PERCEPTIONS OF POVERTY IN THE U.S. AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

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by

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Division of Social Work
Abstract

of

PERCEPTIONS OF POVERTY IN THE U.S. AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS
AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

by

Tammy Montgomery

The purpose of this study was to examine college students’ perceptions of poverty and views about social welfare programs such as the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The research study utilized a mixed-methods exploratory design to generate quantitative and qualitative data. From a sample of 58 college students, the researcher evaluated demographics such as race, gender, social class, voter registration political party, as well as perceptions of poverty and attitudes toward social welfare programs. The results found similarities with previous research in that the perceptions and attitudes are variable and the respondents are divided in their attributions to and beliefs about poverty. Additionally, findings show a mild correlation (r=.266, p=.05) between political ideology, perceptions of poverty and views of social welfare. Most significant was the outcome that 50% of conservative students attributed poverty to individual behaviors versus societal factors.

________________________________________, Committee Chair
Teiahsha Bankhead, Ph.D., LCSW

________________________________________
Date
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a pervasive and persistent problem in the United States. In 2014, approximately 47 million people lived below the poverty line and 20.5 million people live in deep poverty (Roth & Peters, 2014). Based on 2010 census data, child poverty in America is at 23.8 percent and children have become the group with the highest rate of poverty in the country (Roth & Peters, 2014). The census data also show that suburban poverty has risen substantially by 53 percent between 2000 and 2010 compared to poverty in cities that rose 16 percent during the same time period (Roth & Peters, 2014). White people make up the predominant number of those experiencing poverty, however, the poor are disproportionately represented among people of color and single mothers and their children at three times that of white people (Edelman, 2015). Although the majority of those experiencing poverty do so temporarily, studies have shown that 44 percent of those who are poor on any given day will be poor for more than four years and that number increases to 61 percent for African Americans (Edelman, 2015).

The U.S. government uses the poverty measure to determine eligibility for public assistance. The poverty measure, or what is sometimes called the poverty line, is defined by the use of a formula that was developed in the 1960s (Roth & Peters, 2014). The method includes the multiplying of the amount of money required to purchase adequate food for a household based on the size of that household. The formula has not been updated since its inception. For example, a family of four would currently be considered poor if they live below the poverty line of $23,000 a year. Many critics argue that this is
not an accurate, nor just, way of defining poverty since there are many other cost factors involved in assessing poverty and the risks for becoming poor in addition to the amount of food one needs such as housing costs, transportation, health care and childcare (Roth & Peters, 2014). Moreover, the actual cost of living varies geographically across the country and is not taken into account in the poverty measure.

An important aspect of addressing poverty issues is the examination of the way in which people perceive poverty and those who experience it. Prevailing perceptions have vacillated from conservative to liberal stances during different time periods in the country’s history (Shaw, 2009). There is much debate on who and what to blame and that ultimately impacts views on how to handle and alleviate the problem. Studies show that conservative beliefs about poverty and the poor tend to focus on stereotypes and seeing the problem as inherent in the individual, and liberal beliefs tend to favor more structural and societal causes (Guetzkow, 2010; Kim, Carvallo & Davis, 2010). As attitudes and politics change around this issue so do the approaches toward social welfare programs intended to help the poor and reduce the number of people experiencing poverty such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

**Background of the Problem**

Over the past fifty years, solutions to alleviate poverty through social welfare policies have fluctuated in their focus due to the varying perceptions of poverty by the public and policymakers. In the 1960s there was a growing awareness of a high level of poverty in the country and the Johnson administration responded by declaring an “unconditional war on poverty” in the president’s 1964 state of the union address. The
policies that followed intended to address many social problems of the day, with an emphasis on antipoverty programs which are often referred to as the Great Society. During this time, the perceptions of the causes of poverty by many policymakers were primarily focused on problematic social conditions such as poor education, housing, discrimination and employment (Guettel, 2010). Therefore, the types of policies that were created in response reflected an attempt at changing some of the structural causes of poverty for instance through programs such as Head Start, Job Corps, Medicaid and the Food Stamp Program. These programs were intended to provide a good start to education and improved access to jobs, health care and food which were perceived as being missing from impoverished communities.

During the same era, in an effort to explain the causes of poverty, Daniel Patrick Moynihan released a report called *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Greenbaum, 2015). The report stirred a debate about what came to be known as the “culture of poverty” in America (Greenbaum, 2015). In her book, *Blaming the Poor* (2015), Greenbaum, a leading authority on poverty and racism in the U.S., states that the Moynihan report has had a lasting negative impact on the perception of poverty, race relations and social policy. She claims it created a misleading image of poor African Americans by blaming the structure and culture of their families for their poverty. Moynihan’s argument in his report began to shift the conversation from societal forces such as inadequate schools and the lack of jobs as a main contributor of poverty to one of the perception that the African American family, primarily black men in general, were incapable of supporting themselves and their families due to a poor work ethic and a
family structure made up of mostly single mothers. More than fifty years after the report, policymakers still use this argument in order to justify punitive practices within social policies focused on changing and penalizing individuals instead of focusing on improving institutions and systems in order to alleviate the structural problems that are at the root cause of poverty.

A backlash toward the policies of the Great Society began to occur in the early 1980s as attitudes toward the poor and antipoverty programs made a dramatic conservative ideological shift during the Reagan administration (Roth & Peters, 2014). During the Reagan era, the goal of Republican lawmakers was to cut the federal government programs as much as possible and shift power to the states. Conservatives’ perceptions of poverty were and still are that it is worsened by welfare programs. They believe that public assistance incentivizes dependence on the government and therefore keeps people poor. It was during this time that cuts were made to the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and a dialogue ensued among policymakers about ending the entitlement aspect of the program and adding work requirements. The rhetoric surrounding the issue began to impact the public’s perception of poverty and social welfare programs as well to one of viewing welfare itself as being the problem and inhibiting people from escaping their poverty conditions (Guettzkow, 2010; Roth & Peters, 2014).

The conservative attitude toward poverty continued into the 1990’s with “welfare reform” under the Clinton administration (Roth & Peters, 2014). Although Clinton is a Democrat and espouses a liberal ideology, his administration and the Republican led
Congress maintained a more conservative stance about welfare when they decided to overhaul the system. As was famously quoted in the media at the time, the goal was “to end welfare as we know it” (Cohen, 2010). The law that went into effect in 1996 was called the Personal Responsibilities and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). The biggest change under that law was transforming AFDC into Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The new law gave states more freedom and flexibility in enacting the policies, implemented a five year lifetime time-limit on receiving cash benefits and created a work requirement in order for participants to remain in the program. Because the predominant perception at that time was that federal government assistance in the form of welfare created dependency and worsened people’s poverty conditions, the program changed from an entitlement focus into a welfare-to-work program that is still in existence today. The primary goal was to reduce the number of welfare recipients by providing the incentives to lift themselves out of poverty. Reese (2007) contends that

Welfare reform was actively promoted by a cross-class alliance of ideologically conservative and low-wage employers, politicians competing for the white vote, and conservative movement organizations. These groups gained public support for welfare reform policies through an emotionally powerful discourse appealing to racist stereotypes of the poor, public anxieties about single motherhood, and broadly held moral values and beliefs. (p. 47)
The problem with TANF is that the primary goals of the new program never materialized (Reese, 2007; Shaw, 2009). Although actual overall numbers of people receiving cash benefits have been reduced, the reality of the lifetime limits, lack of living wage employment, and high cost of childcare have forced poor families off of welfare and therefore heavily reliant on other social services to survive and in the worst case into homelessness and even more extreme poverty (Roth & Peters, 2014). The solutions that were sought through welfare reform focused on correcting what are believed to be deficiencies in the individual and taking a more punitive approach to reform instead of looking at the system as a whole and improving social structures that contribute to the entirety of the poverty problem in the U.S.

Statement of the Research Problem

Poverty is a serious problem in the United States and impacts the lives of one-quarter of Americans (Roth & Peters, 2014). The public perceptions surrounding the issue and its causes are multifaceted and many people believe the root causes are a combination of both individual and societal forces with studies showing the country divided on these beliefs (Shaw, 2009). The problem is that decreasing or modifying government assistance programs for the poor based primarily upon perceived deservedness or stereotypical behaviors of those experiencing poverty is worrying, as the impact of those actions serves to increase the absence of effective solutions that will address and alleviate the complex nature of poverty in the United States. Misconstrued perceptions and attitudes about poverty and its causes increase the divide between the poor and the non-poor, between social classes, between races and cultures, and between
political parties which ultimately impacts the policies that more often than not reflect the predominant attitudes and attributions.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this exploratory study is (1) to provide information about a sample of college students’ perceptions of poverty and of social welfare programs, (2) to examine the relationship between the students’ perceptions of poverty and of social welfare programs, and (3) to examine the relationship between the students’ perceptions of poverty, social welfare programs and their political ideology. It is the intention of the researcher to determine what the primary perceptions are regarding poverty among this population in order to inform social work professionals and educators of a need for a more comprehensive education and awareness about the issues of poverty.

Moreover, the researcher hopes that this study will support educators in considering the importance of conveying current data and facts about poverty and social welfare programs in order to give students the most accurate information with which to form opinions and make informed decisions. Studies exist that examine the public’s perception of poverty and its causes, however further research is necessary in order to understand current perceptions and understanding of poverty and social welfare programs among a population of educated and mostly young adults. This knowledge may inform individuals who will directly or indirectly impact the future of social welfare policies and the lives of people experiencing poverty in their professional or personal lives as voting citizens.
Theoretical Framework

The theory of Social Justice is directly related to the issue of poverty among disadvantaged groups in the United States. The theory informs the public of the need to understand how justice is at the heart of helping those who live in impoverished conditions. Thus, this theory serves as a guiding framework for the present study. Bell (2007) states

Social justice is both process and a goal. The goal of social justice is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. (p. 21)

Inequities and injustices arise from negative perceptions and judgements of people based on things such as their class, race, and sex. Those perceptions manifest and grow within individuals, communities and societal institutions that inevitably perpetuate stereotypes and behaviors that oppress and discriminate against people. In terms of social justice, poverty and social welfare programs, the theory suggests that if people in positions of power have a desire to maintain the status quo, have a lack of understanding of the issues or merely base their perceptions on personal beliefs or political ideology, they may intentionally or unintentionally treat disadvantaged groups unfairly.

Conversely, those in power have access to information and resources that can also influence positive changes in the way the country responds to the high
level of poverty. If they focus on social justice as a goal, they can make a significant impact and difference in alleviating the problems as well as advocate for the just treatment of the individuals and families who are experiencing poverty.

**Definition of Terms**

**Conservative political ideology (conservatism)**

(1) the inclination, especially in politics, to maintain the existing or traditional order and (2) a political philosophy or attitude that emphasizes respect for traditional institutions and opposes the attempt to achieve social change though legislation or publicly funded programs (www.freedictionary.com).

**Liberal political ideology (liberalism)**

(1) the quality or state of being liberal, as in behavior or attitude and (2) a political and social philosophy advocating individual freedom, representational forms of government, progress and reform, and protection of civil liberties (www.freedictionary.com).

**Social Welfare Policy**

Social welfare policy is public policy that focuses on addressing social problems such as public assistance and policies related to the poor.

**Assumptions**

This research is based on two assumptions. The first being that poverty is a complex issue and there are a myriad of factors involved in defining and examining causation and solutions that are based both within the individual and in society. Secondly,
political ideology directs and influences perceptions, attitudes and behaviors toward others.

**Justification**

The profession of social work has a commitment to people living in poverty. It is clearly stated in the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (2014) that, “the primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty” (p. 1). The knowledge derived from research about perceptions of poverty and social welfare programs can inform social workers in their advocacy work intended to help the poor. By understanding how people perceive poverty and what they believe the potential causes of poverty to be, social workers can bring awareness of the facts to the public and institutions, like universities and community colleges, to correct any misconceptions that have the potential to harm the poor. Since there is a connection between perception and behavior, addressing improved accuracy of information may influence individuals to reexamine or modify their values, beliefs, and attitudes toward the poor and the solutions for the alleviation of poverty. Advocacy work that involves providing education and awareness intended to help the poor offers a means by which social workers can practice the values of social justice and promote the dignity and worth of all people.

**Limitations**

This thesis project does not include a large and diverse enough sample to extrapolate the data. The data retrieved was confined to students from California State
University, Sacramento. The researcher narrowed the focus of the survey to get a sense of students’ perceptions of poverty and social welfare programs, however it was a limited number and not representative of the diversity of the U.S. population.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review of the literature will evaluate the perceptions of poverty and the poor in the United States along with research on major influences on those perceptions including political ideology, media, and racial and cultural stereotypes. In addition, studies that examine the views about particular social welfare policies such as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) will be reviewed.

Included in this review are primary and important segments of a large body of published work that address many of the key areas of poverty. The studies are from sociologists, economists, political scientists, psychologists, and others who have a broad range of perspectives through which they have assessed the issues surrounding current beliefs about poverty and its causes.

Perceptions of Poverty

Studying perception can be difficult, yet attempts at qualitative and quantitative analysis have yielded solid findings. In a mixed-methods study on the changes in opinions of poverty over time, Shaw (2009) examined a combination of surveys from several contemporary sources, including the American National Election Studies from 2000 to 2004, the 2008 Budget of the U.S. Government, the National Opinion Research Center General Social Survey from 1990 to 2008, and multiple informal and non-standardized national newspaper polls. After examining many years of data about the public perception of poverty, the author contends that the issue of what to do about the
problem of poverty in the United States is complex and is in need of attention. Shaw’s (2009) findings show that Americans are deeply divided in their opinions. He proposes that because there is a lack of consensus and much tension among Americans about their beliefs about the issues concerning those who are poor, anti-poverty policy does not have effective measures to address the issue (Shaw, 2009).

Moreover, the semantics of poverty can influence the public’s perception of it (Henry, Reyna & Weiner, 2004; Shaw, 2009). In a quantitative study of 1,716 participants nationwide, the researchers examined how the attributional content of stereotypes can help to explain negative reactions to poor people receiving welfare. They tested perceptions of the poor and of poverty with differing terminology, finding that participants in the study responded less favorably to the term welfare than they did to the term poor, (Henry, Reyna, & Weiner, 2004). The term welfare seemed to suggest more responsibility on the part of the recipient. Also, the participants were more likely to agree to federal spending on poor people than they were on welfare. The crux of this research was that different ways of assessing blame within the terms used in the context of particular stereotypes drive the difference in reactions to these groups and the policies designed to assist them.

Peck (2007), stated at the 2006 Conference on Poverty, Inequality, and Social Justice, that there is a break between the public perception of poverty and the measurement of poverty. She presented the issue as one of how the poor see themselves and how the non-poor see them and holds this contrast up to the statistical evidence that the measured definition of poor is far from the sociological definition of poor by either
group. Ultimately, Peck (2007) concluded that the current measurement method for
poverty in the U.S. does not reflect what public opinion deems necessary to meet basic
needs and that the public does not know how to measure who is actually poor or how to
evaluate the issue of poverty.

Furthermore, Rank (2006) argued in his qualitative study for the Washington
University Journal of Law and Policy that poverty in the U.S. is largely the result of a
misrepresentation of the nature, causes, and solutions to poverty by the American people.
He proposes that one of the main reasons for the high rate of poverty in the United States,
one of the richest nations on the planet, is that there exists a favored lore or narrative that
interprets poverty as an individual failing and a static condition. In addition, Rank
suggests that part of the incorrect perception is that poverty is seen as a problem of only
the poor instead of believing that it is a collective problem that impacts every one as a
society. His argument is that approaching the issue of poverty in a more constructive and
effective way entails the realignment of meaning—a new understanding of the nature of
poverty.

Individual Versus Societal Causes of Poverty

Perceptions about the causes of poverty in the United States can be divided into
two main categories with either individual behaviors or societal factors believed to play
the primary role (Rank, 2006; Robinson, 2009; Shaw, 2009, Weiner, Osborne &
Rudolph, 2010). People who believe individuals are the cause for their own poverty
blame the poor for their marginalized condition because of their personal choices and
internal causes including poor work ethic, laziness or substance abuse (Rank, 2009).
Assigning individual blame to those who live in poverty may be reinforced by the belief in a socially-created culture of poverty and by perceptions of lack of deservedness for those who receive assistance (Applebaum, 2001; Guetzkow, 2010). People who perceive societal factors as the main cause of poverty blame the state of the economy, cost of living, high unemployment, low wages, racism and discrimination, high incarceration rates and lack of educational opportunities, among many others (Rank, 2009).

In an analysis of transcripts of U.S. congressional hearings related to the issue of poverty from the “War on Poverty” and the “Welfare Reform” eras, Guetzkow (2010) looked at how the non-poor policy elites have viewed and responded to the problem of poverty during key moments in recent history. Guetzkow (2010) explains that in the 1960s the prevailing belief among policy makers was one that poverty was caused by a lack of availability of any high-paying jobs. Consequently, many believed that allowing the poor to maintain some government assistance during hard times was reasonable.

On the other hand, in the 1980s and 1990s many perceived that a main cause of poverty was laziness or an unwillingness to work and believed that the government should eliminate financial assistance and support of these individuals or at minimum require more stringent work requirements and accountability. Moreover, they saw government assistance as a contributing factor to the poverty problem (Guetzkow, 2010). Like Shaw (2010), Geutzkow (2010) relates how perception and the framing of poverty and the images of the poor impact how policy is utilized in the efforts to alleviate it.

Shifting the framework of the rhetoric also shifts the perceived causes of poverty. Rose and Baumgartner (2013) studied media coverage and U.S poverty policy between
1960-2008. The purpose of their research was to study the relationship between the portrayal of the poor in newspaper stories and the level of generosity toward the poor in U.S. government social welfare policies. They examined 560 *New York Times* articles grouping themes found in the stories as they related to the depiction of the poor and the change in the discourse over time. Results of the Rose and Baumgartner (2013) analysis demonstrated how discussion of the causes of poverty has changed from a macro level discourse about societal causes and social costs of having a large number of people in poverty to individual behaviors as the cause of poverty conditions and that welfare programs only hinder improvement of the situation instead of helping it. The perceived structural causes of poverty have, therefore, been replaced by perceived value judgements of the poor themselves since the 1960s.

In a study that looked at how race/ethnicity impacts perceptions of wealth and poverty, Hunt (2004) studied beliefs among 1,007 African American, Latino and white residents of Los Angeles County. Study participants completed descriptive and multivariate surveys. The researcher wanted to determine whether race/ethnicity shape how the respondents view the causes of poverty and whether African Americans, Latinos, and whites displayed differences in their beliefs. Findings indicated that most participants, regardless of race, believed in individualistic causes of wealth compared to structural causes, favoring the idea that the United States is a country that economically rewards hard work. On the other hand, African Americans and Latinos had a higher structuralist view for causation of poverty than whites, therefore blaming society to blame for poverty conditions.
Moreover, Cozzarelli, Wilkinson, and Tagler (2001) investigated the links between perceptions of poverty, stereotypes about the poor, poverty attribution, and social and political ideas about poverty to quantitatively measure those attitudes in a sample of 209 undergraduates. The goal of this research was to provide context and descriptions of the attitudes of various social classes about poverty, look at relationships between poverty and stereotypes, and to evaluate sociodemographic characteristic of the sample group, presumably as a mirror of core American values. They found that the middle class was more likely to blame the poor for their financial condition exclusive of social circumstances. The researchers found that poverty was most often thought to be due to individual failure rather than structural failure and that political ideology had the most consistent effect on stereotypes and attributions concerning the poor (Cozzarelli, Wilkinson, & Tagler, 2001).

**Influences on the Perceptions of Poverty**

The influences on the perceptions of poverty include political ideology with a strong and pervasive partisan stance as well as a solid media influence that contributes to racial and cultural stereotypes and attributions surrounding poverty (Gilens, 2003, Hopkins, 2009). Perhaps one of the strongest indicators of how an individual or group of individuals perceives poverty, affiliation with a political party, can create a strong rhetoric for the causation of poverty in the United States, and once these ideas are thoroughly engrained, beliefs are difficult to change (Guetzkow, 2010; Kim, Carvallo & Davis, 2010).
Political Ideology

A careful review of the arguments that the policy makers have made in the latter half of the 20th Century reveals that social policies meant to alleviate poverty enacted since 1964 have created a lack of understanding about which of the poor are deserving of assistance (Guetzkow, 2010). In a survey of recent literature surrounding the media’s approach to poverty, Kim, Carvallo, and Davis (2010) found that conservative publications tend to define the issue of poverty as individual, where liberal publications take a broader approach and define poverty as a societal problem. Further, a conservative approach, which traditionally is what is portrayed in the mainstream media as will be discussed later in this review, may include stereotypes of individual behavior leading to poverty such as poor spending habits, lack of motivation, and even laziness (Kim, Carvallo & Davis, 2010). Liberals tend to take a more structuralist approach and focus on social and economic conditions such as lack of education, lack of high paying jobs, and discrimination (Guetzkow, 2010, Kim, Carvallo & Davis, 2010).

Conservative views about the poor contributed to the restrictive nature of welfare reform policies that occurred in the United States in 1996 and was largely a conservative movement toward “a broad neoliberal agenda” (Reese, 2007). It offered a way for politicians to ingratiate themselves with the conservative, white, upper-class corporate voters. Anti-welfare equated to pro-big business. Rank (2006), states that conservative beliefs held that welfare programs prior to reform were entitlement programs and did not work because the poorly designed programs encouraged people to make bad choices
about serious things such as not completing their education, having children outside of marriage, choosing criminal behavior and not going to work.

**Racism**

Hopkins (2009) discusses the impact of poverty descriptors, especially those related to politics. Seeking to determine if local contexts would be able to influence partisan viewpoints, his study synthesized the contextual effects of political and racial theories. He used a survey to inquire about the reasons for poverty and found that people living in areas where the poor are mostly white are less likely to attribute poverty to the failings of the poor themselves (Hopkins, 2009). The political implications, though, come with a second finding from Hopkins’ survey which is the percentage of participants that voted Republican in the last election consistently predicts less structural and more individualistic explanations of poverty. Thus, partisan reinforcement is a shaping force used to explain poverty not as a whole, but in the sense that there is blame to be cast for some poor people but not for others, quite typically in favor of individual responsibility for black people and social and economic circumstances for white people, other racial groups, and other cultural or geographically disadvantaged groups.

In a classic study about perceptions of poverty, Zucker and Weiner (1993) utilized attribution theory to determine the causal explanations for poverty and its effect on behavior toward the poor. Using a rating system, study participants were asked to rate 13 causes for being poor. After gathering the results from the ratings, the researchers then formulated a structural equation analysis. The findings revealed that beliefs about poverty are directly related to attributions of responsibility and political ideology (Zucker &
Weiner, 1993). More specifically, like previous studies cited, those with a conservative ideology tended to blame the individual for a state of poverty where liberals tended to see societal failures as reasons for poverty. Ultimately, and perhaps most importantly, the authors find that the endorsement of individual causes of poverty by conservatives shows that attributions can help defend steadfast opinions such as the opposition to social change.

**Media and Racial/Cultural Stereotypes**

Both news media and social media are pivotal influences on how social issues are defined and perceived. By framing an important issue such as poverty, the audience of these media are told how to act and react (Kim, Carvallo, & Davis, 2010), and the patterns of use of media strongly inform social reality (Sotirovic, 2001). Building these referential frames secures the roles that society and policy makers play in their reactions to the issue and the resolutions that are brought forward. These frames are guided by organizational pressures, governmental financial constraints, interest group pressures, and even the perspectives of individual journalists or publications.

In order to determine how the poor view themselves, Sotirovic (2001) studied the impact that media had on a group of 807 welfare recipients. The welfare recipients were polled and asked their perceptions of governmental spending on welfare and their perceptions of what a typical welfare recipient’s demographics were. Sotirovic (2001) purports in her findings that media can play a role in the participants’ defining of themselves in negative terms. The group of welfare recipients that participated in the
study revealed their perception of the media’s portrayal of the poor as primarily inner city minority residents, women on welfare, street criminals, and homeless people.

Rank (2006) furthered this concept of media creation of the poor by stating that they are presented as different from mainstream Americans. His research revealed that the media are responsible for the indications that those who are poor should only blame themselves for their economic and social position. They are portrayed as people who choose to not follow societal standards, therefore placing themselves outside of the socially accepted limits of the mainstream. In essence, their nonconformity has caused poverty.

Americans receive tightly framed rhetoric and messages from media about the state of poverty in the United States. Gilens (2003), an prominent researcher in the study of poverty, media and race issues, states that the non-poor of the United States have had their preferences influenced by the media’s exaggeration of poverty as a ‘black problem’ and the portrayal of African Americans as the group that deserves the least sympathy. Media framing was also studied by Rose and Baumgartner (2013), who looked at every story on poverty that appeared in the New York Times from 1960 to 2008. Upon examining these 560 articles, five distinct frames about the issue of poverty and the poor became evident: misery and neglect; social disorder; economic and physical barriers; laziness and dysfunction; and cheating. The authors argue, like Guetzkow (2010), that the data in this study strongly suggests that the focus in media on individual failings in regard to poverty may be one of the most important elements in the ideological shift toward a more conservative stance toward poverty in recent times (Rose and Baumgartner, 2013).
In an analysis of how media portrays poverty and the poor, Clawson and Trice (2000) investigated the accuracy of those media portrayals during the time period of 1993 to 1998. This was the era of welfare reform brought about by both the Democratic presidency and Republican Congress’ scrutinizing of long-standing assistance programs. They determined that inaccurate portrayals of the racial characteristics of the poor may influence the public to favor political candidates who make racially biased arguments about poverty issues. The study further concluded that welfare policies are impacted when the newly elected candidates continue to legislate through a racialized lens (Clawson & Trice, 2000).

Furthermore, Clawson and Trice (2000) evaluated both text and photo portrayals of the poor in their research, and in alignment of Gilen’s (2003) work, the results of this study showed stereotypical representations of poverty. The media was found to portray poverty as an underclass issue and utilized terms of behavior such as criminals, alcoholics, and drug addicts. Additionally, this research described the people of the United States as overestimating the percentage of blacks as poor and underestimating the percentage of Hispanic and Asian poor. The specific media evaluated included, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report* periodicals and suggested also an exaggerated feminization of poverty by about 14 percent (Clawson & Trice, 2000). Ultimately, the authors determined much like Guetzkow (2010), Rank (2006) and Shaw (2009) that the outcome of the study showed that if attitudes toward poverty are driven by inaccurate and stereotypical portrayals of the poor, the policies developed to address the issue will not effectively alleviate the problems of poverty (Clawson & Trice, 2000).
Moreover, the close relationship between racial stereotypes and perception of poverty was explained by Gilens (2003) in a quantitative analysis of 40 years of media coverage regarding poverty from the 1950s to 1990s. In this analysis, a shift in media reporting was found in the mid-1960s that continues to have relevance to today. In media coverage prior to the 1960s, poverty was reported as primarily a “white” issue. After that timeframe, the media began portraying poverty more commonly as a “black” issue even though the real racial composition of the American poor remained steady with whites comprising the majority of those receiving assistance. Gilens (2003) cited many reasons for this shift, including the civil rights movement, the urban riots, and the movement of rural blacks to more urban areas.

In addition, Gilens (2003) found a prevalence of racial messaging through his observation that when stories became more critical of poverty, the images portrayed were primarily poor black people and when media coverage became more sympathetic toward poverty the images of black people decreased. In other words, as the number of welfare recipients of many different races grew and the opinion of poverty became increasingly negative among Americans, the more black people were also portrayed negatively which increased public misconceptions of poverty. According to the author’s findings, the media had a tendency to show poor black people as lazy and undeserving of assistance which harkened back to centuries-old racial stereotypes (Gilens, 2003).

In her landmark research regarding Latino stereotypes and poverty, Fox (2004) attributed a negative attitude toward poverty by the middle class as a blended factor of working, middle class white stereotyping of Latinos and a willingness to differentiate the
work ethic of the Latino population from the black population of working poor. As the Latino population increased in the later decades of the 20th century and eventually matched the black population in the United States, the working, white middle class accepted the Latinos as hard-working and not at fault for their poverty. Conversely, black people were judged to be individually responsible for their poverty. Hard workers were perceived as poor due to social and economic factors rather than for individual causes. Fox (2004) argues that this perception has a strong effect on the relationship between stereotypes and attitudes toward poverty and welfare.

Additionally, in the states with high Latino populations, white middle class participants rated Latinos as hard working where they rated blacks as having a higher degree of laziness. According to the author, there is a dual explanation: Latinos may be being used as a measuring stick against which blacks are measured regarding poverty; also, the more isolated whites are from ethnic diversity, the more likely they are not to differentiate differences between racial groups, and specifically, the poor among those populations (Fox, 2004).

**Attitudes toward Social Welfare Policies**

By evaluating the data from the National Public Radio, Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard University Kennedy School opinion poll on poverty issues from 2001, Peck (2007) found that the work requirements that came out of PRWORA from 1996 transformed the perception of how the public views welfare recipients. Those who receive cash benefits were perceived with less disdain from years previous because of having to work for their assistance instead receiving government money without working.
Alternatively, in an analysis of three well-known and long-term polls on the perceptions of the welfare systems in place in the United States (the General Social Surveys 1972-1998, the National Elections Studies 1948-1998, and the CBS/New York Times polls since 1976), Epstein (2004) found that the polarity around welfare reform had no distinct impact on the perception of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF). In fact, he suggests that the attitude differences toward welfare, between rich and poor men, women, blacks and whites, between poor and wealthy and among ethnicities are basically insignificant.

Moreover, Schneider and Jacoby (2005) used data from the CPS National Election Studies when exploring the reasons for a change in attitudes of American citizens toward welfare distributions or TANF. The empirical results of the study indicated that there is a high degree of variability in attitudes; specifically, the continuity of attitude is not present. According to the authors, this means that views toward welfare are changeable due to various influences, including the fluctuation of elite political discourse and public levels of attentiveness to politics and public affairs.

In a research study that surveyed 131 psychology students at a public university about poverty attributions and beliefs about social welfare policies, multiple regression analyses of the data was utilized to ascertain the association between the attributions for poverty and support for either progressive or restrictive welfare policies (Bullock, Williams & Limbert, 2003). Their findings, similar to previous studies mentioned in this literature review, reveal that support for progressive policies appears to be related to
perceiving poverty as a societal problem. Whereas, more restrictive policies showed a significant association to the view that poverty is based on individual responsibility.

**Effectiveness of Welfare Reform**

Using an anthropological lens for their qualitative study, Morgen and Maskovsky (2003) utilize five approaches in their analysis of urban poverty, PRWORA and TANF that began in 1996. The approaches include the authors examining: a) claims of policy successes; b) lived realities of families experiencing poverty in contrast to policymaker discussion about the reforms; c) moving beyond the behaviorism rationale and examining structural causes of poverty; d) multiple perspectives of the poor who receive aid; and e) the relationship between welfare reform and the disenfranchisement of the poor. In addition to the five themes, the researchers consider factors such as class, gender, and race in their assessment (Morgen & Maskovsky, 2003).

Conclusions made from their analysis of the effectiveness of welfare reform are multifaceted. First, a basic finding is that using the strategy of obtaining low-wage employment as a means to escape poverty is a failure. Jobs that do not provide a living wage will not provide economic security or job stability. Moreover, the focus has become about personal responsibility, yet without adequate supportive services such as affordable childcare to make the efforts reliably successful. Secondly, Morgen and Maskovsky (2003) critique the hegemonic discussion surrounding transforming welfare. They see a turn in political rhetoric in defining families on welfare as “undeserving” and dependent and therefore demoralizing individuals who are seeking assistance. Lastly, the authors see the primary focus of the reform to be on the reduction of welfare caseloads rather than
poverty reduction. The authors contend as long as that is the main motivation of the welfare system, it is highly unlikely it will ever truly be effective.

The comprehensive explanation of urban poverty and welfare restructuring in the United States by Morgen and Maskovsky (2003) theorizes that real welfare reform calls for a different way of thinking about poverty rather than a federally mandated restructuring that claims to empower the poor by bringing them into the mainstream of society through the workforce. The authors suggest that many of those affected by welfare ‘reform’ experience quite the opposite often in the form of punitive measures.

**Conclusion**

The major contributions of these studies indicate the clear data and analysis about the perceptions of poverty and the reactions to it by individuals and societal groups based on such things as class, race and political affiliation. Additionally, the policies created in response to the diversity of these opinions and reactions often places blame on the poor and is an invitation to the perception of poverty to be seen as strictly personal responsibility. The perceived deservedness factor is strongly present and too often prevents the research for, development of, and implementation of viable social and policy solutions that enhance social welfare which in turn has the potential to enhance American society as a whole.

Political ideology continues to preclude and prevent a mutually agreeable solution to the poverty problem in the United States. In large part, the media perpetuates a partisan stalemate. Additionally, current personal, social, and political ideologies regarding racial and cultural stereotyping of the nature and definition of poverty consistently prevent a
multifaceted analysis of what the reality of poverty is. Attitudes toward social welfare policies have shifted slightly since the 1996 PRWORA, but ultimately, the complex issues preventing a true addressing of poverty negatively impacts the poor and prevents the creation of solid solutions for the poor in the United States.

Therefore, the literature that has been reviewed here is relevant to this investigator’s research purposes because it affirms the importance of studying the perceptions of poverty and attitudes towards social welfare policies. This study will particularly be focused on college student’s perceptions to see if the literature is supported among those respondents and if there is an association between the perceptions of poverty and attitudes toward social welfare programs as well as the influences of political ideology.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This study focused on college students’ perceptions of poverty and their beliefs about two social welfare policies, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The primary aim was to identify the association, if any, between the perceptions of poverty and the attitudes and beliefs about the social welfare policies meant to alleviate poverty. As previously stated, poverty is a pervasive problem in the United States, and although there is much discussion and study about poverty in general, there is little research with college students exploring the connection between their perceptions of poverty and their attitudes toward policies meant to assist those experiencing poverty.

In this study, it was important to explore not only the students’ perceptions and knowledge of poverty but also their understanding of potential causes as well as discovering what factors may influence those perceptions. The creation of policies with the intention of ameliorating social problems is very important, and the difference of having or not having accurate knowledge impacts the potential outcomes of those policies, touching the lives of many vulnerable individuals and families. The findings presented in this study may potentially benefit society in that they may add to the knowledge and awareness of college students about the importance in understanding their perceptions of poverty and how those views may have a potential connection to and be significant in making policy choices that impact social change.
Study Design

This exploratory, mixed methods research study utilized a convenience sample of CSU Sacramento students. This study incorporated a survey with forty-six questions (see Appendix A) regarding participants’ perceptions of poverty and beliefs about the social welfare programs of TANF and SNAP. Demographic data such as gender, ethnicity, education level, social class, race and student status level was also collected.

Population and Sampling Procedures

The population under consideration in this study is college students at California State University Sacramento (CSUS). This study seeks to understand the students’ perceptions of poverty and how those might be associated with their beliefs about the social welfare policies of TANF and SNAP. The sampling plan for this study included a sample of fifty-eight participants who were recruited on the CSUS campus. Students were invited to participate in this study. Criteria for inclusion included current enrollment as either an undergraduate or graduate student at CSUS and being at least eighteen years old. Individuals who were not a current student of CSUS or under the age of eighteen were excluded due to the inability of minors to consent to research.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection for this study involved the development of a survey with questions regarding participants’ perceptions about poverty and social welfare programs. Potential participants were approached in the common areas of the CSUS campus, asked if they were a student and at least eighteen years of age and invited to participate in the study. Upon agreement, potential participants were given a verbal summary and paper copy of
the consent form (Appendix B) and asked to sign the consent form if they agreed to its content. After returning the signed consent form, the participants were given the survey to complete. Surveys and consent forms were collected and stored in two different manila envelopes to maintain confidentiality.

**Instruments**

Participants were asked to complete a forty-six question survey beginning with four brief qualitative questions that asked for short answers about their views on poverty and social welfare policies. The next eight were demographic questions that captured information about the participants’ gender, race, education level, voter party registration, social class, source of news, student status and student status level. The following thirty-two questions were Likert Scale and inquired about the respondent’s views about poverty, social welfare policies, and political ideology. The scale consisted of a range between one and five including the responses of “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” with “neither disagree nor agree” in the middle of the scale. Most questions were nominal and ordinal in measurement and a few questions asked for a brief qualitative narrative using a few words of phrases.

**Data Analysis**

The researcher in this study utilized statistical and content data analysis. Quantitative data was entered and coded using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows version 23. Statistical data was then generated using a combination of frequencies, chi-square, t-test, and correlation testing, depending on the level of measurement of the variables being analyzed. Relationships between variables were
analyzed using correlation testing to measure the reliability of the survey and specific questions in the survey. Content analysis was conducted on the responses to the four narrative questions in the survey. The researcher individually analyzed the narrative responses by identifying themes that emerged in the responses. The number of responses that fit into each theme were then tabulated and computed to generate basic descriptive statistics.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

The Protocol for the Protection of Human Subjects was submitted and approved by the Division of Social Work as exempt research with approval number 14-15-068 (see Appendix C). This application described the anticipated methodology of the study as well as any potential impacts on participants. Before completing the survey, all participants signed a consent form which included the purpose of the research; associated procedures, risks, and benefits; confidentiality; compensation; researcher contact information; and a statement of voluntary participation. Participant information and surveys were kept confidential. Names were not recorded on completed surveys and consent forms were collected and stored separately from completed surveys in order to prevent participant identities from being connected to survey responses. The surveys and consent forms were stored in a locked case to which only the researcher had access until collection and analysis of data for the purpose of this study were completed. Once the California State University, Sacramento, Office of Graduate Studies, accepts this Master of Social Work thesis project, the data will be destroyed by shredding.
Summary

This mixed method research project sought to explore college students’ perceptions of poverty and their views about the social welfare programs of TANF and SNAP in order to determine if there was a correlation between them. The researcher compiled a convenience sample of fifty-eight participants by distributing surveys on the CSUS campus. The instrument consisted of a forty-six question survey that measured participant’s perceptions of poverty and views about social welfare programs with narrative, multiple choice and Likert Scale questions. The participants were informed of procedures to ensure confidentiality and the improbability of any risk. The researchers conducted statistical analysis of responses to quantitative questions and content analysis of responses to qualitative questions. Conclusions were framed from the analysis of the data, and these results and conclusions are discussed in the subsequent chapters.
Chapter 4

RESULTS

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the study data. The researcher was interested in the perceptions of poverty by California State University Sacramento students. Specifically, the researcher was interested in the relationship between perceptions of poverty, the causes of poverty and beliefs about social welfare programs aimed at alleviating the conditions for the poor. In addition, the researcher was concerned with the association between the perceptions and beliefs mentioned above and the potential influences of political ideology, media and racial and cultural stereotypes on those perceptions. The research question for this study was: What is the relationship between college students’ perceptions of poverty and their views of social programs such as the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

Descriptive Statistics

All 58 college student participants reported their gender. There were 36 (62.1%) female participants and 22 (37.9%) male participants. Table 1 describes the participants’ race and/or ethnicity. The categories of “Mixed Race” and “Other” were included to be inclusive of all races and ethnicities. There was no write in option for those categories. The largest percentages of participants by race were white (31%) and Hispanic (22%).
Table 1

Participants’ Race/Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>55.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>69.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>87.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Race</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 illustrates the Social Class of the participants’ family of origin. The results show that the majority of respondents (60.3%) come from middle class homes.

Table 2

Participants’ Social Class of Family of Origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>89.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant voter registration by political party is shown in Table 3. The results reveal that a large percentage (41%) are not registered to vote, however, of the responses by registered voters, the majority are Democrat (57.6%) whereas Republicans make up (18.2%), Independents (15.2%) and Other (9%).
Table 3

*Participants’ Voter Registration Party*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>57.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Registered</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Perceptions of Poverty and the Poor**

The section of the survey that measured the students’ perception of poverty was based on a Likert Scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” = 1 to “Strongly Agree” = 5 with “Neither Disagree or Agree” = 3. The participants circled the response that best characterized how they felt about each statement that reflected their perception of poverty or about the poor. Figures 1-8 show the percentage and frequency for each of the responses. Many of the statement results show a large percent of participants choosing “Neither Agree or Disagree” for their answer, however, there are enough results showing “Agree” and “Disagree” to make important observations and analysis.

Figure 1 reveals that among respondents, a larger percent chose to agree to the statement “I believe poor people have a different set of values than other people”. The combined percentage of “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” was 39.6% as opposed to “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” at 29.3%.
Figure 1. Poor people have a different set of values than do other people.

The perception of students who believe that most poor are people of color is illustrated below in Figure 2. The survey results show that a greater percentage (39.6%) of the participants combined agree and strongly agree with that most poor are people of color, whereas, 31.1% combined disagree and strongly disagree.

Figure 2. Most poor people are people of color.
Figure 3 shows that of the student responses indicating agree and strongly agree together, 34.5% of the students believe that if poor people worked harder, they could escape poverty. Twenty-four point one percent disagreed and strongly disagreed.

![Graph showing frequency of responses](image)

**Figure 3.** If people worked harder, they could escape poverty.

Results concerning the perceptions of poor people and the abuse of drugs and/or alcohol are shown in Figure 4. Of the students surveyed, the outcome is close to equal with the combined total of 27.5% agreeing and strongly agreeing with the statement that most poor people abuse drugs and/or alcohol and a combined 27.6% disagreeing and strongly disagreeing with that statement.
Figure 4. Most poor people abuse drugs and/or alcohol.

A majority of participants (75.8%) believe that a lack of educational opportunities challenges the poor as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Lack of educational opportunities is a major challenge of the poor.

Figure 6 illustrates that a large percentage (37.9%) of respondents selected agree and strongly agree to having the perception that poor people experience poverty due to
circumstances beyond their control. Seventeen point two percent of the students, combining disagree and strongly disagree responses, do not share that view.

![Frequency Chart](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Figure 6.** People are poor due to circumstances beyond their control.

Racism and discrimination are believed to contribute to poverty according to 69.9% of the survey participants who selected agree and strongly agree (Figure 7). Twelve point three is the combined percentage of those that disagree and strongly disagree that racism and discrimination contribute to poverty.
Figure 7. Racism and discrimination are contributing factors to poverty.

Views about Social Welfare Policies

The section of the survey that measured the students’ perception of social welfare policies was based on a Likert Scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” = 1 to “Strongly Agree” = 5 with “Neither Disagree or Agree” = 3. The participants’ circled the response that best characterized how they felt about each statement that reflected a different perception of government assistance intended to help alleviate poverty. Figures 9-12 show the frequency of each response per statement. Once again, many of the statement results show a large percent of participants choosing “Neither Agree or Disagree” for their answer, however, there are enough results showing “Agree” and “Disagree” to make important observations and analyses.

Figure 8 shows that the majority of participants (64.9%) believe that society has a responsibility to help the poor. Only 17.6% of the students disagree with that statement.
When the students were asked to rate their perception of the statement “welfare makes people lazy”, 22.4% of the participants stated that they agree or strongly agree while 32.7% disagree or strongly disagree (Figure 9).

The vast majority of the students (89%) agree that everyone should have enough food (Figure 10).
Figure 10. Everyone regardless of the circumstances should have enough food.

Figure 11 illustrates that a large percentage (47.4%) of the combined chosen responses of disagree and strongly disagree, do not agree that the U.S. government spends too much money on poverty programs, while a combined 22.8% who chose agree and strongly agree reveal their perception that the government does spend too much money of programs aimed at alleviating poverty.
The government spends too much money on poverty programs.

**Political Ideology**

The section of the survey that measured the students’ perception of their political ideology was based on a Likert Scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” = 1 to “Strongly Agree” = 5 with “Neither Disagree or Agree” = 3. The participants’ circled the response that best characterized how they perceived their political ideology as conservative or liberal. Forty-one point four percent of the students agreed that they perceive themselves as politically liberal while 18.9% indicate that they perceive themselves as politically conservative. An average of 39.7% of respondents said they were neither liberal nor conservative.
Inferential Statistics

Using a Pearson Correlation test, Table 4 shows a mildly significant correlation (r=.266, p=.05) level between those who consider themselves politically conservative and those agreeing and strongly agreeing that welfare makes people lazy.

Table 4

*Correlation Between Politically Conservative and Welfare Makes People Lazy*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politically Conservative</th>
<th>Welfare Makes People Lazy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politically Conservative</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare Makes People Lazy</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cross-tabulations reveal differences between Democrat and Republican students. Of the respondents whose voter registration party is Republican, the combined responses of disagree and strongly disagree show 50% do not believe that poor people are poor due to circumstances beyond their control. Thirty-three percent of the Republicans agreed with the statement. Whereas, those respondents who selected their voter registration party as Democrat had 0% disagree or strongly disagree that poor people are poor due to circumstances beyond their control. Instead, 52% of the Democrats chose neither disagree nor agree and 48% agree with the statement.
Table 5

Poor People are Poor Due to Circumstances Beyond Their Control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree Nor Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Qualitative Section

Three qualitative questions were included in the survey. Participants were asked to fill in their own words to answer the following questions: (1) What are the top three causes of poverty in the U.S.?; (2) What are the top three words or phrases you would use to define a family that consists of a single mother with three children who works full-time at a minimum wage job and receives welfare and food stamps?; and (3) What three words come to mind when you think about welfare programs that are intended to assist those experiencing poverty in the U.S.? Themes were developed from the answers and then the responses were coded into those themes. Some of the themes were further broken down into societal versus individual or behavioral descriptors used for the perceptions of poverty and those who are experiencing poverty.

For the question about the respondents’ perceived causes of poverty, the main themes, as stated previously, were broken down into societal and individual causes of poverty. Of 169 responses, 145 (86%) were words that focused on societal causes such as lack of education and resources (n=51) and not enough jobs or a bad economy (n=46). Twenty-four responses (15%) included terms that reflected more individual and
behavioral causes for poverty such as laziness (n=8), alcohol and drug abuse (n=6) and poor planning (n=5).

There were 147 words or phrases used to define a poor family with a single working mother, as specified earlier, and 131 (89%) of them described the mother in terms such as hard working, strong, resilient, unlucky, determined, depressed, trying, and in need of help or deserving of opportunities and/or resources. Of the remaining words or phrases, 16 (11%) defined the family and/or mother using descriptors such as broken home, dead-beat dad, irresponsible, or as unwilling to do better.

When asked what words came to mind when thinking about welfare programs, the respondents provided 136 answers. Of the 136, 75 (55%) of the descriptors were words that expressed a need for welfare programs such as helpful, not enough, supportive, necessary, important, and life-saving. Conversely, 61 (45%) words or phrases consisted of negative perceptions of welfare such as wasteful, broken, not helpful, inefficient, expensive, handouts, and complicated.

Summary

This chapter summarized the findings from 58 surveys administered to California State University Sacramento students. The information was gathered from participants using quantitative and qualitative methods. The research was designed to explore the students’ perceptions of poverty and social welfare programs. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Demographic data was collected and evaluated. Frequency distributions and inferential statistics were used to provide insight into a basic
conceptual understanding of the sample and general trends in the responses.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

Within this chapter the researcher will summarize and discuss the findings that were presented in chapter four. The researcher will engage in a discussion regarding the conclusions that can be drawn from this study, how the findings relate to current academic literature on the subject, and the implications for social work practice and policy. The chapter will also include a discussion on the limitations of the study, coupled with suggestions for future research and recommendations on how to effectively apply the findings to social work practice and advocacy.

Analysis

The researcher created this study with the intention of gaining insight into the important issue of people’s perceptions of poverty and the programs intended to alleviate it. The research questions were designed with the hope of gaining information from students about their views on poverty, the causes of poverty, and the effectiveness of social welfare programs. Through the creation of the study, the researcher attempted to contribute to academic understandings of the perceptions of students, while examining these experiences in relation to students’ political ideology, and the relationship between the two.

The prevalence of poverty in the U.S. is one that garners a lot of discussion and research in academia. Also well explored are the ways in which poverty and the perceptions of it impact impoverished individuals and society as a whole (Applebaum, 2001; Greenbaum, 2015; Guetzkow, 2010; Rank, 2006). Furthermore, various researchers
explore the role of political ideology, racism, cultural stereotypes and media and the ways in which they influence the perceptions of poverty and how those perceptions shift policy priorities (Clawson & Trice, 2000; Fox, 2004; Gilens, 2003; Hopkins, 2009; Hunt, 2004; Shaw, 2009).

Consistent with the research examined in the literature review, this study’s findings show that the student respondents reflect the public at large as also having divergent views about poverty that fall within the categories of either seeing it as a problem of the individual or society (Applebaum, 2001; Guetzkow, 2010; Rank, 2006). In the quantitative data, varied results were revealed when asked about the perceptions in each category. For example, when examining the statements that focused on individual behavior such as, “people should work harder to escape poverty”, 27.6 percent of the students agreed and 6.9 percent strongly agreed. There was a significantly higher percentage of students who agreed that poor people should work harder than disagreed at only 24.1 percent. Moreover, when asked if poor people have different values than others, a large percentage (39.6%) agreed or strongly agreed, whereas 29.3 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, the same sample of students also show a concern for the societal causes of poverty, in that they agreed by a large percentage (75.8%) that a lack of educational opportunities is a major challenge for the poor.

Within the qualitative data, when participants were asked to list the top three causes of poverty the majority of the responses focused on societal factors with descriptors such as lack of education, the economy, low wages, and cost of living. Furthermore, when describing their perception of a family comprised of a single mother with three children
who works full time yet is on welfare and food stamps, most respondents defined the mother in words that included hard working, struggling, strong, and deserving of assistance. These responses show that among the student respondents when asked to define these issues with their own words there seems to be a strong focus on understanding the structural causes of poverty and less on blaming the individual. These results are in contrast to some of the research reviewed in Chapter 2 that showed more of an overall equal division among the data between the perceptions of poverty in the U.S. as a societal or individual problem (Rank, 2006; Shaw, 2009). This is likely due to the composition and size of the sample used in this research.

Another notable finding of this study is the congruence with other studies that show the importance of political ideology in relation to perceptions of poverty. The articles examined in the literature review revealed that one’s political affiliation and beliefs do impact how poverty and those who are impoverished are viewed (Cozzarelli, Wilkinson & Tagler, 2001; Guetzkow, 2010; Robinson, 2009; Shaw, 2009; Weiner, Osborne & Rudolph, 2010). As previously discussed, studies show that Republicans who tend to have a more conservative ideology perceive individual behaviors as responsible for poverty whereas Democrats with a more liberal ideology focus more on societal issues as the cause of poverty (Shaw, 2009).

Among the respondents of this study who stated in the survey that they are registered to vote, the majority (58%) identified their party of voter registration as Democrat, 18% Republican, 15% Independent and 9% Other. Moreover, of the 58 respondents, 19% considered themselves politically conservative and 41% saw themselves as politically
liberal. The analysis using inferential statistics shows a positive correlation \((r=.266, p=.05)\) between those who consider themselves politically conservative and those who believe that welfare makes people lazy. This result is reflective of the literature that has been reviewed in this study that the more conservative a person’s views are, the more they consider behavioral explanations the root of the problem. Similarly, cross-tabulations between registered Democrat and Republican respondents and the statement regarding the perception that people are poor due to circumstances beyond their control show that 50% of Republican students disagree that poverty is a problem outside of the individuals control and 50% of Democrat students believe it is a societal issue.

Included within the literature review and consistent with the conclusions of the data, was the importance of racism and cultural stereotypes with regard to perceptions of poverty (Clawson & Trice, 2000; Fox, 2004; Gilens, 2003; Hopkins, 2009; Hunt, 2004; Rose & Baumgartner, 2013). When provided the statement that most poor people are people of color, a larger number of respondents agreed and strongly agreed (39.6%) than disagreed and strongly disagreed (31%) that most impoverished people are non-white. Research analysis cited within this study contends that many people in the U.S. overestimate the percentage of black poor people (Clawson & Trice, 2000; Gilens, 2003). Gilens (2003) argues that when people focus on stereotypes perpetuated by the media and have the misconception that poverty is made up of mostly African Americans, perceptions tend to gravitate toward blaming the individual than examining structural causes of poverty and therefore solutions become more punitive in nature. Conversely, the data in this study also show that a large percentage (64.9%) of respondents believe
that racism and discrimination contribute to poverty. Moreover, the qualitative data did not reveal any descriptors from respondents that describe or define poverty in relationship to people of color. These mixed results among the same population show the variability in the perceptions of poverty (Schneider & Jacoby, 2005).

Lastly, when looking at the respondents’ attitudes toward social welfare policies, the quantitative data show that the majority (64.9%) agree that society has a responsibility to help the poor and a large percentage (47.4%) disagree that the government spends too much money on helping the poor. Since both of those statements are strongly held beliefs of Democrats, this could be related to the fact the majority of the students participating in the study who are registered to vote are Democrats and there is a larger percentage of politically liberal respondents, although no significant correlation was found in the analysis to show this.

The qualitative data results focused on the participants’ perceptions of social welfare programs showing that when respondents were asked to write down three words that described social welfare programs, the words chosen were almost evenly divided between positive and negative descriptors. Out of 136 responses, 55% described social welfare programs in terms of positive attributes such as helpful, supportive, necessary, and important. Forty-five percent of the responses were negative attributes such as dependency, inefficient, broken, and wasteful. These results support the data that shows that people in the U.S. are divided on the issue of poverty and the social programs that are created to alleviate it (Schneider & Jacoby, 2005).
Summary of Study

There is a large body of literature regarding the issues and perceptions of poverty and social welfare programs in the U.S. (Applebaum, 2001; Greenbaum, 2015; Guetzkow, 2010; Rank, 2006, Shaw, 2009). However, there are not studies designated solely to examining the perceptions of college students and exploring the potential link between perceptions of poverty and social welfare programs. Upon review of the conclusions garnered from related studies, the researcher sought to expand current academic discussions by seeking conclusions from their findings. The researcher found that there is similarity in the quantitative and qualitative outcomes among the college student population at California State University, Sacramento and the outcomes from other studies exploring public opinion on the same issues.

One of the outcomes from the study showed that when evaluating the issue of attributing poverty to either individual behaviors or societal forces, the results were mixed. A large percentage of the 58 participants chose neither disagree nor agree as their response. This could be reflective of the difficulty of examining the complex issue of poverty in general and specifically not wanting to generalize about an extremely diverse population of people in the U.S. Yet, of those who chose to either agree, strongly agree, disagree, strongly disagree there was a range of responses that were not always consistent and sometimes contradictory. For example, a higher percentage of students believed that poor people have different values than others and should work harder to escape poverty than did not, while a higher percentage of respondents also stated that poor people experienced poverty due to circumstances beyond their control.
Another result of the study was the slight association between political ideology and perception of poverty and social welfare programs. This outcome supports the idea that political ideology matters in the decision making about how best to address the issues of poverty. Nonetheless, there was only a small number of self-reported Republican, or conservative, students, so it is difficult to extrapolate this conclusion from the data in this study.

The most promising result of the study was that a high number of respondents had the perception that society has a responsibility to help the poor and that everyone should have enough food to eat. Additionally, of those surveyed, they tended more toward the belief that the government does not spend too much money on assisting the poor. Moreover, there seemed to be an understanding of the importance of some structural causes of poverty. For instance, a large percentage of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that lack of educational opportunities is a major challenge for the poor as well as believing that racism and discrimination contribute to poverty. This awareness among college students may make a difference in influencing future policies aimed at alleviating poverty.

**Implications for Social Work**

Although the findings collected from the study are specific to California State University, Sacramento students, there are significant implications for social work practice and policy. By conducting this study, the researchers attempted to explore the important area of perceptions about poverty and social welfare programs. In the social work profession, it is imperative to understand the issue of poverty and the implications
of that understanding on clients and the policies that are intended to help them. Social workers have a responsibility to be aware of social justice issues, including economic justice, because those issues impact the well-being of clients.

At the micro level, social workers will be better equipped to work with impoverished clients if they have a relevant understanding of the issues surrounding poverty, especially how one perceives poverty, especially one’s own biases toward the attribution of poverty that includes both the individual and the societal aspects. This understanding could perhaps better prepare social workers for the varied social issues their clients could face in regard to poverty and potential cultural stereotyping that may be occurring as a consequence of their situation.

At the mezzo level, social workers can strive to create and/or reform social welfare programs to adequately alleviate some of the poverty conditions of their clients. By understanding people’s perceptions of poverty and how impactful and influential they are, social workers can adapt their programs in ways that promote social and economic justice and empower their clients toward improving their situation. They could potentially work with institutions such as colleges, other organizations and community members to promote awareness of poverty conditions and causes, educate on the problems surrounding racism, discrimination and cultural stereotyping in relation to poverty and share best practices for how to alleviate these problems.

Finally, at the macro level social workers have an obligation to advocate for social policies that benefit marginalized populations, and seek to empower individuals. Advocacy at the macro level is central to the NASW Code of Ethics (2014) and social
workers have the opportunity to share their understandings of poverty in a way that positively influences social welfare policies such as TANF that greatly impact impoverished individuals. In order to have successful social policies, there needs to be a correct and thorough understanding of the issue. In learning about perceptions of poverty and social welfare programs and what influences those beliefs, social workers have the unique opportunity to gain a better perspective so as to better address the problem of poverty through advocacy, education and creating awareness.

**Recommendations**

This study about the perceptions of poverty and social welfare policies was intentionally designed to ascertain the level of awareness that the respondents had in regard to the issue of poverty and their perceptions of what is being done to alleviate it in order to better understand where future education and awareness is needed. This section includes how this study could have collected other data and suggestions for future research.

Upon review of the data, and given the complex nature of poverty, the researcher feels that interviewing students would have allowed for a more in-depth analysis of their responses and a better understanding of the reasons for their perceptions. An interview process would have also allowed for follow-up questions, and the potential for the researchers to probe responses and receive clarification. Furthermore, since respondents were only students and primarily young adults from middle class backgrounds, selecting participants for the interview process from different communities would have given the researcher the opportunity to choose a more diverse group of interviewees.
Moreover, since this researcher was interested in the relationship of political ideology and perceptions of poverty, it would have been helpful to include more representation from participants who considered themselves conservative and/or vote Republican. In addition, since the findings showed variability on many of the questions and sometimes even contradictory results about the student’s perceptions of poverty and social welfare programs, the survey could have included more specificity to questions and/or the answer option of “neither agree nor disagree” could have been removed.

Finally, a recommendation would be to interview a diverse group of students and/or professionals who have the intention to directly impact policies through their profession such as students majoring in public policy, business or political science. It is their perceptions of poverty that have a greater likelihood of shaping the future of social welfare policies such as TANF. Moreover, it would be equally interesting to explore how professors of those fields address the issue of poverty, if they do at all. Knowing that information would help to see what improvements may be needed and could be implemented to provide a more comprehensive understanding about poverty among students.

**Limitations**

This study was limited by its relatively small sample size (n=58), and surveying only students at California State University, Sacramento. Generating a larger sample size would have added to the diversity of the participants. A larger sample size could also lend itself to greater variance in participant responses as well as participant demographics.
Further, from such a targeted sample it is challenging to extrapolate the data to the public in general.

**Conclusion**

Poverty is a serious problem in the U.S. It is a social injustice that so many people are economically disadvantaged. Moreover, there is a misperception about poverty. The literature suggests that people in America are divided based upon their beliefs about the causes of poverty and about the people who are impoverished (Rank, 2006; Robinson, 2009; Shaw, 2009, Weiner, Osborne & Rudolph, 2010). Those beliefs vary from blaming the individual for their own poverty to focusing on societal factors as the problem. Furthermore, the lack of understanding about poverty can have an impact on the development of policies to alleviate it.

The purpose of this study was to examine college students’ perceptions of both poverty and social welfare programs in order to determine a relationship. In addition, the researcher wanted to evaluate how the respondents’ political ideology was related to those perceptions. Upon analysis of the survey responses, the findings showed that similar to other research there is variability among perceptions, however there was an association between conservative political ideology and a focus on individual behaviors as a cause of poverty more than structural causes, and the belief that public assistance worsens the problem. These findings highlight the importance of educating the public about poverty in order to determine the most effective policies to address and ameliorate it. The problem of poverty deserves public and professional attention in order to confront
the social injustices and to improve conditions among some of the most vulnerable people in the country.
Appendix A

Survey Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions according to your personal experience to the best of your ability.

1. What are the top three causes of poverty in the U.S?
   a. ___________________________________________________________
   b. ___________________________________________________________
   c. ___________________________________________________________

2. What are the top three words or phrases you would use to define or describe a family that consists of a single mother with three children who works full-time at a minimum wage job and receives welfare and food stamps?
   a. ___________________________________________________________
   b. ___________________________________________________________
   c. ___________________________________________________________

3. What three words come to mind when you think about welfare programs that are intended to assist those experiencing poverty in the U.S.?
   a. ___________________________________________________________
   b. ___________________________________________________________
   c. ___________________________________________________________

4. In your opinion, what is the minimum annual income a family of four in Sacramento needs to live without assistance? ________________
5. My highest education level is:
   a. High School graduate or GED
   b. Some College and/or AA degree
   c. Bachelor’s Degree
   d. Graduate Degree or education

6. Sex:
   a. Female
   b. Male

7. I am registered to vote as:
   a. Republican
   b. Democrat
   c. Independent
   d. Other
   e. Not registered

8. My race is:
   a. Black (of African Descent)
   b. Hispanic / Latino
   c. Caucasian / White
   d. Asian/Pacific Islander
   e. Native American
   f. Other
   g. Mixed Race

9. Social Class of my family of origin:
   a. Working Class
   b. Middle Class
   c. Upper Middle Class
   d. Upper Class

10. I get most of my news from (circle the primary source):
    a. Network News Shows (i.e., ABC, NBC, CBS)
    b. FOX News / FOX Cable Shows
    c. Other Cable News Shows (i.e., MSNBC, CNN)
11. I am currently a student at CSU Sacramento: Yes____ No ____
12. Student status level: Undergraduate ____ Graduate____

Circle the response that best characterizes how you feel about each of the statements below.

1 - Strongly Disagree
2 - Disagree
3 - Neither Disagree or Agree
4 - Agree
5 - Strongly Agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree or Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welfare makes people lazy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any person can get ahead in this country</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society has the responsibility to help the poor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor people act differently</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The government spends too much money on poverty programs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of educational opportunities is a major challenge for the poor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Everyone, regardless of the circumstances, should have enough food</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe poor people have a different set of values than do other people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>If I were poor, I would accept welfare benefits</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benefits for the poor consume a major part of the federal budget</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployed poor people could find jobs if they tried harder</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>People are poor due to circumstances beyond their control</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Most poor people are people of color</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Most poor people use food stamps wisely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Those who are poor are typically less intelligent than those who are not</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minimum wage should be increased to a living wage to help lift families out of poverty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of affordable child care is a major challenge for poor families</td>
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<td>Lack of self-discipline is a major challenge for the poor</td>
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<td>People who are poor should not be blamed for their misfortune</td>
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<td>If people worked harder, they could escape poverty</td>
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<td>There are many external societal factors that contribute to poverty</td>
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<td>Lack of reliable transportation contributes to poverty</td>
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<td>Racism and discrimination are contributing factors to poverty</td>
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<td>Being poor is a choice</td>
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<td>Minimum wage is not an adequate wage to support a family</td>
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<td>Lack of affordable housing in our area is a factor that lends to poverty</td>
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<td>Most poor people abuse drugs and/or alcohol</td>
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<td>I know someone who has held a minimum wage job while raising a family</td>
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<tr>
<td>I consider myself politically conservative</td>
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<td>I consider myself politically liberal</td>
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<td>I vote regularly</td>
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<tr>
<td>I know someone who has experienced poverty</td>
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<tr>
<td>I know someone who has received welfare and/or food stamps</td>
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</table>
Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

California State University Sacramento

You are being invited to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. Your Principal Investigator (the person in charge of this study) will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don’t understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty.

Title of Research Study:
The Perceptions of Poverty in the U.S. among College Students and the Implications for Policy

Name of Principal Investigator (PI): Tammy Montgomery

Funding Source:

Purpose of Study:

This study aims to discover how perceptions of poverty in the United States among college students may correlate with views on policy issues.

What will you be asked to do if you participate in this research study?

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey questionnaire. This should take approximately 10-15 minutes of your time.

What are the possible discomforts and risks involved in this study?

There is only minimal potential discomfort / risk associated with this study. The questionnaire asks about your knowledge and perceptions of poverty and social welfare policies.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

Findings from this study will increase the knowledge in the social work field about the level of awareness among college students about poverty and their views of social welfare policies. The results will allow social workers and those in public policy to better understand where more education about the facts about poverty is needed in order to impact social policy changes with the goal of improving poverty conditions in the U.S.
If you choose to take part in this study, will it cost you anything?

No.

Will you receive compensation for your participation in this study?

You will not receive any type of payment for participating in this study.

Do you have to participate?

Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate at all or, if you start the study, you may withdraw at any time. You do not have to answer any question that you do not want to for any reason. Withdrawal or refusing to participate will not affect your relationship with CSU Sacramento in any way.

Who should you call if you have questions?

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Tammy Montgomery at tammymontgomery@csus.edu or Dr. Bankhead at bankhead@csus.edu.

How will your privacy and the confidentiality of your research records be protected?

Your participation in this study will be confidential and anonymous. There is no identifying personal information on the questionnaire. The questionnaires will be kept separate from this informed consent form and both will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the PI’s home. Once the research project is filed and degree awarded, the questionnaires will be shredded and disposed of. You will not be contacted in the future.

Will the researchers benefit from your participation in this study?

The only way that the researcher will benefit from your participation in this study is by completing the thesis project and graduating from the MSW program.

Signature:

Your signature below indicates that you have been informed about this study’s purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks, and you have received a copy of this form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

______________________________________________________________ Date
Printed Name of Participant

______________________________________________________________ Date
Signature of Participant

______________________________________________________________ Date
Signature of Principal Investigator
To: Tammy Montgomery
From: Research Review Committee

RE: HUMAN SUBJECTS APPLICATION

Your Human Subjects application for your proposed study, “Perceptions of Poverty in the U.S. among College Students and the Implications for Policy”, is Approved as Exempt. Discuss your next steps with your thesis/project Advisor.

Your human subjects Protocol # is: 14-15-068. Please use this number in all official correspondence and written materials relative to your study. Your approval expires one year from this date. Approval carries with it that you will inform the Committee promptly should an adverse reaction occur, and that you will make no modification in the protocol without prior approval of the Committee.

The committee wishes you the best in your research.

Research Review Committee members Professors Jude Antonyappan, Teiahsha Bankhead, Maria Dinis, Serge Lee, Kisun Nam, Francis Yuen

Cc: Bankhead
References


