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BRUCE N. REED
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR DOMESTIC POLICY
WELFARE REFORM FILES (1993-2000)
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THE PUBLIC AGENDA FOUNDATION



April 17, 1996

Mr. Bruce Reed
Deputy Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy
The White House
Old Executive Office Building - Room 213
Washington, DC 20500

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Much has been written and said about welfare reform. To learn more about Americans' views on this issue and to understand the reasoning behind their thinking, Public Agenda recently undertook a survey on welfare reform. The result of this research is *The Values We Live By: What Americans Want From Welfare Reform* and I have enclosed a copy for your review. This study will be released to the media on April 24th.

The public's views are complex and multi-layered, and neither conservatives nor liberals will find hearty endorsements of their position. What is unquestionable, however, is the degree of anger people feel toward a system which in their minds undermines the very values they most cherish. Even if government could provide the current system at far less cost and with no fraud whatsoever, people would continue to be angry. Americans resent being asked to support a system which, in their view, rewards individuals for not working, while it fosters long-term idleness and complacency.

Americans believe strongly in the centrality of work, responsibility and self-discipline in their lives, and want the centerpiece of any reform to reinforce these values. They exempt practically no one from the requirement to work -- not a mother with small children nor a mentally or physically handicapped recipient. Eighty-five percent of Americans say, "If welfare recipients were required to do something in exchange for their benefits -- even if it was just raking leaves or cleaning roads -- I would be satisfied."

Simultaneously, the belief in a safety net for those truly in need remains strong among Americans with only 4% saying welfare should be eliminated altogether. But Americans across all demographic categories feel welfare as it now stands is fundamentally misguided; the values and lifestyle it promotes are unacceptable; work should be the key goal of reform; and change should be comprehensive, not piecemeal.

Sincerely,

Deborah Wadsworth
Executive Director

THE VALUES WE LIVE BY: What Americans Want From Welfare Reform

Finding One: Americans Are Deeply Frustrated and Offended by Welfare, but Reducing the Cost to Taxpayers Will Not Eliminate Their Resentment

An overwhelming percentage of Americans believe welfare is badly flawed and urgently in need of overhaul. Even among Americans from households receiving welfare benefits, only a handful think welfare should be left as it stands. While the cost of welfare bothers Americans, most say that is not their fundamental concern. Instead, the public worries that welfare promotes the wrong lifestyle and values.

Finding Two: Americans Are Angry about Welfare Fraud, but Even If Fraud Were Eliminated, They Would Still Resent the System

Welfare fraud is an immediate and vexing concern to a substantial majority of Americans, but like the cost issues, it is not what they consider the preeminent problem. Strong majorities take welfare cheating seriously and favor a proposal to pay surprise visits to welfare recipients to make sure they deserve their benefits. Even respondents from households receiving welfare benefits subscribe to these views by sizable majorities. But most Americans do not believe that welfare programs suffer from more fraud than other government programs. They are more troubled by those who abuse the system by staying on it too long than by people who cheat. If all welfare reform accomplished were to squeeze fraud out of the system, most Americans say they would still be dissatisfied.

Finding Three: Americans are Outraged by Welfare Because They Believe It Fosters an Addictive and Self-Destructive Lifestyle that Mocks the Values They Live By

Americans are morally indignant that while they struggle and work hard, welfare recipients are spared these pressures. A large majority of Americans thinks welfare recipients stay on the rolls too long and do not try hard enough to get off. Moreover, they are frustrated with the incentives and results of the welfare system. They believe welfare is addictive and passed on from generation to generation. They believe it encourages recipients not to work and undermines their work ethic. And welfare, according to most Americans, fosters the wrong values. These impressions seem based on more than media images. Most Americans say they have personally seen someone abusing the welfare system.

Finding Four: Even Though Americans Are Deeply Offended by the Current System, They Still Want the Government to Help Those in Need

Although Americans are outraged by how welfare works and the values it promotes, very few would eliminate welfare altogether. In fact, many believe welfare has done some good for the poor; and most believe government has a role to play in protecting the economic well being of the needy. When the study presented respondents with nine hypothetical welfare applicants from different circumstances — ranging from a physically and mentally handicapped man from a poor family, to a single mother who quit her job because of a lack of health benefits — majorities said they would grant eight of them welfare benefits. But while Americans want a safety net to catch people beaten down by tough times, they want it to be a temporary intervention that allows people to catch their breath and jump back into the fray. Most think welfare has utterly failed in this regard.

Finding Five: Americans Want a Welfare System That Requires Work from the Very Beginning — Community Service for Anyone Receiving Benefits and a Transition to Paying Jobs as Quickly as Possible

Americans strongly believe that welfare recipients should work and would exempt practically no one from this requirement. A majority think welfare recipients— even a mentally and physically handicapped recipient— should be required to do community service in exchange for benefits. Most Americans hope recipients will become workers who pay taxes, and a large majority would require job training and education programs to help make this happen. But while a majority would invest time and money to retrain recent welfare applicants for quality jobs, a majority would also push long-term welfare recipients to work as quickly as possible, even in menial jobs. These findings are consistent, with little variation across respondents from different demographic backgrounds.

Finding Six: Americans Believe That Mothers on Welfare Should Work — Just Like Other Recipients and Mothers in Most Working Families

The value Americans place on work carries over to mothers on welfare. A strong majority do not think welfare mothers should be allowed to stay home and care for their children. While the public would grant benefits to mothers applying for welfare — including those who have children out of wedlock — strong majorities would also require them to perform community service in exchange for their benefits and to enroll in job training and education programs. To make all of this feasible, the public would add child care benefits. These findings consistently hold true for all respondents, regardless of demographic differences.

Finding Seven: Americans Support Reforms — Including Time Limits — Which They Believe Will Get Recipients Working. They Are Far Less Interested in Reforms That Seem Tangential to That Goal

In the public's view, work should be the centerpiece of welfare reform. Thus, Americans rally in decisive numbers to the cause of reforms they think will direct recipients toward work. Most Americans are not interested in simply punishing welfare recipients — for example, few think cutting benefits is key. But neither do they want to coddle recipients. People are largely unconcerned that getting welfare may be a humiliating experience or that benefits are too low.

Finding Eight: Many Americans Have Not Fully Wrestled with the Possible Consequences of the Reforms They Support

Americans are certain that welfare is fundamentally misguided; they have a clear sense about what bothers them; and they are attracted to reforms which focus on getting recipients to work. But their support for different reform planks is pragmatic and nonideological — they support reforms they think will work. If such measures as time limits or job training programs bring unforeseen consequences — like substantially more homeless or expansion of the welfare rolls — many would reconsider their support. Focus groups also indicate that in discussions, many Americans develop an increased recognition that reforming welfare is more complex than they had thought. But rather than giving up, they often redouble their efforts and attempt to work through these complexities.

Finding Nine: Economic Insecurity Spurs Sympathy Toward Welfare, But Most Americans Continue to Prize Individual Effort

Americans who are economically insecure — who worry about losing their jobs and not keeping up with their bills — are often more sympathetic toward the welfare system. But although many Americans acknowledge the impact of an adverse economy, most still feel their country offers enough economic opportunity so that those who make the effort can succeed.

Finding Ten: Although African-Americans Are More Sympathetic Toward Welfare than Whites, They Also Have Deep Misgivings About the System and Support the Same Reforms

While African-Americans and white Americans sometimes see welfare through different lenses, their views on the core questions — what is wrong with welfare and how to fix it — are strikingly similar. Both groups share common ground in their concern that welfare encourages the wrong values and fosters a dependent lifestyle. Both groups strongly agree that work should be the centerpiece of reform — even for mothers on welfare. They also agree in their support of time limits and other reforms.

Special Focus: Florida, New York, and Illinois

In all three states, residents are in general agreement with the nation as a whole on the principal findings in this report: The welfare system is badly flawed; it traps recipients in a lifestyle of dependency; and its most urgent priority should be to move recipients into the working world. This section highlights areas where the three states vary from the rest of the country. As with African-Americans, these are mostly differences of degree, not of kind. Overall, it is the underlying commonalities among these very different state populations that are most striking.

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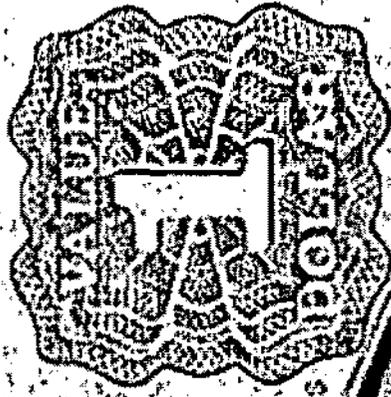
Public Agenda is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that seeks to raise the level of public discussion about critical policy choices facing the nation. Copies of *The Values We Live By: What Americans Want From Welfare Reform* are available from Public Agenda, 6 East 39th Street, New York, NY 10016. Tel: 212/686-6610, Fax 212/889-3461 (\$10 each, or \$5 for 10 or more copies. Please add \$2.50 for shipping and handling on one book, \$5 for 2-5 books, or \$10 for 6-25 books.)

**The Values We Live By:
What Americans Want
From Welfare Reform**

A REPORT FROM PUBLIC AGENDA



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THE POLLS—TRENDS WELFARE

R. KENT WEAVER
ROBERT Y. SHAPIRO
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The Republican victories in the 1994 congressional elections have led to a shift in government attention from the highly controversial issue of health care reform, which failed to win enactment in the 103d Congress, to welfare reform, another of President Bill Clinton's legislative priorities. In his 1992 presidential campaign, Clinton promised to "end welfare as we know it" and to move people from income assistance to work. In the abstract, there has long been a bipartisan consensus favoring work over cash welfare payments, and favoring significant welfare reform. The current controversy is over how to reform the welfare system, with Republicans pushing for reforms that will turn over increased responsibility to the states, increase disincentives to out-of-wedlock births, and reduce federal expenditures, while Democrats have stressed the need to provide additional child care and job guarantees while protecting poor children.

The available trend data show continuities as well as changes that have occurred since public opinion toward welfare and related issues was last reported in this section of *POQ* (Shapiro et al. 1987a, 1987b). One of the most stable elements of American public opinion in the United States is the unpopularity of "welfare," the general label for public assistance programs in the United States that is most commonly applied to the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) pro-

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gram. An increasing majority of the public believes that the public assistance system does not work well (see question 1 below). Welfare has come to connote dependence—and even fraud—and the welfare system is perceived to have greater negative than positive effects (questions 2 and 3). Majorities of the public are concerned that welfare benefits may be too high and that welfare encourages long-term dependence, and that many welfare recipients do not want to work (questions 6–12). "Welfare," in short, is perceived as being at odds with the widely shared American values of individualism and the work ethic.

In contrast to this resentment of welfare, there is also strong support for helping people in genuine need, although this has eroded in recent years (questions 13–15). The public clearly values both maintenance of incentives for individual initiative and helping the truly needy, and it has not reached a consensus on which value is more important (questions 16 and 17). Nor has it reached a consensus on whether government should try vigorously to reduce income differentials or guarantee a job to everyone (questions 18–20).

This ambivalence toward providing income assistance (see Feldman and Zaller 1992) explains why measures of public opinion on public assistance issues are affected strikingly by the connotations of words used to describe the policies (see Cook and Barrett 1992; Rasinski 1989; Smith 1987). Most notably, a plurality (and recently apparently a majority) of the public thinks that government spends too much on welfare, but support for government spending increases dramatically when the phrasing is changed to "assistance to the poor" or similar more specific phrases connoting especially deserving or sympathetic recipients such as "poor children" and "the homeless," or for job training and employment programs to get recipients off welfare (questions 21–33). Similarly, support is much stronger for spending on "food programs for low-income families" than for the Food Stamp program (questions 34–37). Public support for spending to assist "the poor" is fairly strong and stable, although not quite as strong as support for medical care and social security (cf. Baggette, Shapiro, and Jacobs 1995; Cook and Barrett 1992; Jacobs, Shapiro, and Schulman 1993). This public support for social welfare policies, however, has (nearly across the board, with the exception of education) remained less than that in Canada and European welfare states (see Shapiro and Young 1989).

The changes in public opinion that have occurred are interesting and politically important. The last report in *POQ* reviewed the "right turn" in public opinion that occurred before Ronald Reagan's presidency, followed by a liberal rebound as the country went through a deep recession (see Ferguson and Rogers 1986; Mayer 1992; Page and Shapiro 1992; Shapiro et al. 1987b; Stimson 1991). During President

George Bush's one term and its recession, public support increased further for government activism on welfare and health care issues (see, e.g., Jacobs, Shapiro, and Schulman 1993).

The Clinton administration and the Democratic Party both continued to have a strong edge over their Republican rivals in public confidence on dealing with welfare reform issues in 1993, but this advantage strikingly reversed by the end of 1994 (questions 39-42; though Clinton and the Democrats are still better trusted to "help the poor" or disadvantaged; other data not shown). The survey data show that during Clinton's first 2 years in office, the public moved back in a conservative direction (see Bowman 1994; Shapiro, Jacobs, and Harvey 1995; Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press 1994). These trends are shown in the data below across a wide array of opinions and attitudes: toward government spending (with apparent public sensitivity beginning in the Reagan years to the federal budget deficit), toward the perceived responsibility and other behavior of the poor (to be sure, with some likely racial connotations), toward economic redistribution, and toward some specific proposed welfare reforms. These changes have occurred in reaction to partisan politics (support for spending on the poor tends to be higher when Republicans are in the White House), the perceived performance of the Clinton administration, and an improving economy (see Weaver, Shapiro, and Jacobs 1995). But there is also remarkable opinion stability in many cases, despite a vehement public debate and very bold policy changes passed by the House of Representatives in mid-1995 (some of which have been challenged by the Senate bill in September 1995, so that the House-Senate differences remain to be resolved at this writing). Given the cyclical nature of public opinion on spending on the poor, it is not clear that the recent conservative shift in opinion on welfare issues will last.

Examining trends in public opinion toward particular proposed welfare reform proposals (questions 43-53) currently being debated is hampered by the paucity thus far of identically worded survey questions repeated over time. According to both the available trend data and single survey items (not presented), several approaches to welfare reform—some seemingly liberal, others clearly conservative—enjoy broad public support. Employment, job training, and subsidies for child care enjoy especially broad approval, at the 80-90 percent level and higher (see also Shapiro et al. 1987a). Paying transportation costs and providing public sector jobs are less universally but still quite broadly supported by the public (about two-thirds of respondents). The public is particularly supportive of work requirements for noncustodial parents who are not paying child support and is most willing to exempt the mothers of very young children from such requirements. But the data show that public support for applying work requirements even to

mothers of young children increased substantially from 1994 to 1995. This strong preference for work is apparently matched by some willingness to pay more taxes in order to provide job training and public service employment.

Disincentives approaches to reforming welfare enjoy mixed support. Denying an increase in welfare benefits to mothers who bear children while on welfare, known as "family caps," appears to be most popular compared, for example, with denying unmarried teen mothers access to welfare, another element of the welfare reform package included in the House bill but rejected by the Senate. Time limits on the receipt of welfare benefits, such as the 2-year limit currently being debated, have evoked substantial support, most strikingly when the deadline is followed by a community service or job requirement.

The survey data reported here were compiled from searches of survey archives and published and unpublished sources, including the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research's on-line Public Opinion Location Library (POLL), *The Public Perspective: A Roper Center Review of Public Opinion and Polling*, the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR, University of Michigan), the Harris survey and other data holdings of the Institute for Research in Social Science (IRSS, University of North Carolina), and Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press (1994). Earlier data and references can be found in Shapiro et al. (1987a, 1987b). Further information about these data and other related data can be obtained from the Roper Center, ICPSR, IRSS, and the specific survey organizations and references listed below.

Appendix

Abbreviations

- ABC/WP: American Broadcasting Company/*Washington Post*
- AP: Associated Press
- AP/MG: Associated Press/Media General
- CBS/NYT: Columbia Broadcasting System/*New York Times*
- GALLUP: Gallup Organization
- Kaiser/Harvard: Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health, survey by KRC/Communications Research
- LAT: *Los Angeles Times*
- Marist: Marist Institute for Public Opinion, Marist College
- NBC/AP: National Broadcasting Corporation/Associated Press
- NBC/BW: Blum and Weprin for NBC News
- NBC/WSJ: National Broadcasting Corporation/*Wall Street Journal*, surveys conducted by Peter Hart, Bregio Research, and Robert Teeter Companies

NES: American National Election Studies, Center for Political Studies/Survey Research Center, University of Michigan
 NORC-GSS: National Opinion Research Center, General Social Surveys
 NYT: *New York Times*
 Potomac Assoc.: Potomac Associates, surveys by Gallup
 Tarr/ML: Tarrance Group and Mellman and Lazarus
 TIME/CNN/YCS: *Time* magazine, Cable News Network, surveys by Yankelovich, Clancy, and Shulman and Yankelovich Partners
 TM: Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press, surveys by the Gallup Organization (1989) and Princeton Survey Research Associates (1990)
 USA/CNN: *USA Today* and Cable News Network, surveys by Gallup
 USNWR: *U.S. News & World Report*, surveys by Princeton Survey Research Associates and by Tarrance Group and Mellman, Lazarus, and Lake
 WP: *Washington Post*
 YCS: Yankelovich, Clancy, and Shulman

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Attitudes toward the Welfare System

1. *ABC/WP*: As you may know, the government gives poor people money through welfare and public assistance programs, including food stamps and aid to dependent children. Overall would you say the system of public assistance works well in this country, or not?

	12/85 (%)	1/95 (%)
Yes	39	25
No	56	72
No opinion	6	3
N	...	1,145

2. *ABC/WP*: Do you think the present system of public assistance discourages people from working, or do you think it helps them until they begin to stand on their own?

	12/85 (%)	1/95 (%)
Discourages working	55	73
Helps people	30	20
Both (volunteered)	9	4
No opinion	7	3

3. *NBC/WSJ*: I would like to read you two statements about the welfare system. Please tell me which of these statements about this issue comes closer to your point of view.

Statement A: The welfare system does more good than harm, because it provides assistance and training for those who are without jobs and live in poverty.

OR

Statement B: The welfare system does more harm than good, because it encourages the breakup of the family and discourages the work ethic.

	1/94 (%)	4/95 (%)
Statement A: more good than harm	19	23
Statement B: more harm than good	71	69
Some of both (volunteered)	6	5
Neither (volunteered)	2	2
Not sure	2	1

The Poor and Dependence

NES: I'd like to get your feelings towards some of our political leaders and other 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 the feeling thermometer . . . (0-100 scale).

4. People on welfare.

	1976	1980	1984	1986	1988	1990	1992	1994
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Anti rating (0-40)	33	34	29	38	33	37	32	41
Neutral (41-59)	25	22	32	22	33	21	26	21
Pro rating (60-100)	43	44	40	40	34	43	42	38
N	1,806	1,305	1,845	2,056	1,702	1,889	2,172	1,580

5. Poor people.

	1972	1974	1976	1980	1984	1986
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Anti rating	4	3	6	4	4	4
Neutral	9	8	10	8	20	14
Pro rating	86	90	85	88	76	81
N	2,092	1,512	1,856	1,329	1,877	2,072

	1988	1990	1992	1994
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Anti rating	4	5	4	4
Neutral	25	13	18	18
Pro rating	71	83	79	79
N	1,701	1,903	2,186	1,708

Note.—Data from the 1952-92 NES Cumulative File and the 1994 NES.

6. TM: . . . Poor people have become too dependent on government assistance programs.

	6/92	5/93	7/94
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Completely agree	35	31	46
Mostly agree	44	49	39
Mostly disagree	14	15	10
Completely disagree	4	3	3
Don't know	3	2	2
N	3,517	1,507	3,800

7. CBS/NT, NYT: What do you consider a more serious problem in America today—families not getting enough welfare to get by, OR families getting more welfare benefits than they need?

	CBS/NT 9/84	CBS/NT 8/88	NYT 5/92	CBS/NT 1/94
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Not enough	29	25	31	21
More than they need	49	55	51	58
Both (volunteered)	10	9	7	10
Neither (volunteered)	3	3	2	2
Don't know/no answer	10	9	9	8

8. CBS/NT, NBCIAP, NBCWSJ, NYT, Kaiser/Harvard: In your opinion, do you think that most people who receive money from welfare could get along without it if they tried, or do you think most of them really need this help?

	(Voters) CBS/NT 8/76	(Voters) CBS/NT Early 10/76	(Voters) CBS/NT Later 10/76	CBS/NT 7/77
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Get along without	52	51	53	54
Really need help	38	36	40	31
Half and half	...	...	...	...
Don't know/no answer	10	13	7	14

	CBS/NT 1980	NBCIAP 9/81	CBS/NT 1/86	(Voters) NBC/WSJ 5/92
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Get along without	51	55	40	45
Really need help	39	32	35	45
Half and half	...	...	20	...
Don't know/no answer	10	15	4	10

	NYT 5/92	CBS/NT 1/94	Kaiser/Harvard 12/94
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Get along without	29	48	46
Really need help	50	35	44
Half and half	16	13	...
Don't know/no answer	4	4	10

9. CBS/NT, NYT: Do you think that most people on welfare are using welfare for a short period of time and will get off it eventually, or do you think most people on welfare are so dependent on welfare that they will never get off of it?

	CBS/NT 9/91	NYT 5/92	CBS/NT 1/94
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Off eventually	11	17	11
Dependent	80	74	82
Don't know/no answer	9	9	7

10. *NYT, CBS/NYT, Kaiser/Harvard*: Do you think there are jobs available for most welfare recipients who really want to work, or not?

	<i>NYT</i> 5/92 (%)	<i>CBS/NYT</i> 11/94 (%)	<i>Kaiser/Harvard</i> 12/94 (%)
Yes, jobs available	64	65	72
Not available	33	31	24
Don't know/no answer	4	4	4

IF YES, ASK: Do you think most of these jobs pay enough to support a family (or not)?

	<i>NYT</i> 5/92 (%)	<i>CBS/NYT</i> 11/94 (%)	<i>Kaiser/Harvard</i> 12/94 (%)
Yes	20	18	32
No	38	41	52
Depends on family size (volunteered)			13
Don't know/no answer	6	6	4

Causes of Poverty

11. *GALLUP, CBS/NYT, LAT*: In your opinion, which is more often to blame if a person is poor—lack of effort on his own part, or circumstances beyond his control?

	<i>CBS/NYT</i> 3/82 ^a (%)	<i>GALLUP</i> 12/84 (%)	<i>GALLUP</i> 7/88 (%)	<i>GALLUP</i> 8/89 (%)
Lack of effort	37	33	40	38
Circumstances	39	34	37	42
Both (volunteered)	17	31	17	17
No opinion	7	2	6	3
N	1,545	1,505	1,000	1,250

	<i>GALLUP</i> 5/90 ^b (%)	<i>CBS/NYT</i> 12/90 ^c (%)	<i>LAT</i> 11/92 ^d (%)	<i>CBS/NYT</i> 12/94 ^e (%)
Lack of effort	35	30	27	44
Circumstances	45	48	52	34
Both (volunteered)	17	20	18	18
No opinion	3	2	3	4
N	1,255	1,028	1,776	573

^a In your opinion, what is more often to blame if people are poor—lack of effort on their own part, or circumstances beyond their control?

^b Just your opinion: Which is more often to blame if a person is poor—lack of effort on his or her own part, or circumstances beyond his or her control?

^c In your opinion, what is more to blame when people are poor—lack of effort on their own part, or circumstances beyond their control?

^d In your opinion, which is more often to blame if a person is poor—lack of effort on their own part, or circumstances beyond their control?

12. *NBC/WSJ*: In your opinion, which is the bigger cause of poverty today—people not doing enough to help themselves out of poverty, or circumstances beyond people's control that cause them to be poor?

	11/93 ^a (%)	4/95 (%)
People not doing enough	48	60
Circumstances beyond people's control	33	30
Both (vol.)	17	7
Not sure	2	3
N	1,020	1,504

^a . . . Bigger cause of poverty and people being poor today. . . .

Government Responsibility for the Poor

13. *TM*: I am going to read you a series of statements that will help us understand how you feel about a number of things. For each statement, please tell me whether you completely agree with it, mostly agree with it, mostly disagree with it, or completely disagree with it. . . . The government should help more needy people even if it means going deeper in debt.

	5/87 (%)	5/88 (%)	5/90 (%)	11/91 (%)	1/92 (%)	2/92 (%)
Completely agree	13	17	15	20	18	19
Mostly agree	40	35	36	31	36	37
Mostly disagree	33	30	34	31	28	28
Completely disagree	7	12	10	15	14	13
Don't know	7	6	5	3	4	3
N	4,244	3,021	3,004	2,020	1,220	1,227

	3/92 (%)	5/92 (%)	6/92 (%)	9/92 (%)	5/93 (%)	7/94 (%)
Completely agree	21	19	18	21	9	13
Mostly agree	33	35	35	32	34	28
Mostly disagree	28	29	31	28	40	37
Completely disagree	13	12	12	14	12	19
Don't know	5	5	4	5	5	3
N	1,668	1,301	3,517	1,508	1,507	3,800

14. *TM, CBS/NYT*: Do you agree or disagree: It is the responsibility of the government to take care of people who can't take care of themselves?

	<i>TM</i> 5/87 (%)	<i>TM</i> 5/88 (%)	<i>TM</i> 5/90 (%)	<i>TM</i> 6/92 (%)	<i>TM</i> 5/93 (%)	<i>TM</i> 7/94 (%)
Completely agree	21	26	23	28	19	20
Mostly agree	50	48	44	41	43	37
Mostly disagree	20	17	23	20	26	26
Completely disagree	4	6	6	8	9	15
Don't know/no answer	5	3	4	3	3	2
N	4,244	3,021	3,004	3,517	1,507	3,800

	CBS/NYT 12/94 (%)	CBS/NYT 2/95 (%)	CBS/NYT 4/95 (%)
Agree	65	63	61
Disagree	29	30	30
Don't know/no answer	6	7	9
N	1,147	1,190	1,089

15. *TM*: . . . The government should guarantee every citizen enough to eat and a place to sleep.

	5/87 (%)	5/88 (%)	2/89 (%)	5/90 (%)	11/91 (%)
Completely agree	22	28	35	27	41
Mostly agree	40	38	30	35	32
Mostly disagree	26	22	22	25	16
Completely disagree	7	9	10	9	9
Don't know	7	9	10	9	9
N	4,244	3,021	2,048	3,004	2,020

	6/92 (%)	7/94 (%)
Completely agree	32	27
Mostly agree	33	32
Mostly disagree	22	25
Completely disagree	10	14
Don't know	10	14
N	3,517	3,800

16. *NES*: In general, some people feel that the government in Washington should see to it that every person has a good job and a good standard of living. Others think the government should just let each person get ahead on his own. . . . Where would you place yourself on this scale . . . ?

	1986 (%)	1988 (%)	1990 (%)	1992 (%)	1994 (%)
1 (Government see to it)	11	11	13	-10	9
2	7	7	10	9	8
3	9	11	13	12	12
4	23	21	21	22	24
5	17	18	16	20	17
6	15	16	14	14	16
7 (Let each person get)	18	16	13	14	14
N	1,009	1,725	1,692	2,164	1,652

NOTE.—From NES 1952–92 Cumulative File and 1994 NES.

17. *NORC-GSS*: Please look at card SS. Some people think that the government in Washington should do everything possible to improve the standard of living of all poor Americans; they are at point 1 on this card. Other people think it is not the government's responsibility, and that each person should take care of himself; they are at point 5. . . . I strongly agree the government should improve living standards/that people should take care of themselves.

	3/86 (%)	3/87 (%)	3/88 (%)	3/89 (%)	3/90 (%)	3/91 (%)	3/93 (%)	3/94 (%)
1 (Government should)	18	17	17	16	19	17	12	13
2	12	12	13	15	15	16	13	13
3 (Agree with both)	45	44	44	43	43	43	48	44
4	11	13	12	14	12	13	14	16
5 (People should)	11	11	11	9	8	8	10	12
Don't know	2	3	2	3	3	3	2	3
N	1,466	1,459	995	1,033	898	1,013	1,053	1,998

18. *NORC-GSS*: On the whole, do you think it should or should not be the government's responsibility to . . . provide a job for everyone who wants one?

	3/85 (%)	3/89 (%)	3/90 (%)
Definitely should be	13	17	15
Probably should be	20	28	27
Probably should not be	32	27	32
Definitely should not be	30	22	22
Can't choose	4	6	5
N	667	1,408	1,173

Attitudes toward Redistribution

19. *NORC-GSS*: Some people think that the government in Washington ought to reduce the income differences between the rich and the poor, perhaps by raising the taxes of wealthy families or by giving income assistance to the poor. Others think that the government should not concern itself with reducing this income difference between the rich and the poor. Here is a card with a scale from 1 to 7. Think of a score of 1 as meaning that the government ought to reduce the income differences between rich and poor, and a score of 7 meaning that the government should not concern itself with reducing income differences. What score between 1 and 7 comes closest to the way you feel? . . . Government should/should not do something to reduce income differences between rich and poor.

	3/86 (%)	3/87 (%)	3/88 (%)	3/89 (%)
1 (Government should)	23	19	20	18
2	9	9	10	13
3	17	17	18	19
4	21	21	20	20
5	11	13	12	11
6	6	6	8	7
7 (Government should not)	12	14	11	10
Don't know	1	1	2	2
N	1,467	1,461	994	1,033

	3/90 (%)	3/91 (%)	3/93 (%)	3/94 (%)
1 (Government should)	21	20	17	14
2	12	12	12	9
3	18	17	19	16
4	21	20	18	21
5	9	12	12	15
6	6	7	8	8
7 (Government should not)	10	9	12	15
Don't know	3	3	2	1
N	896	1,014	1,053	2,003

20. *NORC-GSS*: What is your opinion of the following statement? It is the responsibility of the government to reduce differences in income between people with high incomes and those with low incomes.

	3/85 (%)	3/90 (%)	3/93 (%)	3/94 (%)
Agree strongly	13	9	7	5
Agree	17	24	24	22
Neither agree nor disagree	20	27	21	18
Disagree	31	29	30	31
Disagree strongly	19	10	16	20
Don't know	0	0*	2	3
N	666	1,203	1,511	1,332

* Less than 0.5 percent.

Government Spending and Taxes

21. *NORC-GSS*: We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I'm going to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether you think we're spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount. First, . . . are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on . . . welfare?

	3/83 (%)	3/84 (%)	3/85 (%)	3/86 (%)	3/87 (%)	3/88 (%)	3/89 (%)
Too little	21	24	19	22	21	23	23
About right	28	33	33	34	31	32	30
Too much	47	40	45	40	44	42	42
Don't know	4	3	4	4	4	3	6
N	1,594	484	749	726	481	709	762

	3/90 (%)	3/91 (%)	3/93 (%)	3/94 (%)
Too little	22	22	16	13
About right	35	35	25	24
Too much	38	38	54	60
Don't know	5	5	5	4
N	670	746	796	1,511

22. *NBC/WSJ*: Do you think government is currently spending too little, about the right amount, or too much on . . . people on welfare?

	11/93 (%)	4/95 (%)
Too much	55	66
Too little	14	9
About right	24	18
Not sure	7	7
N	1,020	1,504

23. *NORC/GSS*: We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I'm going to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether you think we're spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount. First, . . . are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on . . . assistance to the poor?

	3/84 (%)	3/85 (%)	3/86 (%)	3/87 (%)	3/88 (%)	3/89 (%)	3/90 (%)	3/91 (%)	3/93 (%)	3/94 (%)
Too little	62	63	61	66	68	66	66	65	63	57
About right	24	25	27	23	23	23	24	22	22	25
Too much	11	10	9	9	7	9	7	9	12	15
Don't know	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	4	3	3
N	485	781	734	972	752	761	682	747	794	1,439

24. *NBC/WSJ, CBS/NYT*: Do you think government is currently spending too little, about the right amount, or too much on . . . poor children?

	<i>NBC/WSJ</i> 11/93 (%)	<i>CBS/NYT</i> 12/94* (%)
Too much/decreased	6	9
Too little/increased	64	47
About right, same	22	39
Not sure	8	6
N	510	573

* Do you think government spending on programs for poor children should be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

25. *Potomac Assoc., USA/CNN*: Now, again let me read off the names of some other programs the federal government in Washington is helping to finance and ask whether you think the amount of tax money now being spent for each of these purposes should be increased, kept at the present level, reduced, or ended altogether. . . . Welfare programs to help low-income families.

	<i>Potomac Assoc.</i> 5/72 (%)	<i>USA/CNN</i> 4/94* (%)
Increased	31	10
Kept at present level	40	32
Reduced	18	44
Ended altogether	6	10
No opinion	4	4

* Do you feel the amount of tax money now being spent for welfare programs to help low-income families should be increased, kept at the present level, reduced, or ended altogether?

26. *ABC/WP*: In order for the federal government to cut spending to reduce the budget deficit, would you support or oppose reducing welfare, or public assistance, for poor people?

	1/188 (%)	1/195 (%)
Yes	27	54
No	66	40
No opinion	7	6
N	...	1,145

27. *Marist*: Would you be willing to pay higher taxes for each of the following?
... Reduce poverty.

	1/190 (%)	2/191 (%)
Yes	67	65
No	30	32
Unsure	4	3
N	1,044	1,142

28. *CBS/NYT*: Would you be willing or unwilling to pay more in taxes in order to provide job training and public service jobs for people on welfare so that they can get off welfare?

	1/194 (%)	12/194 (%)	4/195 (%)
Willing	61	59	61
Unwilling	34	37	35
Don't know/no answer	5	4	4
N	1,146	1,147	1,089

The Homeless

29. *CBS/NYT*: Do you personally see homeless people around your community or on the way to work, or is the problem only something you have seen on television, or have read about?

	1/186 (%)	1/189 (%)	12/190 (%)	1/192 (%)	1/193 (%)	1/194 (%)
Personally see	36	51	54	58	56	57
TV or read	59	48	45	39	39	40
Half and half	3	...	...	3	4	2
Don't know/no answer	2	1	1	1	1	1

30. *YCS*: Do you feel that government spending should be increased, decreased, or kept where it is now in the following areas? ... Aid to the homeless.

	YCS 2/187 (%)	YCS* 1/188 (%)
Increased	71	75
Decreased	5	6
Kept same	21	16
Not sure	4	3
N	1,014	974

* Asked of registered voters who are likely to vote in a Democratic or Republican primary or caucus in 1988.

31. *CBS/NYT, AP/IMG, AP*: Should federal spending on helping homeless people be increased, decreased or kept about the same?

	CBS/NYT 7/188 (%)	AP/IMG 1/188 (%)	AP 12/190 (%)	CBS/NYT 1/192 (%)
Increased	68	61	58	68
Decreased	4	6	7	4
Kept the same	23	27	23	26
Don't know/no answer	5	7	12	2
N	1,177	1,084	1,004	1,281

32. *TM*: If you were making up the federal budget this year would you increase spending for programs for the homeless, decrease spending for programs for the homeless, or keep spending the same for this?

	5/187 (%)	2/189 (%)	5/190 (%)	12/194 (%)
Increase	67	53	67	53
Decrease	5	4	6	9
Same	25	40	25	34
Don't know	3	3	2	9
N	4,244	2,048	3,004	1,511

33. *WP, GALLUP*: Would you be willing to pay more in your own personal taxes if the money went to providing shelter for homeless people in your own community?

	WP 4/190 (%)	GALLUP* 8/192 (%)
Yes	58	60
No	35	36
Don't know/no opinion	7	4
N	1,003	1,387

* Would you, yourself, be willing to pay higher taxes to help reduce poverty and homelessness, or not?

Food Stamps

34. *NES*: If you had a say in making up the following 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? . . . Food stamps.

	1984 (%)	1986 (%)	1988 (%)	1990 (%)	1992 (%)	1994 (%)
Increased	21	25	23	16	18	10
Same	46	44	46	59	53	48
Decreased	33	31	31	25	29	43
Cut out entirely	0*	1	0*	0*	0*	0*
N	1,809	1,999	1,937	1,897	2,395	1,726

NOTE.—Data from the NES 1952–92 Cumulative File and 1994 NES.

* Less than 0.5 percent.

35. *ABC/WP*: I'd like to ask you about some specific federal government programs. For each, please tell me whether you feel spending for that program should be increased, decreased, or left about the same. . . . Food stamps.

	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1/87 (%)	8/89 (%)
Decrease	49	32	26	28
Spend about the same	33	48	45	50
Increase	15	18	27	21
No opinion	3	2	2	1
N			1,505	1,509

36. *FCS*: Do you feel that government spending should be increased, decreased, or kept where it is now in the following areas? . . . The food stamp program.

	2/87 (%)	9/91 (%)
Increased	33	31
Decreased	24	22
Kept as now	36	38
Not sure	8	9
N	1,014	500

37. *GALLUP*: I am going to ask you a question about government spending. In answering, please bear in mind that sooner or later all government spending has to be taken care of out of the taxes that you and other Americans pay. As I mention each program, tell me whether the amount of money now being spent for that purpose should be increased; kept at the present level, reduced, or ended altogether. . . . Providing food programs for low-income families.

	1984 (%)	1986 (%)	6/88 (%)	7/89 (%)	5/91 (%)
Increased	48	46	44	51	55
Same	37	35	35	35	34
Decreased	12	11	15	9	7
Ended	1	3	0	1	2
No opinion	2	5	6	4	2
N			1,210	1,253	1,014

Issue Salience

38. *TM*: In the future, which one of the following items should President Clinton give the highest priority to?

	12/93 (%)	1/94 (%)	3/94 (%)	7/94 (%)
Improving the job situation	28	26	26	23
Reforming health care	14	14	16	15
Reducing crime	20	22	23	24
Reforming the welfare system	11	15	12	15
Reducing the budget deficit	22	20	20	21
Don't know/refused	5	3	3	2
N	1,479	1,207	2,001	3,800

	10/94 (%)
Improving the job situation	19
Reforming health care	15
Reducing crime	26
Reforming the welfare system	13
Reducing the budget deficit	23
Don't know/refused	4
N	2,052

Who Would Do a Better Job at Welfare Reform?

39. *LAT, NBC/BW*: Who do you think can do a better job of reforming the welfare system: President (Bill) Clinton or the Republicans in Congress?

	NBC/BW 1/94* (%)	LAT 4/94 (%)	LAT 10/94 (%)
President Clinton	44	42	35
Republicans	34	33	41
Both (volunteered)	2	8	4
Neither (volunteered)	9	13	5
Don't know/no answer	11	8	7
N	555	841	1,272

* Who do you think would do the best job reforming the welfare system—President (Bill) Clinton or the Republicans in Congress?

40. *NBC/WSJ, Gallup, TM*: When it comes to . . . reforming the welfare system . . . which party do you think would do a better job—the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, neither, or are both about the same?

	NBC/WSJ 2/92 (%)	TM 12/93* (%)	Gallup 12/93 ^b (%)	NBC/WSJ 7/94 ^c (%)
Democratic	36	40	47	30
Republican	24	30	36	29
Both/both equal	16			17
Neither (volunteered)	16	11		19
Don't know/no answer	8	19	17	5
N	500	1,479	1,014	1,005

	NBC/WSJ 10/94 ^a (%)	Gallup 11/94 ^b (%)	NBC/WSJ 6/95 ^c (%)
Democratic	28	35	21
Republican	31	55	39
Both/both equal	12	6	15
Neither (volunteered)	21		19
Don't know/no answer	8	4	6
N	1,509	1,020	504

^a Which party, Republican or Democrat, do you think can do a better job of . . . reforming the welfare system? ("Neither" response volunteered.)

^b Do you think the Republican party or the Democratic party would do a better job of dealing with each of the following issues and problems . . . welfare reform?

" . . . Both about the same, or neither?"

^c In your view, would the Republican party or the Democratic party do a better job of dealing with each of the following issues and problems . . . welfare reform? ("Both equal" volunteered.)

" . . . The Republican Party, both about the same, or neither?"

41. CBS/NYT: Who do you think has better ideas about reforming the welfare system: President Clinton, or the Republicans in Congress?

	12/94 (%)	1/95 (%)	4/95 (%)
Clinton	28	35	33
Republicans	60	46	50
Both (volunteered)	2	2	4
Neither (volunteered)	5	5	6
Don't know	5	12	7
N	573	728	1,089

42. ABC/WP: Please tell me who do you trust to do a better job handling that issue—Clinton or the Republicans in Congress? . . . Helping the poor.

	1/95 (%)	3/95 (%)
Clinton	54	61
Republicans	35	27
Neither (volunteered)	6	8
Both equally (volunteered)	1	3
No opinion	4	3

Specific Reform Proposals

43. CBS/NYT: As part of a welfare reform program, do you think the government should create work programs for people on welfare and require people to participate in the programs, or not?

	12/94 (%)	4/95 (%)
Create work programs	87	89
Don't create	11	8
Don't know/no answer	2	3
N	1,147	1,089

44. NYT, CBS/NYT: Do you think government spending on job training programs for people on welfare should be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

	NYT 5/92 (%)	CBS/NYT 1/94 (%)
Increased	65	61
Decreased	5	10
Kept the same	27	25
Don't know/no answer	2	4
N		1,146

45. ABC/WP: Should there be a two-year welfare limit, after which able recipients must get a job or perform community service?

	1/94 (%)	1/95 (%)
Yes	89	89
No	8	9
No opinion	3	1
N		1,145

46. TIME/CNNIYCS: Which of the following goals of welfare reform is most important to you: cutting the cost of welfare programs by removing people from the welfare rolls, or giving poor people the skills they need to become self-sufficient?

	3/92 (%)	5/92 (%)
Cut costs	5	3
Make self-sufficient	90	93
Both (volunteered)	3	2
Don't know	3	2
N	1,400	1,250

47. CBS/NYT: Do you think that women with young children who receive welfare should be required to work or should they stay at home and take care of their young children?

	1/94 (%)	12/94 (%)	4/95 (%)
Work	45	52	64
Stay at home	40	37	22
Don't know/no answer	14	11	14
N	1,146	1,147	1,089

48. TIME/CNNIYCS: Here is a list of changes many people would like to make in the current welfare system. For each idea I read, please tell me whether you favor or oppose that change. . . . Require all able-bodied people on welfare, including women with small children, to work or learn a job skill?

	5/92 (%)	5/94 (%)	9/95 (%)
Favor	87	92	88
Oppose	11	6	9
Not sure	2	2	3

49. *CBS/NTT*: Do you think that unmarried mothers who are under the age of 18 and have no other way of supporting their children should or should not be able to receive welfare?

	2/95 (%)	4/95 (%)
Should receive welfare	62	60
Should not receive welfare	31	31
Don't know/no answer	7	9
N	1,190	1,089

50. *TIME/CNN/YCS*: Here is a list of changes many people would like to make in the current welfare system. For each idea I read, please tell me whether you favor or oppose that change. . . . End increases in welfare payments to women who give birth to children while on welfare?

	5/92 (%)	5/94 (%)	9/95 (%)
Favor	36	42	45
Oppose	59	51	50
Not sure	5	7	5

51. *USNWR, NBC/WSJ, USA/CNN, CBS/NTT*: Do you favor/oppose the following suggestion to reform the welfare system? Do not increase benefits when people on welfare have additional children?

	<i>USNWR</i> 11/93 (%)	<i>NBC/WSJ</i> 12/93 ^a (%)	<i>USA/CNN</i> 12/94 ^b (%)	<i>CBS/NTT</i> 4/95 ^c (%)
Favor	65	68	46	56
Oppose	28	31	52	38
Don't know/no answer/ unsure	7	1	2	6

^a Now, here are some additional proposals related to poverty and welfare. For each one, please tell me if you would strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the proposal? . . . Stop giving extra money to mothers if they have another child after they go on welfare. (Combines "somewhat" and "strongly.")

^b Now here are some possible changes to the welfare system. Please tell me whether you would favor or oppose each one? . . . End increases in welfare payments to women who give birth to child while on welfare.

^c Would you favor or oppose denying additional benefits to unmarried mothers on welfare if they have additional children while they are on welfare?

52. *TIME/CNN/YCS*: Here is a list of changes many people would like to make in the current welfare system. For each idea I read, please tell me whether you favor or oppose that change. . . . Cut the amount of money given to all people on welfare?

	5/92 (%)	5/94 (%)	9/95 (%)
Favor	18	25	32
Oppose	75	65	62
Not sure	7	10	6

53. *Tarr/ML, Kaiser/Harvard*: In general do you think that government officials should . . . ?

	<i>Tarr/ML</i> 11/93 (%)	<i>Kaiser/Harvard</i> 12/94 (%)
Leave welfare as it is	6	7
Experiment with welfare reform at the state level	37	52
Reform welfare at the national level	43	29
Eliminate all welfare benefits	8	6
Unsure, don't know, refused	6	7
N	1,000	1,200

* MOST IMPORTANT GOAL FOR WELFARE REFORM

Reducing out-of-wedlock births	19%
Getting people into workforce	62
Reducing gov't spending on welfare	13

FAX to [unclear]

WR-Polls

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION	ALL	WHITES	BLACKS
Favor	44%	38%	78%
Oppose	49	55	18

AFFIRM. ACTION PROGRAMS GIVING PREFERENCES TO WOMEN & MINORITIES

Should be continued as they are	13%
Should be continued but reformed	57
Ended	26

THE ATF RAIDS IN WACO WERE

Justified	60%
Not justified	32

IN WHITEWATER, HILLARY IS ...

	NOW	5/94
Telling the truth	29%	39%
Not telling truth	39	41
Not sure	32	20

U.S. POLICY TOWARD BOSNIA

Approve	28%
Disapprove	50

IF SERBS CONTINUE ATTACKS DO YOU FAVOR ALLIED AIR STRIKES? (half)

	NOW	6/95
Favor	61%	56%
Oppose	27	33

SELLING ARMS TO THE BOSNIANS (half sample)

Favor	43%
Oppose	47

HILLARY CLINTON IS SCHEDULED TO SPEAK AT THE U.N. WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN IN CHINA. SOME SAY SHE SHOULD NOT ATTEND BECAUSE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST HARRY WU IS BEING HELD BY CHINESE AUTHORITIES. OTHERS SAY SHE SHOULD ATTEND TO SHOW SUPPORT FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS.

HRC should attend	55%
Should not attend	33

POLL FINDS PUBLIC DOUBTS KEY PARTS OF G.O.P.'S AGENDA

A SPLIT OVER PRIORITIES

Survey Says Congress Should Stress Issues Like Crime, Jobs and Health Care

By RICHARD L. BERKE

EIGHT weeks after Republicans assumed control of Congress and vowed to make the Government more responsive, Americans are dubious about central elements of the party's legislative agenda on issues that include welfare, crime, military spending and the Federal budget deficit, according to the latest New York Times/CBS News Poll.

Republicans are generally more supportive than Democrats and independents of what the new leadership in Congress is trying to do. But Republicans, too, express misgivings about the course taken by Speaker Newt Gingrich and his loyalists. Most Americans believe that Congress should stress jobs and crime — issues that have not been top priorities for Republicans this year — and health care, which has not been on the agenda of the new Congress at all.

While the Republican leadership has addressed the issue of crime, people took exception to major parts of the Republicans' crime policy. A substantial majority favored the ban on assault weapons that the Republicans have vowed to overturn, and most objected to a bill that has passed the House and would give towns and cities more discretion in spending money that was targeted by President Clinton specifically for more police officers.

One of the most dramatic examples of the gap between public opinion as measured by the poll and the priorities of Congressional Republicans, which are based on their reading of public sentiment, is over the balanced-budget amendment to the Constitution. The amendment, already approved by the House, is scheduled for what appears to be a close vote in the Senate today.

Seventy-nine percent of Americans said they favor such an amendment. But that support shrinks to only 32 percent when Americans are told that balancing the budget will require cuts in Social Security, as many analysts say. The Republicans have defeated efforts to remove Social Security from the budget-bal-

How Americans View The Contract With America

Wk Paris

REPUBLICANS INDEPENDENTS DEMOCRATS

CONGRESS			
Approve of the way Congress is handling its job	57%	29%	26%
Disapprove	31	58	61

Approve of the way own Representative is handling his or her job	69	52	62
Disapprove	15	26	23

CRIME			
Say it is better to use money in the crime bill for police on the streets	39%	54%	65%
Say it is better to let towns and cities decide	59	40	33
Say it is a bad idea to let police make searches without a warrant	63	73	71
Say it is a good idea	24	17	17

BALANCED BUDGET			
Say they would prefer:			
Balancing the budget over cutting taxes	59%	59%	51%
Cutting taxes over balancing the budget	37	37	45
Favor a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution	82	79	79
Oppose	11	12	13
Favor a balanced budget amendment even if it means cuts in Social Security	40	32	25
Oppose	56	63	72

WELFARE			
Say unmarried mothers under the age of 18 should be able to receive welfare	57%	63%	67%
Should not	38	29	25

Say welfare recipients in a work program:			
Should be allowed to receive benefits as long as they are willing to work for them	63%	70%	66%
Should stop receiving benefits after a year or two	33	27	30

MILITARY SPENDING			
Say spending on military should be:			
Increased	24%	15%	9%
Decreased	13	18	23
Kept the same	60	63	65

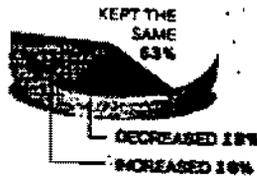
Based on telephone interviews with 1,190 adults conducted nationwide Feb. 22-25. Those with no opinion are not shown.

Americans' Views ...

ON WELFARE FOR TEEN-AGERS
Should unmarried mothers under 18 with no way of supporting their children be allowed to receive welfare?



ON MILITARY SPENDING
Should Federal spending on military and defense programs be increased, decreased or kept about the same?



ON WARRANTLESS SEARCHES
Are police searches without a warrant a good idea or a bad idea?



The New York Times

Balt. Sun: 2-28-95 Americans are dubious of GOP agenda, poll says

WASHINGTON — Eight weeks after Republicans assumed control of Congress vowing to make government more responsive, Americans are dubious about central elements of the party's legislative agenda on issues including welfare, crime, military spending and the federal budget deficit, according to the latest New York Times/CBS News Poll.

Republicans are generally more supportive than Democrats and independents of what the new leadership in Congress is trying to do, but they too express discontent about the course taken by their party's new leadership in Congress.

Most Americans in the poll said they believe that Congress should stress jobs and crime — issues that have not been top priorities for Republicans this year — and health care, which is not even on the GOP agenda of the new Congress at all.

*14 ABC/W. POST: OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR 2-YEAR WELFARE LIMIT
 1,145 adults surveyed by Chilton Research Services 1/8-9;
 margin of error +/- 3.5% (release, 1/12).

CUT WELFARE SPENDING TO REDUCE DEFICIT?	NOW	11/88
Support	54%	27%
Oppose	40	66

TWO-YEAR WELFARE LIMIT, AFTER WHICH ABLE RECIPIENTS GET A JOB OR PERFORM COMMUNITY SERVICE?	1/9/95	1/4/95	1/94
Support	89%	91%	89%
Oppose	9	8	8

SHOULD GOV'T GIVE WELFARE TO	YES	NO
Single mothers with children	76%	21%
Teen-age girls with children	53	44
Single mothers who have more children while on welfare	21	76
Men who can't find a job	54	41
Illegal immigrants	6	93
Illegal immigrants with children born in US	31	65

DOES US PUBLIC ASSISTANCE SYSTEM WORK WELL OR NOT?	NOW	12/85
Works well	25%	39%
Doesn't work	72	56

WHICH DO YOU AGREE WITH MORE?	NOW	12/85
Most able-bodied people on welfare ...		
Want to work but can't because of circumstances	39%	43%
Prefer to sit home and collect benefits even if they can work	57	52

ARE MOST ON WELFARE RECIPIENTS BLACK OR WHITE?	SUPPORT INCREASE IN YOUR FED. TAXES FOR JOB TRAINING & EDUC. TO GET PEOPLE OFF WELFARE?
Black 41%	Support 55%
White 29	Oppose 43
Equal 16	

CURRENT WELFARE SYSTEM ...	NOW	12/85
Discourages people from working	73%	55%
Helps until they can stand on their own	20	30

IS GOV'T DOING ENOUGH TO GET PEOPLE ON WELFARE BACK TO WORK?	NOW	12/85
Is doing enough	14%	20%
Is not doing enough	83	72

GOV'T SHOULD HELP THOSE WHO CAN'T HELP THEMSELVES	MOST PEOPLE ON WELFARE JUST DON'T WANT TO WORK
Agree 65%	Agree 52%
Disagree 34	Disagree 45

TABLE 17

**AMERICANS' VIEWS OF ENDING WELFARE PAYMENTS
TO ABLE-BODIED RECIPIENTS AFTER TWO YEARS
Views of American Adults**

Favor ending welfare payments to able-bodied welfare recipients, including women with pre-school children, after two years, and requiring them to take a job	68%
Would continue to favor even if the job the person takes pays a low wage that would make it difficult to support a family	26%
Would continue to favor even if the person is unable to get a job	16%

Source: Kaiser/Harvard Program on the Public and Health/Social Policy Survey, January 1995

TABLE 18

**AMERICANS' VIEWS ON WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN IF WELFARE RECIPIENTS
ARE CUT OFF AFTER A SPECIFIED PERIOD OF TIME AND AFTER EDUCATION,
TRAINING, AND HEALTH AND CHILD BENEFITS HAVE BEEN PROVIDED
Views of American Adults**

Favor requiring welfare recipients to do community service work in exchange for continued benefits	56%
Favor cutting off benefits and guaranteeing jobs to recipients	25%
Favor cutting off benefits	10%
Don't know/Refused	10%

Source: Kaiser/Harvard Program on the Public and Health/Social Policy Survey, January 1995

TABLE 19

THE PRINCIPAL GOAL OF WELFARE REFORM
Views of American Adults By Political Affiliation

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Dem.</u>	<u>Rep.</u>
Get people off welfare, but only if we can get them decent jobs by providing job training and education	63%	66%	60%
Get people off welfare even if it means they have to take a low-paying job	27%	22%	33%
Get people off welfare regardless of the consequences	6%	7%	5%
Provide people on welfare with more money so that they have a higher standard of living	2%	5%	2%
Other (vol.)	2%	1%	1%

Source: Kaiser/Harvard Program on the Public and Health/Social Policy Survey, January 1995

===== POLL UPDATE =====

*15 NEWSWEEK: 47% PLURALITY SAYS CLINTON SHOULD NOT RUN IN '96
 728 adults surveyed 12/27-28; margin of error +/- 4%
 (NEWSWEEK release, 12/30).

CLINTON JOB	NOW	11/3-4	10/27-28	9/29-30
Approve	39%	40%	44%	36%
Disapprove	45	43	44	48

HOW MUCH CONFIDENCE DO YOU HAVE THAT THEY'LL DO RIGHT THING?		
	A LOT/SOME	LITTLE/NONE
Pres. Clinton	58%	42%
Bob Dole	65	27
Newt Gingrich	38	38
Jesse Helms	40	41

SHOULD CLINTON SEEK '96 DEM NOMINATION?		WILL HE?	
Yes	44%	Yes	85%
No	47	No	10

'96 MATCHUPS							
Clinton	54%	Clinton	52%	Clinton	49%	Clinton	42%
Quayle	32	Perot	30	Gingrich	27	Gramm	24
DK/other	14	DK/other	18	DK/other	24	DK/other	34
Clinton	42%	Clinton	38%	Dole	48%	Powell	48%
Cheney	28	Kemp	35	Clinton	38	Clinton	34
DK/other	30	DK/other	27	DK/other	14	DK/other	18

HOW UPSET WOULD YOU BE IF ...	VERY/ SOMEWHAT	NOT TOO/ NOT AT ALL
Many poor mothers have to send their kids to orphanages or foster homes	78	17
Tax cuts lead to major increase in deficit	73	22
Limits on welfare cut off benefits to poor families even when no work is available	73	24
Many enviro regulations are seriously weakened or eliminated	73	24
Cuts in benefits for illegal immigrants lead to discrimination against legal immigrants who work and pay taxes	64	30
Funding for public TV is cut back sharply	55	43
Women have less access to abortion than now	53	42
Funding for serious artists and community arts projects is cut back sharply	41	57
Congress passes Const. amendment to permit prayer in public schools that is offensive to non-Christians and non-believers	36	61

HOUSE GOP'S CONTRACT W/AMERICA IS ...	
Serious promise/GOP Congress should be held responsible	25%
Just a campaign promise/Shouldn't be taken seriously	24
Haven't heard about it	47

MIDDLE-CLASS TAX CUT WOULD BE	
Good for the country	54%
Bad for the country	32

EVEN WITH THE TURNOVER IN CONGRESS, TERM LIMITS ARE ...	
Necessary	71%
Not necessary	21

12a. Should mothers who have infants and who are on welfare be required to work? (IF YES:) Should they be required to work full time or part time? *

Yes, Should Work		
Full time	14	
Part time	27	CONTINUE
Not sure how many hours	6	
<hr/>		
No, Should Not Work	47	SKIP TO Q.12c
Not Sure	6	

Peter Hunt
 Associates
 Nov 1943

*Asked of one-half the respondents.

(ASK ONLY OF RESPONDENTS WHO ANSWERED "YES, SHOULD WORK" IN 12a.)

12b. And should mothers who have infants and who are on welfare be required to work only if child care is provided, or should they be required to work even if child care is not provided? *

Only if child care provided	27	[80]
Even if child care not provided	16	
Not sure	4	
Do not think should work (from Q.12a)	53	

*Asked of one-half the respondents.

(ASK EVERYONE.)

12c. Do you think a single mother working at a part-time, minimum-wage job should be permitted to receive welfare benefits, for as long as she earns less than the poverty level, or do you think she should not be permitted to do so?

Should be permitted	86	[81]
Should not be permitted	9	
Not sure	5	

(READ:) Now, I have a few questions about two different welfare reform plans.

13a. One welfare reform proposal places a two-year limit on welfare benefits. After two years, benefits would be ended for all able-bodied recipients, and the government would not provide a job. Would you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose such a two-year limit?

Strongly favor	25	[82]
Somewhat favor	30	
Somewhat oppose	24	
Strongly oppose	18	
Not sure	3	

13b. An alternative welfare reform proposal would require welfare recipients to attend job training sessions as soon as they start receiving welfare. After two years, if they have not found employment, welfare recipients would be required to work at a public service job. Would you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose this proposal?

Strongly favor	64	[83]
Somewhat favor	28	
Somewhat oppose	4	
Strongly oppose	3	
Not sure	1	

Broad Support for Reforms

"I'm going to read to you a number of suggestions of ways to reform the welfare system that are being talked about today. Please listen as I read each one and tell me if you favor or oppose the suggestion."

Percent Support	All voters	Reps.	Dems.	Whites	African Americans
Require job training for those on welfare, and after two years require them to work in government jobs if necessary	82	77	86	81	86
Require job training for those on welfare, and after two years require them to work	93	96	86	93	91
Require unemployed fathers of children to work	94	94	95	94	86
Replace welfare benefits with tax credits and strengthen child support enforcement	67	69	65	66	72
Have government help pay for childcare and transportation for welfare recipients who work or are in job training or education courses	77	72	81	76	84
Deny welfare benefits to legal immigrants until they become citizens	69	72	65	71	67
Deny welfare benefits to legal immigrants	37	39	36	36	39
Do not increase welfare benefits when people on welfare have additional children	65	70	61	67	49
Limit welfare benefits to two years and do not allow people to get back on welfare for at least five years	50	56	42	52	37
Limit welfare benefits to two years and do not allow people to get back on welfare ever	24	25	19	21	15

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Send
TM

February 22, 1995

Bruce Reed
Deputy Assistant, Domestic Policy Council
Old Executive Office Bldg, Room 213
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue,
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Reed:

The enclosed report was requested by David Ellwood's office; I thought your office might be interested in a copy as well. The first few pages of the report summarize my findings, which are further encapsulated here, as follows: Concerning the welfare system, Americans hold a set of diverse beliefs, with divergent policy implications. My study found that communitarian, populist, and individualist rhetorical framings of the issue led to significant differences in support expressed by respondents for three options for reform. In addition, I found a great deal of public support, in almost all demographic groups, for government programs that would aid working people in this country as well as welfare recipients.

At the end of the report (p. 25) I use the discourse of the public summary of the Work and Responsibility Act of 1994 as an example of an inadvisable approach, rhetorically, given the evident goals of the President's Working Group on Welfare Reform. I then recommend two alternative presentation approaches that my survey suggests are more likely to evoke public support.

This small survey is part of a larger, ongoing study I am conducting of attitudes about the welfare system. To date my students and I have conducted several focus groups with middle- and upper-middle-class men and women as well as a few individual interviews in a poor, rural African-American community in eastern North Carolina. Additional individual interviews will be completed in the next two months.

I am on research leave from Duke this semester. If you or your colleagues have any questions, I can be reached at (401) 941-6513.

Sincerely,

Claudia Strauss
Assistant Professor

ENGENDERING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR DIFFERENT WELFARE REFORM OPTIONS: THE
EFFECTS OF INDIVIDUALIST, COMMUNITARIAN, AND POPULIST POLITICAL RHETORIC

February 1995

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ENGENDERING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR DIFFERENT WELFARE REFORM OPTIONS: THE
EFFECTS OF INDIVIDUALIST, COMMUNITARIAN, AND POPULIST POLITICAL RHETORIC

Overview

Welfare reform is one of the leading issues facing national and state policy makers in the United States at the present. On this topic, as so many others, the American public is divided. The most interesting divisions, however, are within rather than between people. The average American wants to spend less money on "welfare" but more money on "programs for poor children," likes the idea of limiting welfare to two years but is also willing to greatly expand government programs that would help welfare recipients become self-sufficient.

Between January 12 and January 24, 1995 I conducted a telephone survey on welfare reform. The primary purpose of this survey was to learn which of these various competing ways of thinking about welfare reform is evoked by different introductory "framings" of the issue. More specifically, I was interested in the effect of individualist, communitarian, and populist framings, i.e., framings that look at welfare in terms of welfare recipients' behaviors, community values, or structural obstacles faced by the average person, respectively. These initial framings of the issue were created by asking respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with a general statement about "one of the biggest problems in America today" phrased, variously, in individualist, communitarian, or populist terms. Then respondents were asked for their opinion of three options for changes to the welfare system (eliminating welfare for single teenage mothers; providing welfare for two years only; and replacing welfare with government-subsidized health insurance, day care, and jobs for all Americans who need them). This small survey (143 respondents, equally divided between North Carolina and Rhode Island) is part of a study I began in the summer of 1994 of public discourse and popular opinions about the welfare system in the United States. Most of the data for the study will be collected through media analyses and focus

group and individual interviews with working- and middle-class men and women.

This survey found that the framework evoked by the initial rhetorical question was significantly associated with policy preferences respondents then expressed, particularly for those respondents who were somewhat uncertain about their opinions. These statistically significant results indicate that it is highly likely any other random sample from the same population would show the same pattern of results. Support for eliminating welfare for single teenage mothers was significantly higher among those who heard the individualist statement, while support for replacing welfare with government-subsidized health insurance, day care, and jobs for all Americans who need them was significantly higher among those who heard the communitarian statement. Interestingly, however, the communitarian framework did not lead to an overall preference for the latter proposal when respondents chose the one they liked best. Instead, the communitarian framing led in the end to greater support for limiting welfare to two years, while the populist discourse led respondents to prefer replacing welfare with public jobs programs and government-subsidized day care and health insurance for all Americans who need them. This last finding was the opposite of what most knowledgeable observers might have expected and what I had hypothesized. These findings suggest that communitarian and other moralistic appeals to be generous toward the less well-off may create that generous feeling in the short term, but they may have the paradoxical long-term result of arousing resentment that increases public support for measures that contract, rather than expand, the social safety net.

Overall, consistent with other recent polls, the survey revealed very low support for the proposal to eliminate welfare for single teenage mothers and high support for the proposal to limit welfare to two years. It also revealed surprisingly high levels of agreement (majorities in both states) with a proposal that conventional wisdom would say the public had rejected: "to replace welfare with a system of government-subsidized child care, health insurance, and jobs for all Americans who need them." While there is no chance such a proposal could be enacted at the federal level or

in any state, it suggests that there would be strong public support for measures such as raising the minimum wage that would not only help people on welfare to become self sufficient but also help the struggling working and middle classes.

In closing I recommend that advocates of balanced approaches to welfare reform avoid framing their proposals in individualist or moralistic terms. Instead, I suggest either an "Invest in Children" approach of the sort that is very popular in North Carolina at present or an "Inclusive Populist" approach that frames the issue in terms of the failures of current programs to meet the needs of all those struggling to make ends meet. Inclusive populism is quite different in both style and substance from 1960s-style "liberal" programs and discourses, which stress instead the need for the middle-class and rich to help the poor.

Background: A Clash of Rhetorics

Our opinions about the welfare system, like our opinions about most topics, are informed by diverse and often inconsistent sources of information. We may have first-hand experiences with the welfare system or know others who have; or, in any case, know how difficult it can be to make ends meet. By now we have probably heard discussions about welfare. These discussions are couched in different discourses. At least three predominate at present: individualist, communitarian, and populist.

Individualist discourses are obvious to any observer of American culture and history. In this discourse each person's fate is in their own hands; reference is to individuals (Hardworking Helens or Lazy Louies) rather than to classes or communities joined by common concerns. When conservative commentators apply these discourses to welfare, they are

Reich (1987) discussed these three discourses, calling them the Tales of the Triumphant Individual, the Benevolent Community, and the Rot at the Top. He described a fourth "Tale" as well: that of the "Mob at the Gate" (nationalism). If the "mob" is expanded to Third-World peoples within as well as outside our borders, then the fourth tale is also extremely relevant to the current welfare debate--for some people, more so than any of the tales. In the present study, however, I chose not to experimentally invoke this rhetoric.

likely to state that welfare recipients could be self supporting if they worked harder and controlled their reproduction. When more liberal commentators apply individualist discourses to welfare they stress the need to empower individuals to help them achieve success in a competitive system.

Communitarian discourses are a reaction to extreme American individualism. While the label "communitarianism" is new, these discourses are supposed to be revivals of much older ways of talking and thinking. One current example is President Clinton's call for a "New Covenant." Stimulated in part by Bellah et al.'s, *Habits of the Heart* (1985), communitarians promote groups bound by mutual concern and obligations. Typically, these discourses are nostalgic, evoking earlier periods of American history when families and neighbors living in small towns or frontier settlements helped each other in times of need and imposed a common code of conduct. Although communitarianism is supposed to transcend liberal/conservative differences, it too comes in different, ideologically loaded, versions. Conservative communitarians are likely to hark back to a period before feminism and multiculturalism, when, as Charles Murray put it in a recent radio interview about *The Bell Curve*, "spouses" and different ethnic groups each had a "special place" (and stayed there, he implied) (WGBH Boston, 1/28/95). The implication for welfare is that government programs should not try to change the distribution of wealth and communities should take care of their own. Liberal communitarians use images of families and communities to stress, instead, as Mario Cuomo put it in his keynote address to the 1984 Democratic National Convention, that as our "wagon train" heads for the frontier, we should keep "the whole family aboard. Constantly reaching out to extend and enlarge that family," leaving no one behind. Here the implication for welfare is that we are one large national community and federal programs may be needed to ensure that we meet our obligations to each other. Communitarian discourses on the left are not very common in the information field of the average American and may be easily confused with religious and other moralistic appeals to

provide charity to people in need.

Populist discourses also have a long history in the United States (Kazin 1994). Populist appeals are class based: this is discourse that speaks for the class of "little people" or "average people" who face systematic barriers to economic advancement. As with the first two discourses, populism comes in different flavors, depending on how the class of "average people" or "little people" is imagined. For some the "average person" is middle class, not an immigrant or a person of color, and probably male. For others the class of little people includes everyone who is not wealthy, from the poor through the middle class. Populist discourse on the right tends to delimit the class of little people the first, more narrow, way and criticize the barriers imposed by big government or the misguided policies demanded by "special interest groups" (i.e., women and minorities). Populist discourse on the left tends to delimit the class of little people the second, broader way, critiquing the constraints imposed by an economy that has generated insufficient jobs paying a family wage. Populist discourse on the left--let us call it "inclusive populism"--is different from 1960s-style liberalism, which appealed to the comfortable middle-class to support the poor. By contrast, inclusive populism stresses the common interests of everyone struggling to make ends meet.

In practice, of course, these three discourses rarely appear in isolation from each other. A talk-radio host can easily move from complaints about affirmative action (conservative populism) to praise of unfettered competition (conservative individualism) or criticism of cultural relativism (conservative communitarianism). Nor are these the only discourses relevant to welfare. Those centered on gender, race, and immigration are also extremely potent in this field.

Still, despite the continuities among individualist, populist, and communitarian discourses, they invoke overlapping but not identical ways to think about changing the welfare system. Individualist discourses, both on the right and the left, suggest solutions that change the values, attitudes, or behaviors of welfare recipients. Communitarian discourses, both on the right and the left, turn attention instead to cultural values--

the moral climate of the nation. Populist discourses, both on the right and left, focus on structural problems and solutions. Furthermore, these discourses tend to differ in emotional tone, with the greatest contrast appearing between moralistic communitarian discourses and cynical populist discourses. The former we are more likely to hear from the pulpit, the latter at a neighborhood bar or kitchen table.

Cognizing Diverse Rhetorics: Compartmentalization, Integration, or Random Assortments

How do members of the public internalize these diverse rhetorics? There are three possibilities: integration around common themes, compartmentalization, and random combinations.

Integration consists of selectively retaining only those ideas from each discourse that fit a common theme. The theme could be "the less government the better," "things were better in the old days," "we should help those less fortunate," "People always take advantage of me" or any other concern--whether common or idiosyncratic. The selectively retained ideas would comprise a single cognitive schema that would be activated in any relevant context (such as participating in a telephone survey).

Compartmentalization occurs if divergent sources of information are retained in somewhat disconnected cognitive schemas. To continue the previous example, a given person could have both a "the less government the better" schema and a "we should help those less fortunate" schema. The particular conditions at a given moment (e.g., the precise wording of a survey) would then activate one of these schemas⁷ rather than the other.⁸

If divergent information is internalized in *random combinations*, there is no system to the way we pick up new information or respond, on the basis of previously learning, to a situation such as a survey. Our minds are like fortune-telling balls, with different responses floating randomly to the surface.

A reasonable assumption would be that the form of internalization that occurs would depend on several factors, the most important being the

⁷Increasingly, "schemas" is considered acceptable as the plural, instead of "schemata".

⁸Elsewhere (Strauss 1990) I have distinguished two forms of cognitive compartmentalization. Horizontally compartmentalized schemas are equally easy to bring to awareness. If, on the other hand, two schemas are vertically compartmentalized, one is more cognitively accessible than the other. That distinction is not relevant for the present study because I was not asking respondents to voice their opinions. Instead, they had only to react to statements I presented to them.

person's involvement in and knowledge about a topic and the way ideas about that topic have been presented to that person. When we are exposed to topics about which we know very little, we are likely to assimilate diverse bits of information in a way that looks fairly random. At the opposite extreme, if the topic is one about which we are both knowledgeable and concerned (concerned enough to have discussed it with others or thought it through for ourselves), we are then much more likely to pick and choose from the information presented to us, integrating it in a personally meaningful whole. Between these extremes are topics about which we have a moderate amount of knowledge and a moderate level of concern--concern sufficient to make us attend to more information on the topic but insufficient to provoke us to think through our own position. My assumption is that under these in-between conditions we compartmentalize if our personal information field is discontinuous (i.e., divergent ideas are presented in different contexts). The assumptions guiding the present study were that for the topic of welfare and for the average American adult, sources of information are somewhat discontinuous, while information and concern levels are moderate. Hence, I expected that the way respondents reacted to questions about welfare reform could be strongly affected by which of several compartmentalized schemas was most strongly activated by the survey questions.

This assumption is supported by the experiences of pollsters, who find that on most topics, survey wording has large effects on replies; by the well-known finding that Americans tend to be ideological conservatives but operational liberals; and by studies focussed on Americans' attitudes about welfare. A few years ago one researcher found, as he put it in his title, "Welfare by any other name smells sweeter." For example, questions that asked about helping poor people evoked a much more favorable response than those that asked about helping people on welfare (Smith 1987). A December 1994 New York Times/CBS News Poll found that 48% of the respondents called for cuts in "government spending on welfare" but 47% called for increases in "spending on programs for poor children" (New York

Times, 12/18/94:E 5). These findings suggest that for most Americans, ideas relevant to welfare have been internalized in a compartmentalized way.

As a cultural anthropologist, I was particularly interested in the schemas evoked by the three broad cultural discourses described above: individualism, communitarianism, and populism. This study investigated whether asking respondents at the beginning of the survey to respond to a statement phrased in terms that evoked one of these discourses would affect the opinions they expressed shortly afterward in the survey about proposals to change the welfare system. I anticipated that the schema evoked at the beginning would affect the attitudes respondents expressed later, regardless of their agreement or disagreement with the statement posed.⁴

Questionnaire design and survey sample

The survey was short and simple (Appendix A). Respondents were told that this was "a survey of attitudes about welfare reform." After screening to make sure respondents were U.S. citizens, 18 years old or older, three-quarters of the respondents next heard: "First, before I get to welfare reform, I will read a statement. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree."

Some randomly chosen⁵ respondents were then asked their opinion of the statement, "One of the biggest problems in America today is that too many people avoid taking responsibility for their lives." The term "responsibility" (cf. "The Personal Responsibility Act," the welfare reform proposal in the *Contract With America*) and the statement's focus on

⁴At the same time, I tried to choose statements with which I expected most respondents to agree. The individualist and communitarian statements were successful in this; the populist statement somewhat less so. There is further discussion of this point below.

⁵To assign respondents to groups, survey forms were marked in advance, with successive surveys indicating each of the four possibilities in turn. A slight adjustment of this order was made part way through to ensure equal distribution of the assignments in each of the three calling areas.

"people," considered apart from any larger groupings, were intended to be evocative of individualist ways of talking about welfare recipients.

Other respondents were asked to respond to the statement, "One of the biggest problems in America today is that we have forgotten that all of us, rich and poor, are in the same boat. Giving help to some people now will eventually help other people later." This wording was supposed to evoke a communitarian feeling of citizens sharing common concerns. By adding, "giving help to some people now will eventually help other people later," I had hoped to evoke a communitarian image of mutual responsibility rather than a "liberal" image of one-way charity.

Finally, some respondents considered the statement, "One of the biggest problems in America today is that the average person pays too much in taxes and doesn't get enough in return from the government." In this statement the focus is on "the average person," a taxpayer (like most of the respondents), part of a larger class of similar taxpayers. Furthermore, this average person is aggrieved (pays too much and gets too little). This statement was designed to be evocative of populist discourses.⁶

My initial assumption had been that individualist discourses are typically conservative, communitarian discourses typically liberal, and populist discourses can go either way; so the statements I created to evoke these discourses were ideologically tilted accordingly. The individualist statement is "victim blaming;" the communitarian statement stresses a progressive vision of communities that unite, rather than separate, diverse citizens; while the populist statement mixes liberal and conservative elements. In fact, as I explained previously, each of these cultural discourses has variants that range across the political spectrum. As I demonstrate below, however, the results of the survey show that the specific schemas evoked had effects that cannot be characterized solely along a liberal-conservative scale. Furthermore, contrary to my

⁶Even though it is probably more common for Americans to hear populist criticisms of taxes than populist calls for a greater return from government.

expectations, the populist discourse led in the end to greater support for expanded government programs than did the communitarian discourse.

The remaining respondents served as a control group. They heard none of these rhetorical framing statements, only the questions that were next posed to all respondents. Everyone was told that they would hear "three proposals for welfare reform" and for each they were supposed to say whether they agreed or disagreed. The three proposals were the following:

The best way to reform the welfare system is for states¹ to eliminate welfare for children born out of wedlock to teenage mothers.

The best way to reform the welfare system is for the government to provide welfare for two years, then expect recipients to work.

The best way to reform the welfare system is to replace welfare with a system of government-subsidized child care, health insurance, and jobs for all Americans who need them."

The order of presentation of the three proposals was rotated.

The first of these proposals is one element of the Republican Contract with America. It will be referred to as ELIMINATE from here on. The second proposal (hereafter called TWO YEARS) has been made by several Republican and Democratic politicians, including President Clinton. The third proposal (to be called BENEFITS FOR ALL) is not currently advocated by any well-known political leader. A public jobs program, national health insurance, and transitional day care for former welfare recipients were among the proposals suggested by President Clinton's welfare reform task force last year. Although the program they proposed was ambitious, it was not as extensive as government-subsidized "child care...and jobs for all Americans who need them."

¹In retrospect I realize it would have been better to have used "the government" rather than "states" here. As one respondent pointed out, many people favor having states control this area of policy. The effect of this wording, however, should have been to raise support for this proposal, and yet I found that support remained quite low.

²Use of "the best way to reform the welfare system" to introduce each of these proposals confused a few respondents, who then wanted to hear all three before they would respond to any. This occurred in 2 or 3 of the 99 calls I made.

Both for the initial rhetorical statement and for these three proposals, after respondents stated their agreement or disagreement, they were asked whether they agreed/disagreed "strongly" or "not so strongly." If it was not clear from the strength and direction of their agreement or disagreement with the welfare reform proposals individually, respondents were asked to choose between the two (or three) proposals they liked equally well. This question was usually worded as follows: "There were two proposals you agreed with strongly [or somewhat]. The second one I mentioned: [repeated word-for-word] and the third: [repeated word-for-word]. If you had to choose between those two, which would you pick?"

Finally, respondents were asked their age, highest grade completed, income category, race, and whether they voted in the last election. Their sex was inferred from their voice (Appendix A).

The survey was administered in two states: North Carolina and Rhode Island. In choosing these two states I took advantage of the fact that I am on the faculty at Duke University (Durham, North Carolina) and thus had the help of a research assistant and other people I know there, but I am currently on a semester's leave from Duke and am living in Rhode Island. My research assistant and one other caller made an initial set of calls for me in North Carolina; I made all Rhode Island calls as well as later call backs to people they had not reached. One of the North Carolina callers lives in Raleigh, the other in Chapel Hill, and each made calls in her local calling area. For the first caller that area covered Raleigh and surrounding Wake County, including the affluent suburb of Cary and the area around Research Triangle Park. The second caller's area included the university town of Chapel Hill and surrounding, more rural, Orange County. My calls in Rhode Island were made to the greater Providence area: Providence and the surrounding cities and suburbs of Cranston, Warwick, Pawtucket, North Providence, Cumberland, Coventry, East Providence, Bristol, and Barrington. This is largely a working-class area, although

*My instructions to callers were to repeat the choices verbatim, so as not to introduce possible bias by a substitute wording. Beyond that, they could improvise on the wording to elicit the respondent's top choice.

parts of it (e.g., Barrington) are quite affluent. Since the aim of the survey was to assess the effect of different rhetorical frames on attitudes about welfare policy, no attempt was made to choose a sample representative of the population of each state or of the nation. As I will explain later, however, the overall results I obtained are very similar to several recent national surveys.

Samples were chosen as follows. Several five-digit numbers were drawn from a random number table. These were used to specify a page number in the local directory, column number on the page, and distance down the column. The phone number at that point was noted for each of these random numbers. For each of these initial phone numbers a list of numbers to call was generated by adding four to the first number, four to that number, and so on, for ten phone numbers. This gave us the possibility of reaching unlisted numbers and ensured respondents' anonymity. By limiting the list to 10 numbers for each randomly chosen starting point, no exchange was over sampled. The initial lists had 170 numbers (some working, some not) for the greater Providence area; 120 for the Raleigh area; and 50 for the Chapel Hill area. By repeated calling (at least four attempts for each working residential number) we eventually reached 203 people, out of whom 143 (70.4%) participated in the survey. It is likely that the high participation rate was due in large part to widespread public interest in the topic of welfare reform.¹⁰ Of those 143 participants, half (71) were from Rhode Island, a third (49) from the Raleigh, North Carolina area, and the remaining sixth (23) from the Chapel Hill, North Carolina area.

Findings: The Effects of the Rhetorical Frame

¹⁰Our success in reaching a large share of the initial list was also the result of persistent calling over the 13 days during which the survey was conducted. This is longer than is ideal for a survey on a topic of such current interest. Still, there were no major public discussions of welfare during that period that should have created differences between people polled earlier and later. (Discussion of a balanced budget amendment and the start of the O.J. Simpson murder trial near the end of the calling period consumed more public interest.) The last survey was given minutes before President Clinton's State of the Union address.

The previous discussion suggests that the respondents who were most likely to be affected by the rhetorical frame introduced at the beginning of the survey were those with moderate levels of interest in the topic of welfare. No question was asked directly to judge their level of interest or concern. Instead, I measured this by the strength of their opinions about the three welfare reform proposals. The 42 respondents who agreed or disagreed strongly with all three proposals were tagged as "high certainty" and the remaining 101 as "moderate certainty." Most of the findings reported below hold as trends approaching statistical significance for all respondents and are statistically significant for the respondents of moderate certainty considered alone.

The rhetorical frame introduced at the beginning of the survey did not create an orientation that affected responses to all three proposals equally. As a compartmentalization theory would predict, the effects were more specific. The individualist rhetoric had its greatest effect on support for ELIMINATE (increasing it). The populist rhetoric had its biggest effect on support for TWO YEARS (decreasing it) and on final choice among the proposals (leading to preference for BENEFITS FOR ALL over TWO YEARS). The communitarian rhetoric affected support for all three proposals, but in more complicated ways. Overall, it increased support for BENEFITS FOR ALL, considered alone, but this depended on the respondent's agreement or disagreement with the communitarian statement and did not hold up in their final choice among welfare reform options. In the end, those who heard the communitarian rhetoric tended to prefer TWO YEARS.

The least complicated finding is that the individualist rhetoric increased support for ELIMINATE ($p=.01$ for mod. certainty; $p=.21$ for all, Appendix B, Tables 1b & 2b). It is not surprising that having respondents think about the statement, "One of the biggest problems in America today is that too many people avoid taking responsibility for their lives," would increase support for proposals to eliminate welfare for single teenage mothers. "Responsibility" is usually associated with maturity (social, emotional, and moral); "irresponsibility" with immaturity. Furthermore, "avoiding one's responsibilities" has sometimes been used as a euphemism

for men not marrying the women they impregnate or supporting the children they father. Probably this statement brought to mind ideas of immature behavior; when combined with the possible connotations of paternal irresponsibility and the knowledge that this was a survey about welfare, the result was activation of schemas relating to "family values." For respondents whose opinions were held with moderate certainty, the effects of the individualist rhetoric were striking. Among these respondents, while 89% of the control group and 89% of the communitarian group rejected the ELIMINATE proposal, the individualist group was nearly split between those disagreeing and those agreeing with ELIMINATE (54% disagree to 45% agree). (The populist moderate certainty group was in between, with 68% disagree to 32% agree.)

Although it is hard to draw conclusions from tests showing no association, it is interesting that the particular individualist statement used in this survey had less strong effects on support for TWO YEARS or BENEFITS FOR ALL. One possibility is that the "family values" connotations of "avoid taking responsibility" affected ELIMINATE, which dealt directly with sexuality, more than it affected TWO YEARS or BENEFITS FOR ALL, which focus on other aspects of welfare. Another possibility is that respondents were divided about whether TWO YEARS and BENEFITS FOR ALL (i.e., putting everyone to work, with day care and health insurance) would promote or retard responsible behavior.

Support for ELIMINATE was not greatly affected by respondents' degree of agreement or disagreement with the initial statements they heard. For the TWO YEARS and BENEFITS FOR ALL proposals, the situation is more complicated. Overall, the particular populist rhetoric I used decreased (I emphasize this, because some might find it surprising) support for TWO YEARS ($p=.05$ for mod. certainty; $p=.11$ for all, Appendix B, Tables 3b & 4a). This is true of the whole group exposed to the populist rhetoric, but especially true of those who heard the populist statement and then did not agree with it strongly. Exactly half of those who heard, "The biggest problem in America today is that the average person pays too much in taxes and doesn't get enough in return from the government," agreed with it

strongly. But 26.5% of those who heard it disagreed with it, making it the most contested of the three initial statements. The remaining quarter neither agreed nor disagreed, or agreed with it, but not strongly. Those who heard the populist statement and agreed strongly were fairly similar to the control group: only a little more in favor of ELIMINATE and BENEFITS FOR ALL and a little less in favor of TWO YEARS than the controls."¹¹ However, those who heard the populist statement and decided that they did not agree completely were more likely than the controls to reject ELIMINATE and embrace BENEFITS FOR ALL¹² and they came closer than any other group to rejecting TWO YEARS (50% agree to 50% disagree).

Interestingly, majorities of both the group who heard the populist statement and agreed strongly and of the group who heard it and did not agree strongly chose BENEFITS FOR ALL over TWO YEARS in the end. For many of the respondents, their preference among programs was apparent from their opinion about each. However, 44% of all respondents agreed with both TWO YEARS and BENEFITS FOR ALL. If they agreed equally strongly, they were asked to choose between them. For 90.5% of all those in the populist group who had agreed with BENEFITS FOR ALL, it was still their top choice after they had heard all three proposals. As we will see, support for BENEFITS FOR ALL in the communitarian group was much softer. The result is that the populist group favored BENEFITS FOR ALL over TWO YEARS by almost a 2 to 1 margin in the end (19 to 11). The difference between the populist group

¹¹Those who heard the populist statement and decided they agreed strongly rejected ELIMINATE by a 2.2 to 1 ratio, compared to the 2.6:1 ratio for the control group and 3:1 ratio for the whole sample; agreed with TWO YEARS by a 4.3:1 ratio, compared to 5.4:1 for the control group and 3.2:1 overall; and agreed with BENEFITS FOR ALL by a 1.4:1 ratio, the same as the control group's, and slightly lower than the 2:1 found overall.

¹²They disagreed with ELIMINATE 9 to 1, while the control group disagreed 2.6:1 and they agreed with BENEFITS FOR ALL 3:1, while the control group agreed 1.4:1. These figures are for all respondents, there being too few people to work with if I looked at just those whose opinions on the welfare reform proposals were held with moderate certainty and who agreed strongly or not with the initial rhetorical statement. The differences here (tested as part of a comparison with all other groups) not significant but suggestive.

and the rest combined in final preference for BENEFITS FOR ALL over TWO YEARS was significant, in this case, for all respondents rather than those of moderate certainty alone ($p=.05$ for all; $p=.20$ for mod. certainty, Appendix B, Tables 7b & 8b).

The communitarian rhetoric also increased support for BENEFITS FOR ALL ($p=.03$ for mod. certainty; $p=.13$ for all, Appendix B, Tables 5b & 6b). These effects, however, were driven by unanimous agreement (16 to 0) with BENEFITS FOR ALL, when considered alone, by respondents who heard the communitarian rhetoric and decided they agreed with it strongly (the communitarian, agree strongly, group differed from the other experimental groups significantly on this question, $p=.02$, Appendix B, Table 6c). Yet, less than a majority (45.7%) of those who heard the communitarian rhetoric agreed with it strongly. Another 40% agreed "not so strongly" and the rest disagreed.¹⁷ Those who were forced to think about the communitarian rhetoric and decided they did not support it wholeheartedly were a little less likely than the control group or the whole sample to support BENEFITS FOR ALL and they were considerably more likely to support TWO YEARS (17 agree to 1 disagree; $p=.056$, Appendix B, Table 4b).

Moreover, when respondent were given their final opportunity to choose the proposal they liked best, if there were two or more they liked equally well, the communitarians' support for BENEFITS FOR ALL turned out to be soft. Recall that in the populist group, 90% of those who had agreed with BENEFITS FOR ALL considered alone liked it best after they had heard all three proposals. By contrast, over half (52%) of those in the communitarian group who agreed with BENEFITS FOR ALL considered alone abandoned it for TWO YEARS in the end.¹⁸ For the moderate certainty respondents alone, the communitarian group's preference for BENEFITS FOR ALL in relation to TWO YEARS is still higher than the control group's.

¹⁷One person simply said "agree," refusing to modify it by a "strongly" or a "not so strongly" and was not counted.

¹⁸This includes 44% of those who had agreed strongly with the communitarian statement, along with 71% of those who had not agreed strongly with the communitarian statement.

However, it is about the same as the individualist group's and not as high as the populist group's (Appendix B, Table 8a, n.s.). For all respondents the communitarians' preference for TWO YEARS over BENEFITS FOR ALL is almost exactly the same as the control group's, higher than the individualist group's, and much higher than the populist group's (differences between populist and communitarian groups significant, $p=.05$, Appendix B, Table 7c).

At first blush it might seem surprising that those given the populist framing preferred BENEFITS FOR ALL as a way of improving the welfare system, while those given the communitarian framing preferred TWO YEARS. A closer look at the particular wording of each of these rhetorical statements may explain why this happened. The communitarian statement was, "One of the biggest problems in America today is that we have forgotten that all of us, rich and poor, are in the same boat. Giving help to some people now will eventually help other people later." While the first sentence posits cross-class commonality, the second suggests wealthier people helping poorer people, in return for an unspecified return (for someone) later. How might respondents have pictured this return?

Some immigrant groups in the United States have had loan funds, from which poor members borrowed to establish small businesses. When they became wealthier, they repaid the fund, making money available for poorer, newer immigrants. This example would be remote from the experience of most of my respondents, however--and perhaps would not come to mind even if they had ever known of it, because it was an intraethnic group practice while most respondents are likely to think of interethnic group giving in response to the above statement. Another way to interpret the communitarian statement is that any of us could become poor at any time ("There, but for the grace of God...")--so we really are all in the same boat and need to have a well-established safety net. It is likely, however, that my use of the phrase, "all of us, rich and poor...", tended to work against that interpretation, reinforcing the popular habit of thinking of rich and poor (or, at least, the poor) as unchanging castes instead of the more fluid categories they are, in fact. Still other

interpretations could have been that if poor children are better fed, housed, and educated, they will eventually contribute more to society, or (less benignly) will at least be less likely to commit antisocial acts. These interpretations may not be common enough in popular discourse, however, to come readily to most people's minds.

My suspicion is that the communitarian statement, instead, activated closely related "charitable" framings of this issue: we should help poor people out of compassion for the hungry and homeless. Once this was activated, ELIMINATE was clearly the wrong answer, but either BENEFITS FOR ALL or TWO YEARS could have been seen as reasonable, "charitable" alternatives. If one is temporarily imbued with kindly feelings--or feeling the weight of the moral exhortation to think of all of us, rich and poor, as in the same boat--it would be hard to disagree with the proposal to "replace welfare with a system of government-subsidized child care, health insurance, and jobs for all Americans who need them." But people do not usually like their charity to be open ended, making the proposal to "provide welfare for two years, then expect recipients to work" look more attractive in the end. This is all the more the case for those who did not agree with the communitarian statement wholeheartedly. It is hard to disagree explicitly with charitable appeals, but they can arouse resentment ("All right, I'll give, but I don't want to"). For those resentful respondents, particularly, TWO YEARS probably seemed much more appealing than BENEFITS FOR ALL.

The particular populist statement I used ("One of the biggest problems in America today is that the average person pays too much in taxes and doesn't get enough in return from government,") framed the issue quite differently. Asking respondents whether they agreed or disagreed forced them to think about whether they (when it comes to paying taxes, almost everyone thinks they are an "average person") are getting sufficient government services in relation to the taxes they pay. Half of the respondents agreed strongly, whether because they think they pay too much in taxes or because they think they get too few services it is hard to say--people did not comment much on statements with which they agreed.

Those disagreeing (26.5% of those who heard this statement) were more voluble. Some disagreed, or agreed not so strongly, because we should not expect much from the government, but others disagreed, as one 45-year old Raleigh man put it, because "if we want services we have to pay for them." He seems to have spoken for more of those who disagreed or did not agree strongly with the populist statement. Recall that this group was more likely than those who agreed strongly with the populist statement, more likely than the control group, and more likely than the sample as a whole to agree with BENEFITS FOR ALL. Still, majorities of all of those who had to respond to the populist statement, both those who agreed strongly with it and those who did not, preferred BENEFITS FOR ALL over TWO YEARS. That is probably because the populist statement framed the issue in terms of the adequacy of government programs for "average people" and BENEFITS FOR ALL proposed not to expand programs for poor people only but to provide subsidized child care, health insurance, and jobs for "all Americans who need them."

Other findings

My sample was not chosen to be representative of the population of all adult Americans, or even of the adult populations of North Carolina and Rhode Island. People living in the urban Raleigh area and university-dominated Chapel Hill area are unlike those in the more rural parts of North Carolina to the east or the mountainous region at the far western end of the state, while the greater Providence, Rhode Island, area is more ethnically diverse than southern or western parts of the state. (See Appendix B, Tables 9-15 for description of my sample.)¹¹ Still, my overall findings are similar to those of other recent national polls. For example, a January 1995 Los Angeles Times poll found that only 28% of those surveyed preferred the *Contract with America* proposal to eliminate benefits to

¹¹These tables show that the sample had twice as many women and men. Sex was not significantly associated with opinions about any of the welfare reform choices however.

single teenage mothers over President Clinton's proposal to require them to live at home if they want to receive welfare benefits (Providence Journal, 1/24/95). Similarly, only 24.8% of my sample agreed with ELIMINATE. The same poll found that 66% did not want to end welfare benefits after two years without providing a job. This is consistent with the 65.9% of my sample who liked the sound of "jobs for all Americans who need them."

Still, government-subsidized health care, child care, and jobs for all Americans who need them is not the same as jobs, and possibly transitional health insurance and child care subsidies for all former welfare recipients. Is there really strong popular support for such an expansion of government services? Or was my sample skewed?

The demographic profile of those supporting BENEFITS FOR ALL suggests that any representative national sample, and probably any representative state sample, would show a majority agreeing with the proposal. It was supported by majorities of my interviewees whose household incomes were \$75,000 or less; majorities of respondents at every education level except those with a two-year or vocational education degree; majorities of both men and women; majorities of both whites and African-Americans; majorities of those who did and did not vote in the last election; majorities at every age level; and majorities of respondents in all three research sites (Raleigh area, Chapel Hill area, and Providence area) (Appendix B, Tables 9-15).¹⁶

A particularly interesting finding is that each of the three groups who had to respond to one of the rhetorical framing statements then agreed with BENEFITS FOR ALL more than did the control group (Appendix B, Tables 5a & 6a). In some ways the experiment I conducted is unlike the average person's exposure to political rhetoric. Normally, such rhetoric washes over us; we are not forced to attend to it and state our opinion about it.¹⁷

¹⁶One expert who reviewed my survey thought support for BENEFITS FOR ALL could have been bolstered by the coda: "jobs for all Americans who need them," which she thought sounded like "Mom and apple pie" (Christina Zarcadoolas, personal communication).

¹⁷This was pointed out to me by Rachel Van Cleve (personal communication).

In this survey, by contrast, the respondents in the individualist, populist, and communitarian groups had to think about and respond twice to the rhetorical framing statement they were given: first when I asked if they agreed or disagreed; again when I asked if they agreed/disagreed strongly or not so strongly. Daniel Yankelovich distinguishes between "public opinion" and "public judgment" thus: public judgment is a form of public opinion that

exhibits (1) more thoughtfulness, more weighing of alternatives, more genuine engagement with the issue, more taking into account a wide variety of factors than ordinary public opinions as measured in opinion polls, and (2) more emphasis on the normative, valuing, ethical side of questions than on the factual, informational side (1991:5).

Merely putting respondents through two rounds of questions about broader moral principles after I had announced that this was a survey about welfare reform may have helped to foster conditions for reaching a more thoughtful judgment. Under these conditions, support for BENEFITS FOR ALL was uniformly higher in all three experimental groups.

As the analysis in the previous section has shown, however, support for BENEFITS FOR ALL, considered alone, is easier to obtain than support for that proposal considered in relation to the rest. Were there any groups that favored BENEFITS FOR ALL over TWO YEARS or ELIMINATE? Overall, only 8% of the respondents liked ELIMINATE best, while 46% preferred TWO YEARS and 41.5% preferred BENEFITS FOR ALL. Majority support for TWO YEARS came from those whose total household income was between \$55,000 and \$150,000; those who had some college education but no postgraduate education; those who were 18 to 45 years old; and those living in the Raleigh area.¹⁸ Exactly half of those earning \$35,000 to \$55,000 preferred

¹⁸Raleigh respondents stood out from the sample in being older than 30 but younger than 51, having incomes higher than \$35,000, and having some college but no postgraduate education. The Rhode Island sample was much older and less well educated than the rest, while the Chapel Hill area respondents were younger and poorer than the rest. It appears, therefore, that attitudinal differences among the three sites are as much the result of these demographic differences as of local culture.

TWO YEARS, and it was the top choice of a plurality, but not a majority, of whites, men, women, and those who voted in the last election.

Majority support for BENEFITS FOR ALL over TWO YEARS and ELIMINATE, by contrast, was found among those whose total household income was \$35,000 or less; those with a high school diploma or less; African-American respondents; those who did not vote in the last election; and those living in the Chapel Hill area. A plurality of those with a postgraduate education and respondents 46 and older also favored BENEFITS FOR ALL. Greater Providence area respondents were exactly divided between TWO YEARS and BENEFITS FOR ALL (42% to 42%) (Appendix B, Tables 16-22).

Finally, it should be kept in mind that the TWO YEARS proposal, as worded in this study, did not state whether public jobs would be provided if no private sector jobs were available for former welfare recipients. Some of my respondents agreed with TWO YEARS but commented that a job with health insurance or child care must be made available. Similarly, the wording of the BENEFITS FOR ALL proposal was quite extreme: "The best way to reform the welfare system is to replace welfare with a system of government-subsidized child care, health insurance, and jobs for all Americans who need them"! More realistic proposals--to raise the minimum wage, create some public jobs or provide health insurance or help with child care costs for all Americans whose household income is less than 185% of the poverty level, for example--would probably find much greater support.

The implications

From an anthropological perspective, the current debate about welfare in the United States is fascinating. A myth has been created: the myth of the lazy, sexually irresponsible woman of color (typically) consuming large quantities of hardworking taxpayers' dollars. In fact, the vast majority of adults receiving AFDC are on the welfare rolls for less than two years

initially, have no more children than the national average," and are almost as likely to be white as not (NY Times 6/19/94:E 4). Furthermore, AFDC spending accounts for a very small percentage of national and states' budgets." A study of how and why this myth arose, and what has led to its prominence at this time, would tell us a great deal about the political, economic, and cultural forces at work in U.S. society at the end of the 20th century. It is difficult to take a detached academic perspective on this issue, however, when proposals have been floated that could have serious consequences for people's lives.

The present study has two sorts of implications: those regarding what the public wants and those regarding how advocates for the sort of the sensible reforms the majority of the public favors should frame their proposals.

What does the public want? The American public is by no means in complete agreement about options for welfare reform, but my study, along with the Los Angeles Times and New York Times polls cited earlier, suggest there is majority support in nearly all demographic groups about the following principles: (1) welfare reform should help people to become self-supporting in a short period of time; (2) it should not leave poor families, especially poor children, destitute; and (3) it should address the difficulties everyone of modest means faces in finding good jobs and affordable health insurance and child care. It suggests that the Republican victories in the 1994 elections were not a mandate to eliminate the social safety net but instead an expression of impatience and concern, among those who voted, about how little is being done to address *their* needs.

"Birth rates of unmarried African-American women, in particular, have gone down by 13% since 1970. The percentage of African-American children born to single mothers has risen only because married black women's birth rates have fallen even more than single black women's birth rates (Coontz 1992:236).

"In 1993, AFDC spending accounted for about one percent of the national budget and 3.4 percent of states' budgets. Medicaid spending consumes a much larger share of federal (5.4%) and state (18.4%) budgets (1993 figures, New York Times, 6/19/94:E 4).

How should leaders frame their proposals? The primary implication of the present study is that certain forms of discourse that some leaders may be tempted to use will have unintended, undesirable consequences.

Inadvisable approach #1: Individualist framings. For advocates of approaches that stress principle (1) above and who give priority to deterring women from having children out of wedlock, individualist framings make the most sense. For advocates of proposals that adhere to all three principles listed above, however, individualist framings make much less sense.

On the surface, it would seem sensible for any politician in this country to frame a welfare reform proposal in individualist terms. That 71% of my interviewees who heard the individualist statement agreed strongly merely reinforces what anyone who knows American culture already understands: there is widespread agreement that each of us can and should take responsibility for our own lives. Stressing this bedrock American value was the approach chosen by President Clinton's Working Group on Welfare Reform in 1994. The five-page summary of the proposal written for public consumption is replete with individualist discourse, from the title of the proposal ("The Work and Responsibility Act") through discussion that emphasizes the "tough sanctions" for recipients who refuse to follow the rules. While communitarian and populist discourses are present as well in this document, they are much less prominent than the individualist discourse. For example, a subsection titled "Supporting Working Families..." is buried at the end of the first major section and presented with little rhetorical fanfare. One of the most significant achievements of the Clinton administration, expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), is downplayed in this document just as it has been downplayed since it was passed, despite its potential popular appeal.

The problem with an individualist approach, my study suggests, is that if the issue is framed in terms of individuals' behavior, people will tend to favor solutions that give the goal of deterring irresponsible behavior much greater weight than they would have otherwise in relation to their goals of not hurting children or addressing the structural obstacles faced by people trying to avoid welfare.

Inadvisable approach #2: Don't hurt the children. For advocates of proposals that would give the highest priority to the goal of ensuring that poor children are not left destitute, it would seem sensible to focus the public's attention on the harm to children that could result from severe cuts in AFDC, removal of its status as an entitlement, or outright denial of benefits to single, unmarried women younger than 18 or most immigrants. This approach seems promising in light of the consistent finding that the American public is opposed to punishing children for the behavior of their parents. (As one of my respondents put it when responding to ELIMINATE, "That's terrible. The little child is not to blame because the mother is a damn fool.") This approach, however, has a potential pitfall. My survey suggests that if the appeal is seen primarily as a plea for compassion--a tug at the heart strings--most Americans will respond guardedly, saying in effect, "We will do what we can, but we don't want to do this forever." Appeals of this sort might work in combination with other approaches, but alone they seem to increase support for plans that give time limits greater priority than dealing with underlying causes of poverty."

If these two approaches are inadvisable, what do I recommend instead for advocates of approaches that balance all three goals for welfare reform listed earlier?

Suggested Approach #1: Invest in Children. Unlike appeals to people's compassion, which can wear thin all too quickly, this approach focuses attention on the need to ensure that every child, from infancy on, is healthy and has the education and standard of living that will allow them to develop their full potential. It is interesting to note that despite a conservative political climate in North Carolina, there is considerable public support for the Democratic governor's Smart Start program, which takes this approach. As of December 1994 Governor Hunt had

²While my study did not address the issue of the parenting provided by welfare recipients, advocates of this approach should be concerned that as respected a commentator as the child psychologist John Rosemond could say, in a recent newspaper column, that poor children might be better off in well-run orphanages than at home. Currently, the orphanage alternative is very unpopular among the general public, but there may be a widely shared view of welfare mothers as unfit parents that advocates of the "don't hurt the children" approach need to keep in mind.

a 71% approval rating among adult North Carolinians. This is the highest approval rating of any Democratic governor and the fourth highest approval rating in the country (North Carolina DataNet 1/95:1).

Alone, however, this approach is not enough because it could reinforce the perception that it is all right to abandon poor adults, some of whom might not be much past childhood themselves and who also have potentials that can be developed.

Suggested approach #2: Inclusive populism. An inclusive populist approach stresses the shared concerns of everyone going through hard times, whether currently working or not. While the BENEFITS FOR ALL proposal used in my survey has no chance of being enacted, some steps in this direction are raising the minimum wage, increasing tax credits or providing other subsidies for child care on a sliding scale for middle-income and poor families, and ensuring medical coverage for the working poor as well as welfare recipients. My study suggests, moreover, that it is not enough to propose these things; they should be introduced in a way that brings together Americans going through hard times, rather than addressing the needs of people on welfare while ignoring the needs of the working poor. A populist appeal (or, at least, the one used in this study, which referred to the taxes people pay in relation to the government services they receive) is not without its possibly undesirable consequences: Among the respondents whose opinions were held with moderate certainty, almost a third who those who heard the populist statement then agreed with ELIMINATE, compared to only one-tenth of the control group. This is less support, however, than among the individualist moderate certainty group, nearly half of whom then agreed with ELIMINATE. Moreover, respondents who heard the populist statement, after thinking about all three proposals, were significantly more likely to support as their top choice BENEFITS FOR ALL. The appeal here may be in part one of self interest since this proposal could help the average respondent as well. Self interest, of course, is a powerful motivator.

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APPENDIX A

PHONE NUMBER _____

Telephone Survey/Experiment-- The Effect of Political Rhetoric on Welfare Reform Choices

Hello, my name is Patricia Phillips. I am a graduate student at Duke University and I'm conducting a survey of attitudes about welfare reform. The questions will take only a few minutes. May I go ahead? Thank you.

1. Are you a U.S. citizen, 18 years old or older?

yes

no (If no, ask if someone in the house is. If no one is, end the call.)

IN 3 VERSIONS READ 2 AND ONE OF A-C. IN 4TH VERSION GO STRAIGHT TO 3 on the next page.

2. First, before we get to welfare reform, I will read a statement. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree.

READ ONE OF THE FOLLOWING. FOLLOW UP WITH, DO YOU AGREE/DISAGREE? STRONGLY, OR NOT SO STRONGLY?

A. One of the biggest problems in America today is that too many people avoid taking responsibility for their lives.

Agree Strongly Not so strongly

Disagree Strongly Not so strongly

B. One of the biggest problems in America today is that the average person pays too much in taxes and doesn't get enough in return from the government

Agree Strongly Not so strongly

Disagree Strongly Not so strongly

C. One of the biggest problems in America today is that we have forgotten that all of us, rich and poor, are in the same boat. Giving help to some people now will eventually help other people later.

Agree Strongly Not so strongly

Disagree Strongly Not so strongly

3. [Now] I will read three proposals for welfare reform. For each one, please tell me whether you agree or disagree.

(ROTATE ORDER)

A. The best way to reform the welfare system is for states to eliminate welfare for children born out of wedlock to teenage mothers.

Agree Strongly Not so strongly
 Disagree Strongly Not so strongly

B. The best way to reform the welfare system is for the government to provide welfare for two years, then expect recipients to work.

Agree Strongly Not so strongly
 Disagree Strongly Not so strongly

C. The best way to reform the welfare system is to replace welfare with a system of government-subsidized child care, health insurance, and jobs for all Americans who need them.

Agree Strongly Not so strongly
 Disagree Strongly Not so strongly

4. (IF NOT OBVIOUS, ASK) Which of those proposals do you like the best?

A. _____
 B. _____
 C. _____

5. NOW I'M GOING TO ASK A FEW QUESTIONS FOR CLASSIFICATION PURPOSES ONLY.

6. DONT ASK : Gender M F

7. How old are you? _____
 (if refused, can you tell me which age group you are in?)

- a. 18-23
- b. 24-30
- c. 31-35
- d. 36-40
- e. 41-45
- f. 46-50
- g. 51-55
- h. 56-60
- i. 61-65
- j. 66 and over

8. What is the highest grade you completed in school (DO NOT READ CHOICES)

- a. some h.s. or less
- b. h.s. graduate
- c. some college, no degree

- c. vocational training, 2-yr. college
- e. Bachelor's degree
- f. Postgraduate work or degree

9. Is your total household income... (READ AS ROUNDED OFF \$S)

- a. 10,000 or less
- b. 10,001 - 20,000
- c. 20,001 - 35,000
- d. 35,001 - 55,000
- e. 55,001 - 75,000
- f. 75,001 - 150,000
- g. 150,001 and over
- h. Don't know

10. Would you mind telling me your race?

- a. White
- b. African-American
- c. Latino/a
- d. Asian
- e. Native American
- f. Other

11. Did you vote in the last election?

- a. yes
- b. no

APPENDIX B

Table 1a: Moderate Certainty--ELIMINATE

"The best way to reform the welfare system is for states to eliminate welfare for children born out of wedlock to teenage mothers."

Count (Column %)	INDIVIDUALIST	POPULIST	COMMUNITARIAN	CONTROLS
AGREE	11 (46%)	7 (32%)	2 (10.5%)	2 (10.5%)
DISAGREE	13 (54%)	15 (68%)	17 (89.5%)	17 (89.5%)

Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted from mod. cert.), $p=.02$

Table 1b: Moderate Certainty (Individualist vs. Others)--ELIMINATE

Count (Column %)	INDIVIDUALIST	OTHERS
Agree	11 (46%)	11 (18%)
DISAGREE	13 (54%)	49 (82%)

Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted from mod. cert.), $p=.01$

Table 2a: Full Sample--ELIMINATE

Count (Column %)	INDIVIDUALIST	POPULIST	COMMUNITARIAN	CONTROLS
Agree	12 (31%)	8 (23.5%)	5 (14%)	10 (28%)
DISAGREE	25 (66%)	25 (73.5%)	30 (86%)	26 (72%)
NEITHER/DK	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	0	0

Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted), $p=.33$

Table 2b: Full Sample (Individualist vs. Others)--ELIMINATE

Count (Column %)	INDIVIDUALIST	OTHERS
AGREE	12 (32%)	23 (22%)
DISAGREE	25 (66%)	81 (77%)
NEITHER/DK	1 (3%)	1 (1%)

Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted) $p=.21$

Table 3a: Moderate Certainty--TWO YEARS

"The best way to reform the welfare system is for the government to provide welfare for two years, then expect recipients to work."

Count (Column %)	INDIVIDUALIST	POPULIST	COMMUNITARIAN	CONTROLS
AGREE	17 (71%)	14 (64%)	17 (89.5%)	18 (95%)
DISAGREE	7 (29%)	8 (36%)	2 (10.5%)	1 (5%)

Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted), $p=.045$
(3/8 cells with expected freq. <5)

Table 3b: Moderate Certainty (Populist vs. Others)--TWO YEARS

Count (Column %)	POPULIST	OTHERS
AGREE	14 (64%)	52 (84%)
DISAGREE	8 (36%)	10 (16%)

Fisher's Exact Test, One-Tail (Neither/DK omitted), $p=.05$

Table 4a: Full Sample--TWO YEARS

Count (Column %)	INDIVIDUALIST	POPULIST	COMMUNITARIAN	CONTROLS
AGREE	26 (68%)	20 (59%)	30 (86%)	27 (75%)
DISAGREE	11 (29%)	11 (32%)	5 (14%)	5 (14%)
NEITHER/DK	1 (3%)	3 (9%)	0	4 (11%)

Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted), p=.11

Table 4b: Full Sample (Communitarian, Do not Strongly Agree)--TWO YEARS

Count (Column %)	INDIVIDUALIST	POPULIST	DO NOT STRONGLY AGREE COMMUNITARIAN	CONTROLS
AGREE	26 (68%)	20 (59%)	17 (94%)	27 (75%)
DISAGREE	11 (29%)	11 (32%)	1 (6%)	5 (14%)
NEITHER/DK	1 (3%)	3 (9%)	0	4 (11%)

Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted), p=.056

Table 5a: Moderate Certainty--BENEFITS FOR ALL

"The best way to reform the welfare system is to replace welfare with a system of government-subsidized child care, health insurance, and jobs for all Americans who need them."

Count (Column %)	INDIVIDUALIST	POPULIST	COMMUNITARIAN	CONTROLS
AGREE	14 (58%)	13 (59%)	15 (84%)	10 (53%)
DISAGREE	10 (42%)	9 (41%)	3 (16%)	9 (47%)

Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted), $p=.18$

Table 5b: Moderate Certainty (Communitarian vs. Others)--
BENEFITS FOR ALL

Count (Column %)	COMMUNITARIAN	OTHERS
AGREE	16 (84%)	37 (57%)
DISAGREE	3 (16%)	28 (43%)

Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted from mod. cert. group), $p=.03$

Table 6a: Full Sample--BENEFITS FOR ALL

Count (Column %)	INDIVIDUALIST	POPULIST	COMMUNITARIAN	CONTROLS
AGREE	24 (63%)	22 (65%)	27 (77%)	19 (53%)
DISAGREE	12 (32%)	12 (35%)	8 (23%)	14 (39%)
NEITHER/DK	2 (5%)	0	0	3 (8%)

Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted), $p=.39$ Table 6b: Full Sample (Communitarian vs. Others)--
BENEFITS FOR ALL

Count (Column %)	COMMUNITARIAN	OTHERS
AGREE	27 (77%)	65 (63%)
DISAGREE	8 (23%)	38 (37%)
NEITHER/DK	0	5 (5%)

Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted), $p=.13$

Table 6c: Full Sample (Communitarians, Agree Strongly)--
BENEFITS FOR ALL

Count (Column %)	INDIVIDUALIST	POPULIST	AGREE STRONGLY COMMUNITARIAN	CONTROLS
AGREE	24 (63%)	22 (65%)	16 (100%)	19 (53%)
DISAGREE	12 (32%)	12 (35%)	0 (0%)	14 (39%)
NEITHER/DK	2 (5%)	0	0	3 (8%)

Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted), $p=.02$

Table 7a: Full Sample--Preference among ELIMINATE, TWO YEARS,
and BENEFITS FOR ALL

Count (Column %)	INDIVIDUALIST	POPULIST	COMMUNITARIAN	CONTROLS
ELIMINATE	3 (8%)	3 (9%)	1 (3%)	5 (14%)
TWO YEARS	16 (42%)	11 (33%)	19 (54%)	19 (53%)
BENEFITS FOR ALL	17 (45%)	19 (58%)	12 (34%)	11 (31%)
NEITHER/DK	2 (5%)	0	3 (9%)	1 (3%)

Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted), $p=.22$

Table 7b: Full Sample (Populist vs. Others)--Preference between TWO YEARS and BENEFITS FOR ALL			Table 7c: Full Sample (Populist vs. Communitarian)--Preference between TWO YEARS and BENEFITS FOR ALL		
Count (Residuals)	POPULIST	OTHERS	Count (Residuals)	POPULIST	COMMUNITARIAN
TWO YEARS	11 (-4.7)	54 (4.7)	TWO YEARS	11 (-3.8)	19 (3.8)
BENEFITS FOR ALL	19 (4.7)	40 (-4.7)	BENEFITS FOR ALL	19 (3.8)	12 (-3.8)
Pearson Chi-Square, p=.05			Pearson Chi-Square, p=.05		

Table 8a: Moderate Certainty--Preference among ELIMINATE, TWO YEARS, and BENEFITS FOR ALL				
Count (Column %)	INDIVIDUALIST	POPULIST	COMMUNITARIAN	CONTROLS
ELIMINATE	3 (13%)	2 (9.5%)	1 (6%)	1 (5%)
TWO YEARS	11 (47%)	8 (38%)	8 (47%)	13 (68%)
BENEFITS FOR ALL	9 (39%)	11 (52%)	8 (47%)	5 (26%)
Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted from mod. certainty) p=.58				

Table 8b: Moderate Certainty (Populist vs. Others)--Preference between TWO YEARS and BENEFITS FOR ALL

Count (Residuals)	POPULIST	OTHERS
TWO YEARS	8 (-2.4)	32 (2.4)
BENEFITS FOR ALL	11 (2.4)	22 (-2.4)

Pearson Chi-Square, $p=.20$

Table 9: Location--BENEFITS FOR ALL

"The best way to reform the welfare system is to replace welfare with a system of government-subsidized child care, health insurance, and jobs for all Americans who need them."

Count (Column %)	Orange County NC	Wake County NC	Greater Providence RI	
AGREE	18 (78%)	27 (55%)	47 (66%)	
DISAGREE	5 (22%)	21 (43%)	20 (28%)	
NEITHER/DK	0	1 (2%)	4 (6%)	
TOTAL (Row %)	23 (16%)	49 (34%)	71 (50%)	143

Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted), $p=.13$

Table 10: Sex--BENEFITS FOR ALL

Count (Column %)	FEMALE	MALE	
AGREE	63 (65%)	28 (62%)	
DISAGREE	30 (31%)	16 (35.5%)	
NEITHER/DK	4 (4%)	1 (2%)	
TOTAL (Row %)	97 (68%)	45 (32%)	142

Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted, p=.63)

Table 11: Education--BENEFITS FOR ALL

Count (Column %)	NO H.S. DEGREE	H.S. GRAD.	SOME COLL. NO DEGREE	ASSOC./ VOC. DEGREE	B.A./ B.S.	POSTGRAD	
AGREE	13 (93%)	27 (77%)	13 (54%)	4 (29%)	21 (68%)	13 (52%)	
DISAGREE	1 (7%)	7 (20%)	11 (46%)	8 (57%)	9 (29%)	10 (40%)	
NEITHER/DK	0	1 (3%)	0	2 (14%)	1 (3%)	2 (8%)	
TOTAL (Row %)	14 (10%)	35 (24%)	24 (17%)	14 (10%)	31 (22%)	25 (17%)	143

Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted), p=.008

Table 12: Income--BENEFITS FOR ALL

Count (Column %)	\$10,000 or less	\$10,001 to \$20,000	\$20,001 to \$35,000	\$35,001 to \$55,000	\$55,001 to \$75,000	\$75,001 to \$150,000	\$150,000 or more
AGREE	14 (87.5%)	12 (86%)	15 (62.5%)	22 (65%)	12 (63%)	5 (36%)	1 (25%)
DISAGREE	2 (12.5%)	1 (7%)	9 (37.5%)	11 (32%)	7 (37%)	8 (57%)	3 (75%)
NEITHER/DK	0	1 (7%)	0	1 (3%)	0	1 (7%)	0
TOTAL (Row %)	16 (13%)	14 (11%)	24 (19%)	34 (27%)	19 (15%)	14 (11%)	4 125 (3%)

Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted; 18 refused to state income),
p=.02, (6/16 cells with expect. freq <5)

Table 13: Ethnicity/Race--BENEFITS FOR ALL

Count (Column %)	WHITE	AFRICAN- AMERICAN	LATINO/A	ASIAN- AMERICAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	OTHER
AGREE	77 (62%)	9 (69%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)
DISAGREE	43 (35%)	3 (23%)	0	0	0	0
NEITHER/DK	4 (3%)	1 (8%)	0	0	0	0
TOTAL (Row %)	124 (88%)	13 (9%)	1 (.7%)	1 (.7%)	1 (.7%)	1 141 (.7%)

Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted), p=.75,
(9/12 cells with expect. freq <5)

Table 14: Age--BENEFITS FOR ALL

	18	26	36	46	56	66	
Count	to	to	to	to	to	and	
(Column %)	25	35	45	55	65	older	
AGREE	17 (85%)	23 (66%)	15 (58%)	14 (64%)	11 (58%)	12 (57%)	
DISAGREE	3 (15%)	11 (31%)	11 (42%)	7 (32%)	7 (37%)	7 (33%)	
NEITHER/DK	0	1 (3%)	0	1 (4%)	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	
TOTAL	20 (14%)	35 (24%)	26 (18%)	22 (15%)	19 (13%)	21 (15%)	143

Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted), p=.49

Table 15: Voted in '94 elections--BENEFITS FOR ALL

Count		
(Column %)	VOTED	DIDN'T VOTE
AGREE	66 (59.5%)	23 (79%)
DISAGREE	40 (36%)	6 (21%)
NEITHER/DK	5 (4.5%)	0
TOTAL	111 (79%)	29 (21%)
(Row %)		140

Pearson Chi-Square (Neither/DK omitted), p=.09

Table 16: Location--Preference among ELIMINATE, TWO YEARS, and BENEFITS FOR ALL

Count (Column %)	Orange County NC	Wake County NC	Greater Providence RI	
ELIMINATE	2 (9%)	3 (6%)	7 (10%)	
TWO YEARS	4 (17%)	31 (63%)	30 (42%)	
BENEFITS FOR ALL	15 (65%)	14 (29%)	30 (42%)	
NONE/DK	2 (9%)	1 (2%)	4 (6%)	
TOTAL (Row %)	23 (16%)	49 (34%)	71 (50%)	143

Pearson Chi-Square (None/DK omitted), $p=.01$

Table 17: Sex--Preference among ELIMINATE, TWO YEARS, and BENEFITS FOR ALL

Count (Column %)	FEMALE	MALE	
ELIMINATE	8 (8%)	4 (9%)	
TWO YEARS	43 (44%)	22 (49%)	
BENEFITS FOR ALL	41 (42%)	17 (38%)	
NONE/DK	5 (5%)	2 (4%)	
TOTAL (Row %)	97 (68%)	45 (32%)	142

Pearson Chi-Square (None/DK omitted), $p=.86$

Table 18: Education--Preference among ELIMINATE, TWO YEARS, and BENEFITS FOR ALL

Count (Column %)	NO H.S. DEGREE	H.S. GRAD.	SOME COLL. NO DEGREE	ASSOC./ VOC. DEGREE	B.A./ B.S.	POSTGRAD
ELIMINATE	1 (7%)	4 (11%)	2 (8%)	2 (15%)	1 (3%)	2 (8%)
TWO YEARS	5 (36%)	13 (37%)	13 (52%)	6 (46%)	18 (60%)	10 (40%)
BENEFITS FOR ALL	8 (57%)	17 (49%)	8 (32%)	3 (23%)	10 (33%)	12 (48%)
NONE/DK	0	1 (3%)	2 (8%)	2 (15%)	1 (3%)	1 (4%)
TOTAL (Row %)	14 (10%)	35 (25%)	25 (18%)	13 (9%)	30 (21%)	25 (18%)

Pearson Chi-Square (None/DK omitted), p=.61

Table 19: Income--Preference among ELIMINATE, TWO YEARS, and BENEFITS FOR ALL

Count (Column %)	\$10,000 or less	\$10,001 to \$20,000	\$20,001 to \$35,000	\$35,001 to \$55,000	\$55,001 to \$75,000	\$75,001 to \$150,000	\$150,000 or more
ELIMINATE	2 (12.5%)	0	2 (8%)	2 (6%)	1 (5%)	1 (7%)	2 (50%)
TWO YEARS	6 (37.5%)	4 (29%)	8 (33%)	17 (50%)	12 (63%)	10 (71%)	1 (25%)
BENEFITS FOR ALL	7 (44%)	10 (71%)	13 (54%)	14 (41%)	6 (32%)	3 (21%)	1 (25%)
NONE/DK	1 (6%)	0	1 (4%)	1 (3%)	0	0	0
TOTAL (Row %)	16 (13%)	14 (11%)	24 (19%)	34 (27%)	19 (15%)	14 (11%)	4 (3%)

Pearson Chi-Square (None/DK omitted; 18 refused to state income), p=.005
(12/24 cells with expected frequency <5)

Table 20: Ethnicity/Race--Preference among ELIMINATE, TWO YEARS, and BENEFITS FOR ALL

Count (Column %)	WHITE	AFRICAN- AMERICAN	LATINO/A	ASIAN- AMERICAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	OTHER	
ELIMINATE	10 (8%)	2 (15%)	0	0	0	0	
TWO YEARS	59 (48%)	3 (23%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	0	0	
BENEFITS FOR ALL	48 (39%)	8 (61%)	0	0	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	
NONE/DK	7 (6%)	0	0	0	0	0	
TOTAL (Row %)	124 (88%)	13 (9%)	1 (.7%)	1 (.7%)	1 (.7%)	1 (.7%)	141

Pearson Chi-Square (None/DK omitted), $p=.59$
(13/18 cells with expected frequency <5)

Table 21: Age--Preference among ELIMINATE, TWO YEARS, and BENEFITS FOR ALL

Count (Column %)	18 to 25	26 to 35	36 to 45	46 to 55	56 to 65	66 and older	
ELIMINATE	1 (5%)	0	1 (4%)	1 (5%)	5 (26%)	4 (19%)	
TWO YEARS	10 (50%)	19 (54%)	15 (58%)	8 (36%)	7 (37%)	6 (29%)	
BENEFITS FOR ALL	8 (40%)	13 (37%)	9 (35%)	13 (59%)	6 (32%)	10 (48%)	
NONE/DK	1 (5%)	3 (9%)	1 (4%)	0	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	
TOTAL (Row %)	20 (14%)	35 (24%)	26 (18%)	22 (15%)	19 (13%)	21 (15%)	143

Pearson Chi-Square (None/DK omitted), $p=.01$
(6/18 cells with expected frequency <5)

Table 22: Voted in '94 elections--Preference among ELIMINATE, TWO YEARS, and BENEFITS FOR ALL

Count (Column %)	VOTED	DIDN'T VOTE	
ELIMINATE	12 (11%)	0	
TWO YEARS	52 (47%)	12 (41%)	
BENEFITS FOR ALL	43 (39%)	15 (52%)	
NONE/DK	4 (4%)	2 (7%)	
TOTAL (Row %)	111 (79%)	29 (21%)	140

Pearson Chi-Square (None/DK omitted), $p=.12$
(1/6 cells with expected frequency <5)

WR-Polls

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD WELFARE REFORM:

A SUMMARY OF KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

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Overview

Peter D. Hart Research Associates and American Viewpoint, leading Democratic and Republican public opinion research firms respectively, recently collaborated on an extensive study of public attitudes toward the welfare system and proposals for welfare reform. This research included eight focus groups (four sessions among white voters, two among African Americans, and two among Latinos), as well as an in-depth national telephone survey. The interviews for this survey were conducted between November 12 and 15, 1993, among a representative sample of 1,020 registered voters.

The focus group discussions and survey results both suggest that while voters approach the issues of poverty and welfare with a conservative diagnosis, they are not eager to embrace conservative prescriptions for reforming the welfare system.

In assessing the causes of poverty, Americans generally blame a lack of individual effort more than circumstances. The majority of black voters have a different perspective on this point, however, and contend that a shortage of jobs is a leading cause of poverty. Still, there is an overwhelming consensus across the electorate that the current welfare system is badly broken. In fact, many Americans say the welfare system today exacerbates the problem of poverty, because they believe it encourages dependence and fails to provide sufficient help for people to make the transition to self-reliance.

Voters' primary goal for welfare reform is to move recipients off welfare and into the work force. The public believes this can best be achieved by requiring and encouraging the efforts of individuals to help themselves, and by giving people the necessary tools for self-reliance. A plurality of voters think that improving and expanding education and job training programs is the best way to reform the welfare system. In addition, there is strong support for other government investments, such as providing subsidized child care to poor mothers who want to work.

At the same time, a strict two-year limit on welfare benefits is one of the least supported reforms of the welfare system tested in the survey. When voters are given the choice between a strict two-year limit and a two-year limit followed by a public service work requirement for those who cannot find jobs, they choose the latter by an overwhelming seven to one. If there were a strict two-year limit, a large majority of the public would prefer that it be applied only on a case-by-case basis. More than 70% of voters, for example, would make exceptions for mothers with preschool children and mothers on welfare who work part time at low-wage jobs.

The focus groups, in particular, provide eloquent testimony to how readily the public recognizes both the complexities of welfare reform and the difficulties of moving many Americans out of poverty. When participants are asked to address specific case studies of families on welfare, they acknowledge that not

everyone can achieve self-sufficiency within two years. Furthermore, there is a broadly held concern about the potential for some reforms to unfairly punish the children of welfare families. The survey finds that fully 88% of the public agrees (including 54% who strongly agree) that many poor children would be hurt through no fault of their own by a strict two-year cutoff.

In the end, the success of welfare reform will not be judged simply by how many people are eliminated from the income support system, but rather by how effectively a reformed welfare system moves people from dependency to work. A reform program that takes people off welfare but leaves them without the ability to provide for themselves and their children will be viewed as inadequate, if not unacceptable.

A Discredited Welfare System

Seventy-nine percent of voters feel the current welfare system is not working well, with fully 49% believing that it is not working at all well. This assessment puts the welfare system well below the educational, tax, and health care systems--which are themselves poorly regarded--and on about the same level as the criminal justice system. This criticism is politically and ideologically broad-based: 67% of African Americans, 69% of white liberals, and 77% of Democrats say the welfare system is not working well. No significant sector of the American public considers the status quo acceptable.

Welfare is not seen as helping the people it should. Fewer than one in five voters feels that most current recipients deserve to receive benefits (two in five say about half are deserving; the remainder believe less than half should get benefits). However, this rejection of welfare does not imply a public unwillingness to help poor Americans. While a 55% majority says the government spends too much on people on welfare, far fewer feel it spends too much on poor people (25%), poor families with children (15%), or poor children (6%). In fact, a large majority (64%) feel that government actually spends too little on poor children.

Dissatisfaction with the welfare system centers on one key concern: work. Voters believe welfare fails to achieve what, in their eyes, should be its primary goal: getting poor people back on their feet and into jobs. When asked to name the top goal for reforming welfare, 52% of voters select helping people get off the welfare rolls and into the work force, placing this well ahead of such goals as eliminating fraud and abuse (28%) or ending long-term dependence (29%). Americans will extend a helping hand to those in need, but the quid pro quo is that recipients should strive to improve their skills and to find work—and the system should enforce this bargain.

Interestingly, dissatisfaction with the welfare system is not driven to any significant extent by concerns over money and spending. A mere 7% choose saving taxpayers money as a top goal of reform, well behind every other option. By a lopsided 85% to 4%, voters say the system's problem is spending money the

wrong way, not spending too much. And by better than five to one, Americans would favor reforms that help people leave welfare even if this actually costs a lot more money in the short run than the present welfare system.

Whether voters look at the issue through the prism of values or of public policy, and whether they have a liberal or conservative perspective, they give welfare a failing grade. Because the system is not seen as promoting work and independence, welfare loses with voters in two ways: it seems incompatible with most voters' own values and life decisions, and it does not appear to provide poor people what they really need in the long run.

Welfare Reform Proposals

As one would expect given this level of dissatisfaction, voters voice substantial support for reforming the welfare system. Indeed, majorities express approval for every single reform proposal tested, which suggests that Americans have a considerable appetite for change. However, the intensity of support varies in important and instructive ways among the four categories of proposals tested.

First, proposals that demand more from absentee fathers meet with nearly universal agreement from voters. More than nine in ten Americans favor taking tougher measures to collect child support (95%) and requiring fathers who do not pay support to work at public service jobs (91%). This follows logically from the public's view that the biggest cause of poverty is the breakdown of families and

family values. Approaches to welfare reform that help strengthen families, especially those that encourage paternal responsibility, will be very well received by voters.

Another category of proposals for which there is virtually no public opposition consists of those that directly move welfare recipients into jobs. An overwhelming 93% of voters are in favor (71% strongly) of requiring welfare recipients to work for their welfare checks, while 87% favor (57% strongly) providing public service jobs to poor people who cannot find private-sector jobs. The greater intensity of support for the first proposal—with 71% strongly in favor compared to 57%—suggests that "require" has some rhetorical advantage over "provide" in the reform debate.

We would note that as voters think about the issue of poor women working, they draw some important distinctions. A majority (60%) of Americans believe that welfare mothers who have preschool children should be required to work. However, even among this 60%, two-thirds say the work requirement should be part time rather than full time (just 17% of voters overall favor a full-time work requirement). When it comes to mothers of infants, there is even less support for requiring work (47%), and again there is a two-to-one preference for part-time work (only 14% of voters favor a full-time requirement).

The third category tested are proposals that seek to make work a more economically viable option for welfare recipients. There is very strong sentiment

for providing welfare mothers who go to work with both child care (95% of voters favor this proposal, 71% strongly) and health care (89% favor, 68% strongly). Receiving considerable but less intense support are proposals to raise the minimum wage to \$5.00 an hour (75% favor, 54% strongly) and to allow recipients to earn wages up to the poverty line without losing benefits (83% favor, 48% strongly). In addition, the survey measures considerable support for expanding education and job training programs for the poor to help them make the transition to work.

The final category of potential reforms focuses on limiting welfare benefits. The "family cap" approach of limiting additional benefits for children born to women on welfare earns a significant amount of support (68% favor, 48% strongly), although this proposal is far less popular than plans that require or facilitate work. A general two-year limit on benefits, however, garners much less intense support (65% favor, but only 35% strongly), making it one of the least supported reforms.

The limited popularity of the strict two-year limit approach is further confirmed when this plan is described more fully without specifying a job guarantee: a narrow 55% to 42% majority of Americans favor this proposal, with only 25% strongly in favor. This level of support is considerably weaker than that for an alternative reform plan that provides for up to two years of job training followed by a public service work requirement for those unable to find private-sector jobs. A commanding 92% of voters favor this public service alternative

(64% strongly), and when this proposal is matched against the two-year limit, it is preferred by an overwhelming 83% to 12%.

Significantly, African American voters strongly reject the two-year limit approach, with 24% in favor and 74% opposed. This question, along with many others on the survey, indicates that African Americans are considerably more sympathetic to the plight of those on welfare and are much less attracted to reform measures that cut benefits than are whites. (Latino voters, conversely, generally express views similar to non-Latino whites. They favor the two-year limit, for example, by 53% to 45%.) These general racial differences, however, disappear when it comes to the job training and public service reform plan. African American voters (95%), like white voters, overwhelmingly support this alternative proposal and prefer it over the two-year limit (95% of Latinos also favor the plan).

Analysis

These results all point to the central finding of the research: **for voters, welfare reform is about getting people to work, not limiting benefits. Americans want to see the system fixed, not recipients (or their children) punished.**

Voters do not believe that all people on welfare can or will quickly find jobs, but they expect recipients to make a demonstrable effort to work their way out of poverty. Voters want a kind of social contract with the poor: they will help those who also will help themselves.

Many voters see a strict two-year limit as a rigid and simplistic solution to a complex and difficult problem. For example, eight in ten Americans say any limit should be applied on a case-by-case rather than being a hard-and-fast cutoff. Majorities favor exempting such groups as mothers of young children, welfare mothers who already work at low-wage jobs, and people in high unemployment areas. In the focus groups, support for punitive approaches faded considerably once the discussion turned to concrete examples of the types of families on welfare.

Intervening between voters' conservative analysis of the welfare system and possible support for a strict two-year limit is a strong sense of pragmatism. Americans foresee many negative real-world consequences of such a limit, including more homeless families (62%), a lack of jobs for those cut off (60%), and rising crime rates in poor neighborhoods (57%). A majority of voters believe that most or all of the recipients who would be cut off under such a plan would not subsequently find jobs. **And voters' greatest concern by far is the impact of a cutoff on children: 88% agree (54% strongly) that many poor children will be hurt by the cutoff, through no fault of their own.**

Lower socioeconomic status white voters seem especially moved by realistic assessments of the limit's impact and the bleak job prospects in today's economy. For example, blue collar whites express more conservative views than do upper-status white collar whites on such questions as the underlying causes of poverty

and the number of recipients who deserve welfare benefits, yet they are no more likely to support a strict two-year limit. That is because they are significantly more likely to see negative consequences from a limit, such as an increase in homeless families, a shortage of jobs, and an increase in crime and disorder in poor neighborhoods.

On the other side of the reform debate, the public is drawn to welfare reform initiatives that emphasize the twin goals of promoting work and strengthening families. Voters will support new programs and even some new spending toward these ends, provided they see personal responsibility and accountability being encouraged.

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