous frame because it correlates negatively with the stingy frames. However, the misery and neglect and laziness and dysfunction drive the changes in framing during the time period of this data. Statistically, our count of stories relating to disorder correlates weakly with either the generous frame or with spending. We code it as part of the generous frame partly because doing so underestimates, rather than overestimates, the strength of the changes we document. If we were to revise the coding of these stories in the later part of our series, as may be reasonable, this would only make the shift towards stingy frames even more remarkable. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)