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WELFARE AS A MEDIA TOPIC: THE CASE OF THE NEW YORK PRESS

City University of New York

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**WELFARE AS A MEDIA TOPIC:
THE CASE OF THE NEW YORK PRESS**

by

CAROLYN J. CABELL

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York

1984

In memory of my dear friend, Lenny

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1984

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

WELFARE AS A MEDIA TOPIC:
THE CASE OF THE NEW YORK PRESS

by

Carolyn J. Cabell

Adviser: Professor Hylan Lewis

This research used two newspapers in New York City--the New York Times and the New York Daily News--as vehicles to examine the ideological and value dimensions of American welfare policies. The theoretical premise argues that the mass media are major carriers of ideology because they promote a consensual view of the world by heavily relying on the officials of government institutions for the raw materials of news and by their tendency to treat occurrences as unrelated, ahistoric events.

The American public welfare system is built on the social values that flow out of capitalist ideology; heavy emphasis is placed on individualism, self-reliance, competition, personal achievement,

and the work ethic. The popular image of welfare recipients that emerges often locates the causes of poverty in the behavior of poor people and welfare programs usually contain rehabilitation and control of the poor as necessary palliatives for the poverty problem. This perspective forms the basis of the consensual paradigm as it relates to welfare; the primary objective for change in the welfare system is defined as the need to reduce welfare rather than to reduce poverty.

Although the Times and the News are substantially different in political orientation and audience, the expectation was that the characteristics associated with the consensual paradigm would predominate. Methods of content analysis were used to study a sample of editorials and articles about welfare that were published during the 1970s. A series of hypotheses examined the nature and frequency of the topics discussed, the effect of politics on the news play given certain subjects, and the types of images of welfare recipients that emerge.

The preponderance of evidence pointed to the ideological nature of the coverage of welfare topics offered by the New York press. The major conclusion of the study is that the papers' presentations concerning welfare exhibit more similarities than differences. This is especially the case for their news articles.

The near total exclusion of all information sources except officials of legitimate institutions skewed the news coverage to one interpretive framework. The heavy emphasis on events over issues rendered invisible the structural connections between the problems of poverty and welfare and the functioning of the economic and political systems. As a rule these characteristics were prevalent in the News' editorials as well. Also, a sizeable proportion of the Times' editorials either fell within the consensual paradigm or projected negative images of welfare recipients and programs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The reality of this dissertation attests to the rare combination of good fortune I have experienced over the last five to six years. I owe so much to so many!

The saga that precedes my accomplishment of the dissertation begins and ends with Professor Hylan Lewis --a demanding and exacting mentor who balances his requirements for excellence with understanding and compassion. The dictionary definition of mentor--a wise and trusted counselor--does not do justice to the relationship that I have been privileged to have with Professor Lewis. He has been the guiding force during most of my activities as a graduate student.

Studying with him for several scheduled courses led to several tutorials. This led to my thinking through with him my desire to compete for the Whitney M. Young, Jr. Academic Fellowship and to his invaluable assistance with my proposal to the Whitney M. Young, Jr. Foundation. During the 1978-79 academic year, Professor Lewis guided me through the successful completion of my oral examination and through a series of travels and writings that subsequently sparked the inception of the ideas on which the dissertation is based. He further supervised my successful applications for funding to the

Sloan Foundation Minority Student Dissertation Program and to the American Sociological Association.

During the next year, 1979-80, Professor Lewis helped me develop a concrete dissertation proposal out of a hodgepodge of ideas. I was off and running. Then in 1981 and 1982 when my career demands necessitated that I put my studies on hold, he continued to be encouraging and expressed confidence that I would get back to my writing. Late in 1981 when I re-surfaced and announced my intention to complete the dissertation, we picked up where we had left off, without missing a beat.

Credit for all that is good about this product goes to Professor Lewis' many tireless reviews and critiques; the limitations indicate how much more I still have to learn from him.

I am grateful to the other members of my committee as well, Professors Patricia Kendall and Gaye Tuchman. They were extremely encouraging and supportive throughout. When I presented the draft to them, they reviewed it in what must have been record time and their comments were very helpful.

This endeavor would not have been possible without all of the financial assistance I mentioned above. But I must single out the meaning of applying

for and receiving the Whitney M. Young, Jr. Academic Fellowship. The application process forced me to clarify my professional career aspirations as a social scientist and to articulate the contributions to society that I want to make in the tradition of the late Whitney M. Young, Jr. Receiving the fellowship indicated the Foundation's faith in my commitment to positive social change and placed before me a beacon that I intend to be guided by throughout all the spheres of my life.

What other good fortune can one have beyond an exceptional mentor, a supportive committee, and the push forward of a prestigious foundation award? I have been blessed with the constant encouragement and moral support of family and friends. My mother lived to know of my receipt of the Whitney M. Young Fellowship and of my intent to earn a Ph.D. I remember with great fondness how happy the news made her; she told everyone in the nursing home where she was a patient at the time. After my mother's death, my aunt picked up the banner and bragged about me to whoever would listen.

I have also had the love of many friends. I recall with particular feeling the night in July, 1978, when more than a hundred of my friends gathered to wish me well in this undertaking. Little did I realize then how often I would flash back to that

occasion for sustenance when the temptation to quit reared its ugly head.

On a more intimate basis, a smaller group of friends regularly provided a level of moral support that I find difficult to characterize. It is this group--especially Lenny, Junius, Miles, Bernice, Gail, Ruth, Lorraine--that I plagued with my fears, uncertainties, and talk of quitting. It was this group which in unbridled fashion, but in the context of love and concern, chastised me and redirected my course many times. In our final exchange--just about two weeks before his death, my friend Lenny extracted my promise to finish. I remain awed by his selflessness and by the depth of his caring.

To conclude the telling of this epoch, I gratefully acknowledge the expert assistance I received from R.L. Norman in the numerous computer-related aspects of this work and from Nancy Smith for her transcription, typing, and editorial services for nearly a year. This final manuscript was expertly prepared by Debbie Bell.

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CHAPTER I

DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM: PUBLIC WELFARE AND THE PRESS

Introduction

The year is 1972. Some New York Times headlines read: "Sharp Welfare Rise Predicted in City" (1/7/72); "State Cites More Relief Cases" (7/26/72); "State Registers Welfare Decline, Its First In Years" (12/14/72). The leading popular paper, The New York Daily News, runs similar headlines: "Biggest Relief Roll Hike in Year" (1/11/72); "Budget Shows 1 in 6 Will Get Relief in 1973" (1/7/72). Editorials ask rhetorically, "Is Welfare Out of Control?" (Times: 3/14/72) or exclaim that the country is "Running Out Of Taxpayers" (News: 5/9/72). It is a presidential election year, the political fire is fueled, and controversy about welfare abounds; so much so that the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare releases a pamphlet entitled, "Welfare Myths vs. Facts," that seeks to dispel the common stereotypes about recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

The term, welfare, as I use it, incorporates only those government programs which ostensibly exist as responses to the needs of poor people (Axinn and Levin, 1975)

--the objects of the headlines cited. Welfare for the poor consists of the cash transfer programs, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Supplemental Security Income (SSI) which covers the aged, blind, and disabled who are destitute, and General Assistance for unattached people who are supposedly employable, and two-parent families who, despite earnings or other income, cannot meet their financial needs; such in-kind transfers as Foodstamps, and, the direct service program, Medicaid. To qualify for aid from any of these welfare programs requires proving the inability to support oneself financially. Successful negotiation of their means tests is, in effect, tantamount to admitting personal failure in the economic, family, and social spheres.

In a 1972 Op Ed article in the New York Times, former Chief Justice Earl Warren observed that the term welfare takes on a sinister meaning only when it is applied to the unfortunate. The word itself is not evil; in fact, it is contained in the Preamble to the Constitution. The negative connotation given to the term welfare is such that it is not used when "hundreds of millions of dollars are given to bankrupt railroads, failing defense manufacturers, shipping interests and the like" (Times, May 13, 1972).

Since the last half of the 1960s, welfare has been a much discussed topic in both the popular and scholarly literature. As a domestic policy issue, it has been the

object of numerous attempts at legislative reform on the federal level. Persons with widely disparate political philosophies agree that the current welfare system is a "mess" and in need of "reform." But beyond that superficial assessment there is rarely consensus on an appropriate policy prescription. Instead, a wide range of problems are debated in discussions of the "welfare mess," numerous partisan measures are advanced as the appropriate correctives, and in the end, little substantive change emerges.

One observer suggests that "at the heart of the current debate over welfare reform is a basic disagreement over what the problem is. This disagreement about the nature of the problem "arises out of the basic tension that exists among the values that undergird the assistance system..." (Salamon, 1977:153) The basic split is seen as being over whether the objective of welfare reform should be the reduction of poverty or the reduction of welfare. This conceptual dichotomy forms the basis of my examination of welfare as a media topic.

The decade spanning 1965 to the mid-1970s witnessed major increases in the expenditures for federal and state public assistance programs due to what some called a phenomenal growth in the welfare rolls, especially of the AFDC program. By 1972, national expenditures for public assistance cash transfers, foodstamps, and Medicaid exceeded \$20 billion dollars, compared to the \$5.3 billion spent in 1965 (Plotnick and Skidmore, 1975). The size of the AFDC

rolls went from 4.7 million recipients at the close of 1966 to 11.5 million in 1976. Although the increase in dollar expenditures must consider the effect of inflation, the absolute increase in the number of welfare recipients adds credence to the "phenomenal growth" characterization.

Despite the 1962 Amendments to the Social Security Act which recommended social work counseling and rehabilitation as the cures for welfare dependency, the rolls increased. Similarly, the 1967 Amendments with their mandates for compulsory work or vocational training for welfare recipients did not stem the rising rolls.

I look next at the impact of this growth in welfare on New York City.

The Local Scene:
Welfare in New York City During the 1970s

Data compiled by Campbell and Bendix (1977) of the Urban Institute provide an overview of the welfare situation in each state during the mid-1970s. When compared to most other states and large metropolitan areas, New York is an area with a very large welfare population; high benefits are paid; ineligibility and overpayments are extensive; its federal reimbursement rate for welfare costs is one of the lowest; most of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) benefits go to children born out of wedlock and their mothers who have been deserted by

the children's fathers; and very few AFDC recipients are employed. The following profile emerges from the Urban Institute data. During the middle of the 1970s, New York was second only to California in the average number of AFDC cases in the state. With more than 371,000 cases, the New York average was nearly five and one-half times greater than the national average. New York City accounted for approximately 68 percent of the state's AFDC caseload. During the same period New York had more General Assistance recipients than any other state. General Assistance (known as Home Relief in New York) is the category of welfare that applies to recipients who are deemed employable and who do not meet the qualifications for AFDC. The critical point with General Assistance is that the federal government does not contribute to it. All costs are borne by the state and/or local government.

Another indication of the size of the New York welfare population can be found in the number of recipients per 1000 population. For the January to June, 1976 period, there were 68.2 AFDC recipients and 13.35 General Assistance recipients per 1000 population. Compared to the rest of the country, the AFDC figure is about one and one-half times greater than the national average, while the General Assistance figure is more than three times greater. The concentration of AFDC recipients is even greater within New York City; in 1976, there were 110.0 recipients per

1000 population.

In terms of the benefits paid to AFDC recipients, both New York State and New York City exceed the national average. At the state level, New York's average monthly cash benefit of \$399.32 per case during the first half of 1976 was the highest of any state. Even though a lower average prevailed in New York City, \$345.19, this amount is more than one and one-third times greater than that paid by other large metropolitan counties.

The fiscal impact of AFDC on New York State and New York City can be seen from several statistics. During the same 1976 time period there were 13 states receiving the minimum federal reimbursement rate, 50 percent, toward AFDC costs. New York was one of them. Further, there were eleven states that required local governments to share the AFDC costs. Again, New York was one such state.

Payments to ineligible and overpayments to eligible recipients are other areas in which New York stood apart from other states. During the first half of 1976, nearly 30 percent of New York's AFDC cases were ineligible, or eligible but overpaid. This percentage was almost one and three-quarters greater than the national average, and was exceeded only by four states. Another statistic which expresses the impact of these phenomena is found in the fact that 13 percent of New York's total AFDC payments were made to ineligible or eligible but overpaid cases.

These statistics varied widely depending on the source, and fueled acrimonious debate throughout the decade.

New York compared unfavorably with the rest of the states in terms of desertion of fathers and out-of-wedlock pregnancies being probable causes for families' receipt of AFDC.

In a sample of the state's AFDC cases, more than three-fourths (77.5%) of the fathers were not present in the home for reasons other than legal separation or divorce, i.e., due to the parents being unmarried or to desertion of the father. This figure was nearly one and one-third times greater than the national average, and it was equalled or exceeded in only seven states.

Another statistic which adds to the welfare controversy involves work among New York's AFDC recipients. In 1976, 8.5 percent of the state's AFDC cases earned some income. The national average was more than twice New York's percentage, and only one state had fewer AFDC cases with earned income.

Cunningham (1976) ranked states on such dimensions as the leniency or restrictiveness of welfare regulations, the amount of verification required of applicants, and the complexity of the application procedures. On the continuum which measures leniency and restrictiveness, New York scored four points closer to the lenient end than did the national average. On the verification continuum,

New York required a little more verification than the average state. And on the complexity scale, New York was only one point away from being among the states with the most complex application procedures.

For New York, Cunningham's measurements suggest on the one hand that New York wants to be viewed as progressive and humane in the area of welfare provision, but on the other hand, that applying for aid presents a demanding and complex test of perseverance. This contradiction may well stem from the competing perspectives or theories concerning the nature and causes of poverty that are addressed next.

Competing Perspectives on Poverty and Welfare

George and Wilding (1976) suggest that social problems, like persistent poverty, are the products of definition. To the extent that the definers advance a functionalist perspective:

the disorganization-deviant view of social problems has dominated social science literature. Many social problems are seen as having little relationship with economic or political inequality and others as having none. Thus, their solution is not seen to be directly opposed to vested economic interests in society... no questions are asked about the existing social and economic systems which may be fundamentally connected with the prevalence of social problems... The strong appeal of the disorganization-deviant view of social problems... stems from its ability to appear humane, constructive, and promising without at the same time posing any real threat to the status quo (George and Wilding, 1976:6).

A review of poverty research reveals that considerable attention is given to describing the poor as if poverty were the consequence of individual characteristics. This is not an accident, but rather an instance of social research reflecting the prevailing ideology which is reluctant to view poverty as a structural consequence of a capitalist society (Piven, 1974; Wachtel, 1974). Instead, the attributes which characterize poor people are seen as the causes of poverty; the poor can then be blamed for their own poverty.

Wachtel (1974) distinguishes three political-economic perspectives of poverty--conservative, liberal, and radical. The conservative view presumes that the causes of poverty can be found in some individual characteristics over which the individual exercises control. The workings of the capitalist labor market are seen as sufficient to provide mobility if the principles of rugged individualism and the work ethic are adhered to. The proper economic role of the state, from this perspective, is to leave things alone as far as the poor are concerned. Any interference of the state should be only for the purpose of protecting the basic institutions of capitalism.

Writing at the beginning of the 1970s, Wachtel sees the dominant perspective on poverty as that of the liberals. This perspective gives some recognition to the institutional causes of poverty and to the concept of

class. However, systemic change is not the course of action recommended for alleviating poverty, even though this view rejects the exclusive reliance upon the market to foster mobility. Instead, the use of government to equalize opportunities within the market is the primary approach of the liberals. Coupled with this is the reliance upon government to help people cope with their poverty status by providing direct income transfers, or welfare as it is currently known.

Gil (1976b:153) acknowledges that there are "important differences" between the conservative and liberal positions, but asserts that each:

...serve[s] a common function, to wit, to preserve the capitalist state, and the inequalities, privileges, and deprivations intrinsic to its social, economic, and political dynamics and system of provision. Whether, following the conservative position, dysfunctional aspects of capitalism are denied and attributed to the victims, or whether, in accordance with the liberal position, massive governmental programs for ameliorative intervention are devised, conservatives and liberals alike are committed to maintain the status quo, and their ideologies are conducive to the defense, legitimation, and perpetuation of capitalism.

The third, or radical, perspective sees poverty resulting from the normal functioning of the principal institutional arrangements of capitalism--i.e., labor markets, class divisions, and the state. The starting point for this radical view is the relationship between class status and income inequality. This view emphasizes that the nature of one's relationship to the means of production

affects one's chances of being poor. The radical perspective sees the labor market as the causal agent of poverty. Wachtel (1974) points out that contrary to conventional thinking, nearly all poor people are or have been connected with the labor market, therefore earning their poverty. The possession of capital in addition to labor power lessens one's chances for poverty. In other words, as income rises from low to high, the proportion of income derived from labor earnings is likely to decrease.

The function of the state in a capitalist society, as seen by the radical theorists, is primarily one of system maintenance. This function coincides with the objectives of the dominant class. Within this objective there is room for a variety of short run activities of a defensive nature that are minor concessions to groups perceived to be threatening to the status quo. But substantive social change, for adherents of the radical view, requires a new value system, one that eschews "the prevailing non-egalitarian, ruggedly individualistic, alienating and, in many respects, oppressive social and economic order." (Gil, 1976b:187)

Furniss and Tilton (1977) also discuss poverty and the provision of welfare in the context of American capitalism. Their analysis leads them to conclude that poverty persists in American society because there has been no concerted effort to relieve it. Beyond welfare's failure to

relieve poverty is an even greater deficiency of welfare in their view; that is, the existing system "fails even to trifle with the structural inequalities and class privileges of the society." (Furniss and Tilton, 1977:183)

As Piven and Cloward argue, relief-giving is functional to the larger economic and political structure and as such is a secondary and supportive institution. Their essential premise is that the expansion and restriction of relief-giving varies with the political need to quell civil disorder, or the economic need to enforce work in low wage jobs. Thus, "relief arrangements are ancillary to economic arrangements. Their chief function is to regulate labor..." (Piven and Cloward, 1971:3)

The failure of welfare to relieve poverty that Furniss and Tilton refer to is not difficult to understand once it is realized that to date the result of the competing perspectives on poverty is a welfare system that clearly rests on the classic liberal values of individualism, self-help, competition, and achievement. Welfare policies that conform to these values ensure the provision of minimum level benefits, obtainable under stringent, narrowly defined conditions, carrying the stigma of dependency, and thus, reinforcing the very problems the welfare policies are supposed to relieve.

The persistence of the welfare status quo reflects the intractable nature of these key social values which

undergird capitalist ideology. Feagan (1972:931) notes that there is a "basic individualism which pervades the American value system," and requires that the individual be responsible for his or her own lot in life, particularly one's economic condition.

The key tenets of this emphasis on individualism are, according to Feagin (1972:931):

(1) that each individual American should work hard and strive to succeed in competition with others; (2) that those who work hard both should be, and in fact will be, rewarded with success; and (3) that economic success is the reward of individual virtue while economic failure (poverty) is an individual's own fault and reveals defect of character and lack of virtue.

That individualism is the central value inherent in this country's array of welfare programs is a key aspect of Galper's argument. The political philosophy of liberalism, which encompasses an emphasis on individualism, and the way in which the various welfare programs are designed and administered "operate in a symbiotic relationship of challenge to, but fundamental acceptance of, the values and structures of capitalism" (Galper, 1975:17).

He goes on to elaborate:

Welfare state interventions tend not to establish specific goals or outcomes in terms of social accomplishments, for example, amount of income redistributed or number of jobs created. Rather, welfare state programs are concerned with rehabilitating individuals, ...controlling individuals considered to be deviant... (Galper, 1975:32)

A corollary to individualism is the value placed on the work ethic. The work ethic, in part a product of

Calvinist influence on American society, evaluates an individual who cannot or refuses to work as something less than a human being. One observer suggests that the term "work ethic" is a misnomer. The actual ethic, as it has evolved, is more appropriately deemed a "job ethic," for work within this context "is defined in the market, producing tangible results, and serving an individual's material interest." (Miller, 1977:13) Regardless of terminology, however, the result is social compulsion to hold a job under the threat of being evaluated as less than a full-fledged member of society. The unemployed poor are often depicted as falling outside the "boundaries of citizenship." (Golding and Middleton, 1982)

In viewing welfare as a response to human need, the values of individualism and the work ethic collide with several others which are also thought to be cherished by the American populace generally--generosity and compassion. Hence, individualism and the work ethic are thought to push policy-makers and the public in the direction of restricting welfare, while, on the other hand, the values of compassion and generosity are pulling in the opposite direction, for expansion to meet the need for welfare.

To the extent that the objective of welfare reform has been reducing welfare instead of reducing poverty, it is understandable that major changes in the welfare system are difficult to obtain. This is not to suggest that

numerous, and to some extent substantial, changes have not occurred. Rather, it is the case that despite considerable change, some traditions of the 17th century English Poor Law have been retained. As Stein (1971:43) points out:

The traditions [which still remain] include repression, local financing and administration, a minimization of the amount of money spent on the poor, an emphasis on the work ethic, a distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor, and a stigma attached to those who are dependent on relief.

Public Attitudes Toward Welfare Policies and Recipients

Edelman (1977a) seeks an explanation for Americans' acceptance of large and chronic inequalities. He maintains that two patterns of beliefs embody the range of most peoples' thoughts about the causes of poverty.

One pattern defines the poor as responsible for their own plight and in need of control to compensate for their inadequacies, greed, lack of self-discipline, immorality, pathology, or criminal tendencies... Officials and economic elites responsible for keeping others dependent lean towards this view... An alternative recurring reaction to poverty defines the poor as victims of exploitative economic, social, and political institutions; people deprived by circumstances not by their personal defects... (Edelman, 1977a:6).

Edelman believes that everyone learns both perspectives but depending on a person's social status, one or the other is likely to be predominant. "The availability of both views makes possible a wide spectrum of ambivalent postures for each individual, and a similarly large set

of contradictions in political rhetoric and in public policy." (Edelman, 1977a:7)

The pattern that defines the poor as responsible for their own circumstances is thought by Edelman to be the dominant one since not only the economic elites but also large proportions of the working class and of the poor themselves accept this belief pattern. The result is that economic and political institutions are exonerated from responsibility while the efforts of government authorities to change poor peoples' attitudes and behavior are legitimized.

The results of a number of public opinion polls provide evidence that welfare policy is the source of a good deal of ambivalence for the public. For example, several points emerge from Erskine's (1975) review of the polls conducted from 1935 to 1974 having to do with government's responsibility for providing welfare aid. When poll questions are phrased in very general terms, sizable majorities of respondents consistently favor the notion that government should provide for those who cannot do so for themselves. Unemployment insurance and guaranteed work programs are also usually favored by a majority of respondents. On the other hand, those questions which elicit attitudes about government's responsibility to provide a guaranteed income are most often answered negatively by sizable majorities.

The push and pull of conflicting values is evident in the results of other public opinion polls which measure attitudes towards welfare policies, programs, and recipients. To ameliorate this conflict between values, it appears that the American public uses the notion of "deserving" and "undeserving" in relation to poor people, and that this evaluation is based on the person's relationship to the workforce. Jaffe (1977:1) puts it this way:

Americans draw a sharp distinction between persons who are poor and persons who are on welfare. By "poor," Americans apparently mean fellow citizens disabled by age or physical infirmity, hardworking but low paid heads of families, the unemployed who are diligently looking for work and willing to take any job, and conscientious widows. Welfare recipients are viewed as unworthy.

An example of this is found in the results of Feagin's (1972) 1969 sample survey of Americans to determine their attitudes to welfare programs and recipients. On four out of seven measures, "a majority [of the respondents] took an unequivocal anti-welfare position, and at least four out of ten were anti-welfare in their responses to the other three items." (Feagin, 1972:922) The stereotypes the respondents agreed with were: too many welfare recipients are getting aid who should be working; many recipients are dishonest about their need for aid; women have out-of-wedlock children to increase their allotment; and recipients move from one state to another according to welfare benefit levels.

The results of a poll cited by Alston and Dean (1972:18) support Jaffe's point. Regardless of whether respondents thought that people were receiving welfare due to lack of their own efforts or because of social circumstances, 88 percent of the first group and 66 percent of the second answered that most or some welfare recipients were receiving relief for dishonest reasons. Even those who point to the social structure as the source of poverty attribute dishonesty and fraud to welfare recipients by a large margin.

The attitudes of the British public seem to parallel those of Americans. Evidence of this is reported in Golding and Middleton's (1982) book, Images of Welfare: Press and Public Attitudes to Poverty. After the emergence of a spate of anti-welfare sentiment in the British media, they surveyed residents in two cities in 1977 and focused on the respondents' "knowledge of welfare benefits; attitudes to benefits; attitudes to the cost of welfare; attitudes to the social effects of welfare; and opinions about claimants." (1982:159). Generally their findings indicate that the British have a rather sketchy and superficial understanding of benefits, but nevertheless believe they are too high and too easily attainable. Additionally, the prevalent view is that welfare is costing too much and that the high cost is particularly attributable to an inefficient welfare bureaucracy. Further, the receipt

of welfare is thought to make people lazy and to corrode the work ethic.

Of particular interest are these authors' findings which show an "association between class and attitudes to welfare." They conclude that "the most striking finding is the overall virulence and nature of hostility to welfare claimants. It is strongest among the low paid and unskilled--those most threatened by economic gloom and looming unemployment" (Golding and Middleton, 1982: 178).

The most negatively perceived group within the universe of American welfare recipients are those receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). At one level these recipients are seen as young and able-bodied and therefore capable of finding and holding work. On another level, moral considerations are thought to come into play. There is the illusion of illicit sex which is thought to result in the receipt of welfare. Race is also thought to enter into the negative equation since a large proportion of AFDC recipients are members of minority groups (Miller, 1977). Because of the connotation that AFDC recipients are "undeserving," it is probably the AFDC program which most people are referring to when they use the term "welfare."

Miller (1977) observes that the political unpopularity of welfare in this country is to some measure a

product of the changing characteristics of the recipient population. When the programs were first started in the 1930s, those benefiting were "average Americans," i.e., hardworking majority group families "down on their luck." However, as the decades have elapsed, welfare is no longer seen to apply to the "average" citizen and his family. Instead, in the opinion of Lerman and Skidmore (1977:2) "welfare's unpopularity with the public seems to stem from beliefs that the system rewards the wrong behavior and the wrong people, and that the bureaucratic apparatus which has crystalized around welfare is all but unjustifiable." As evidence for their position these authors cite essentially the same survey results from Feagin's (1972) study that I mentioned earlier.

Scholars' Views of Welfare Policies and Recipients

Results of public opinion polls are not the only place to find the views toward welfare recipients and programs that are described above. The writings of observers of the American scene and of academics display some of the same views.

An 1835 work of Alexis de Tocqueville, recently reprinted, shows how he felt about public welfare and its recipients: "Any measure which establishes legal charity on a permanent basis and gives it an administrative form thereby creates an idle and lazy class living at the expense

of the industrial and working class" (1983:113).

Tocqueville believed that all human beings had a natural propensity for idleness and that universal access to public charity would destroy the incentive to work. In his view, the provision of aid would cause every conceivable problem to crop up in society and culminate by bringing about a violent revolution in the state:

when the number of those who receive alms will have become as large as those who give it, and the indigent no longer being able to take from the impoverished rich the means of providing for his needs, will find it easier to plunder them of all their property at one stroke than to ask for their help (Tocqueville, 1983:118-119).

Two articles published recently in The Public Interest, a prestigious social policy journal, summarize an increasingly prevalent viewpoint. In addition to arguing that the expansion of social welfare programs during the late 1960s and 1970s was ineffective in reducing poverty, Murray (1982:11) states that the program "actually made matters worse by emasculating the work ethic and creating work disincentives as people became less inclined to take low-paying jobs, hold onto them, and use them to get out of poverty [thus becoming] dependent on government assistance." In Murray's view there is also no challenge to the conservatives' hypothesis that the existence of welfare programs and their expansion during the 1960s and 1970s led to the disintegration of low income families.

An article by Mead (1982) makes the same point. He lays out his argument this way. Welfare programs are supposed to have the goal of integrating the disadvantaged populations into the mainstream of society, but they have failed to achieve this. The reason for the failure, he notes, is that "the behavioral aspect of disadvantage... has not been solved and may be even getting worse.... Their [the lower class'] problem is now more a moral one than an economic one, and so is the challenge facing the welfare state." (Mead, 1982:19) The biggest change that the existence of welfare has brought about, in Mead's opinion, is the unwillingness of disadvantaged workers to accept the jobs they are able to get; preferring instead to shift from job to job, drop out and enter the underground or illegal economy where earnings are higher, or depend on welfare.

In sum, public opinion about welfare, as well as some scholarly writings on the subject, are characterized by a generally negative perspective. More often than not, welfare policy is seen as "too liberal," assistance is said to be "too readily available," and thus, "destructive to the work ethic," recipients get "too much aid," allowing fathers to "easily shirk the responsibility of caring for their children," and on, and on. Rarely does one hear that help is "too hard to get," that the benefits are "too miserly," that recipients are "stigmatized and

demeaned" by the welfare system, or that "poverty for many is an inevitable result of our economic order."

The Agenda-Setting Function of the Press

There is a relationship between the media, public opinion, and the policy making process. Cobb and Elder (1981:392) assert that "by selectively directing attention to aspects of [the] environment, the media serves not only as conduits for demands but as active agents in stimulating, filtering, and structuring the inputs of the policy process." Out of choice and necessity, the public depends on the media for accounts of phenomena that cannot be learned from personal experience and for knowledge enhancement. (Zukin, 1981)

The presentations selected for airing by the media, in effect, make a statement beyond their actual content by focusing our attention on some topics to the exclusion of others, thus implying their importance. This agenda-setting role of the media is thought to influence what the public and the policymakers think about. The result is possibly some degree of convergence between the issue agendas of the media and those of interested segments of the general public and some policymaking bodies.

After studying the images of welfare in the British press, Golding and Middleton (1982) offer some

interpretations of this medium's role in the creation and administration of welfare policy. Briefly stated, their conclusion is that for a given topic like welfare, the press functions as an agenda-setter--framing public debate by according differential importance to some issues at the expense of others. The media are the "secondary definers" of poverty and welfare. The welfare issues and events are not invented by the media, but the "form and vocabulary" used to present them are.

... [T]he media divert attention to a limited range of the available metaphors and explanations ... The...role of the media is to connect contemporary material experiences and anxieties with particular cultural legacies. A major mechanism for this is through the resurrection of 'social types' or characters. The media act as directors of a continuous morality play reasserting the core elements of dominant social values by their personification in the daily drama of media output (Golding and Middleton, 1982: 237;238).

The welfare agenda that I expect the American press to set is framed by the consensual paradigm--a concept that is developed in the next chapter. Suffice it to say here that the paradigm, emanating from, and constrained by capitalist ideology and values, "is the lens through which reality is seen: it focuses on certain events, it obscures or obfuscates others, it leads to certain questions being asked and others being ignored" (Cohen and Young, 1981: 164).

The Research Problem

Like other social policies, welfare is best understood if viewed within what Gilbert and Specht (1974:29) refer to as a benefit-allocation framework: "...social welfare policies are seen as choices among principles or guidelines to determine what benefits are to be offered to whom, how these benefits are to be delivered, and how they are to be financed." When it comes to welfare, the benefits which are ultimately allocated and who receives them, generally rest on a particular set of social values and assumptions about the causes of poverty that are closely attuned to the American economic order. As Gil (1976b:27) states, "The dominant beliefs, values, and ideologies of a society, and the customs and traditions derived from them, exert a significant influence on all decisions concerning the ...key processes of social policies."

If one wishes to probe the ideological and value dimensions of welfare policies and programs, and their underlying assumptions about the causes and nature of poverty, how might it be done? I use the press as a vehicle to explore these concerns.

Some observers suggest that most people form their opinion of welfare recipients based upon the picture presented by the mass media (Dedinsky, 1977; Golding

and Middleton, 1982). Few non-welfare persons have the chance or the inclination to discover firsthand what life under the welfare system is like. Therefore, the public assimilates its views of most welfare programs and recipients vicariously through the media. If they are readers of either of New York City's major newspapers, what would they learn?

My basic premise is that the press perpetuates capitalist ideology and values by advancing a consensual view of the world that closes out alternative perspectives. I anticipate that media presentations will view welfare policies and recipients negatively, since to do otherwise would run counter to the value system and ideology of a capitalist society.

I examine how the New York press presents welfare issues to the public and the extent to which newspapers' presentations reflect American ideology and values. From a content analysis of New York City's two major dailies, one representing the elite press and the other having the largest circulation in the country, the answers to six broad questions are sought:

- 1) What issues pertaining to welfare policy, programs, and recipients are reported on most frequently?
- 2) Are there particular issues that receive significantly more newsplay than others?

- 3) What is the effect of politics on news about welfare?
- 4) Are welfare policies, programs, and recipients systematically portrayed in a particular light?
- 5) On what sources does the press rely most frequently for its welfare-related information?
- 6) Do welfare-related stories provide information about the economic and political determinants of poverty?

The answers to these questions are used to make inferences about the papers' projection of values and ideology which are consonant with those contained in the consensual paradigm.

The size and other characteristics of the welfare caseload in New York at the start of the 1970s, as well as certain aspects of administration, make the state, and New York City in particular, a place where welfare is not only likely to be discussed, but also the source of much controversy. My underlying thesis suggests that newspapers which are disparate in political orientation and audience, as the Times and News are, will still tend to be similar in their editorial opinion and news treatment of welfare-related topics due to the yoke of the consensual view to which they adhere.

Murdock and Golding (1979:12) argue that the sociological study of mass communications "should derive

from, and feed into, the continuing debate on the nature and persistence of class stratification." They add:

...media sociology should address itself to the central problem of explaining how radical inequalities in the distribution of rewards come to be presented as natural and inevitable and are understood as such by those who benefit least from this distribution. In short...the sociology of mass communications should be incorporated into the wider study of stratification and legitimation.

By using a segment of the media--the major representatives of the New York press--as a vehicle for examining the nature and prevalence of a particular set of views on poverty and welfare, this study falls within the Murdock-Golding challenge.

To the extent that this research describes newspaper content pertaining to selected welfare topics and explicates the ideological and value content of that coverage, it will contribute jointly to the sociology of mass communications and to an understanding of American social welfare policy.

CHAPTER II

THE MEDIA, IDEOLOGY, AND VALUES:
RELEVANT THEORY AND RESEARCHNewsmaking As A Sociological Concern

The sociology of news is interested in the institutional and ideological pressures that shape the performance of the press; the influence that social structure has on the content of news; the impact of social stratification on the selection of particular information as news. In short, the sociologist is concerned with why one body of ideas is promulgated, becoming news, over another set.

(Roscho, 1975) Two questions help narrow this theoretic inquiry: "1. How do the relationships the press maintains with other institutions determine what it defines as news, where it seeks news, and how it presents news? 2. How is the news content of the American press shaped by the dominant values of American society?" (Roscho, 1975:3)

Following the focus of these questions takes us into the sociological realms that Murdock and Golding (1979) argue are appropriate for media sociology. As mentioned, these authors argue for a strong connection between media sociology and stratification theory and point to "the extraordinary underdevelopment of thought

on the role of mass communications in reproducing class relations" (Murdock and Golding, 1979:14). In the same article, these authors bemoan the dearth of concern about the ideological character of media outputs, and declare that the field "lack[s] a comprehensive and detailed map of the way in which class stratification is presented and explained in the contemporary mass media (p. 36). Fortunately, these gaps no longer exist as the literature covered in this chapter demonstrates.

I divide the literature review into two parts. The first develops the thesis that news is ideological and describes the key ingredients and consequences of this phenomenon. The second section explores several aspects of the newsmaking process and seeks to explain the connection between the organizational structure and practices of newswork and the ideological character of media presentations.

News As Ideology: The Consensual Paradigm

The recent works of several people (Young, 1981; Hall et al, 1981; and Morley, 1981) develop a conceptual framework which they call consensual paradigm theory, to explain the media's role as a major carrier of ideology. Essentially, this model states that the media promote a consensual view of the world by providing a context for

understanding news events that is based on a narrow set of assumptions. Society is represented "as if there are no major cultural or economic breaks, no major conflicts of interest between classes and groups" (Hall et al, 1981:338). Media presentations that are couched in this consensual construct are ideological because the construct further assumes "that there is, basically, only one perspective on events; that provided by...the central value system" (Hall et al, 1981:338). The critical result is an expanded two-pronged role for the media:

The media define for the majority of the population what significant events are taking place, but, also, they offer powerful interpretations of how to understand these events (Hall et al, 1981:340; emphasis in the original).

Presenting news within a consensual framework reinforces preconceived notions of social order, and conceptions of 'normal' and 'deviant' (Cohen and Young, 1981). The world is divided into a majority of people who are normal and in possession of free will and a deviant minority who are controlled by forces beyond themselves. Even though a portion of the news is about the atypical or deviant case, that which violates the consensual paradigm, the paradigm is actually strengthened since it is the norm against which the violation is contrasted. The reason for this is that the mainstay of the consensual paradigm is journalists' heavy reliance on official or institutional sources for the basic facts and interpretations

that ultimately become news. These are the very sources who are the "primary definers" of a situation; they establish the "interpretative framework," and as Hall and his colleagues add, "the primary definition sets the limit for all subsequent discussion by framing what the problem is" (Hall et al, 1981:342; emphasis in the original). Once set, the primary framework is especially hard to change because challengers must stay within its boundaries or be ruled irrelevant and they are kept on the defensive by having to argue against the prevailing perspective.

At a higher level of abstraction the concept of hegemony is operative here. Miliband (1969:180) repeats G.A. Williams' definition of the term:

...the concept of hegemony [is] an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotations.

Hegemony does not just happen and is never fully assured. Instead, through the workings of societal agents like the media, the family, or the educational system, a degree of hegemony is accomplished, but continual reinforcement is necessary (Hall, 1979).

In Mueller's (1973:101-102) words, "Ideologies are... integrated belief systems which provide explanations for political reality and establish the collective goals

of a class or group, and in the case of a dominant ideology, of society at large." The essential purpose of an ideology is to promote a particular world view, especially of social groups and social classes. Ideology serves as the prism through which various aspects of reality are refracted. As Golding (1981:80) puts it, "the key elements of any ruling ideology are the undesirability of change, and its impossibility; all is for the best and change would do more harm than good, even if it were possible." In the context of our concerns, a translation of Golding's point into the ideology surrounding poverty and welfare would suggest that the American economic system is in fine working order, providing all strata an equal opportunity in the marketplace, except of course, that deviant segment of society which is too work-shy and lazy, or too profligate to succeed.

The use of the consensual paradigm by the media to explain the world to their audiences promotes the economic, social and political arrangements of capitalist society. The result is what Young calls an "ideological inversion." That is, since news is usually about deviants or threats to consensus, when problems in capitalist society are identified, the solutions are viewed in terms of the deviance or threat. "The problems endemic to capitalism become the blemishes and the solution to the malaise is to remove the blemishes, not to change the

system" (Young, 1981:403).

Golding partially attributes the maintenance of stability in all industrial societies, despite the existence of gross disparities in wealth, power, status, and opportunity, to the ideological nature of news. He points out that beyond mere stability, it is usually the case that large majorities of those persons who are worst off defend the distributive system. "(T)he apparatus of cultural manufacture and distribution is such as to provide explanations, symbols, and rhetoric which make the social order appear both inevitable and just" (Golding, 1981:63). Golding hastens to add that the overt intention of news is not deception or manipulation; rather, the ideological character of news is determined by "routine production procedures in newsrooms and the beliefs and conventions which support them" (p. 63). Later sections include theoretical formulations which elaborate on this theme.

Consensual paradigm theory suggests that there is very little significant variation either within media types or between media types. This is not to say there are no differences between sources of news. As Young (1981:398) argues, "it is possible for a particular deviant action to be reported differently by various news sources, yet for the notion of absolute consensual standards to be untarnished." As a result:

The public is faced with a constant consensual barrage supportive of capitalism wherein the limited alternatives of available news sources present only variation within a theme: an illusory choice, where the media whether high-brow or lowbrow, visual or literary, parade the same socio-political frame of reference and where the individual is enveloped throughout his or her life with a varied social control apparatus carrying an identical message. (Young, 1981:399)

Miliband (1969:220) advances a similar view about the role of the mass media when he describes them as "crucial elements in the legitimation of capitalist society." He offers several reasons for the media's support of prevailing economic, political and social orders. First, although journalists and their editors exercise considerable autonomy, the conservative ideology of the owners is likely to seep downward and have some impact. Second, advertisers are thought to be a source of conformist pressure on the media. Miliband does not contend that advertisers are likely to dictate to newspapers what they should or should not print. But he does argue that because newspapers' viability depends on advertising, they are likely to be treated gingerly. Finally, the media's conformist stance is fostered by government. Government often attempts to manage news by supplying the media with official explanations of one policy or another that are biased and apologetic in character. It will become apparent in later sections that Miliband probably makes too much of his first two reasons for the consensual influence of the media, and much too little of the third.

Miliband quickly concedes that there are numerous differences in news presentations of occurrences, but still concludes that a conformist outlook is the usual perspective promoted by the media. Consensus, or conformity, is fostered, "not by the total suppression of dissent, but by the presentation of views which fall outside the consensus as curious heresies, or, even more effectively, by treating them as irrelevant eccentricities, which serious and reasonable people may dismiss as of no consequence" (Miliband, 1969:238).

The Agenda-Setting Hypothesis

The agenda-setting concept can be viewed as a refinement or narrowing of the consensual paradigm. The core of the concept is found in the statement that agenda-setting "implies a relationship between the relative emphasis given by the media to various topics, and the degree of salience these topics have for the general public" (Beniger, 1978:444). In essence, the media are thought to set the agenda for their audiences in the way editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters choose and display news (McCombs and Shaw, 1972).

Those who put forth the agenda-setting hypothesis do not claim that the media are the only influence on the public's deciding which issues to think about. Nor is it

claimed that the media necessarily determine the direction of opinion on issues, i.e., for, against, or neutral (McCombs, 1981). No doubt "determining direction" of public opinion is too strong a contention, but we would argue that "influencing direction" is not. The constraints on knowledge that media's use of the consensual paradigm favors results in the presentation of few opposing viewpoints. If a topic is generally couched in one perspective, the likelihood of its being defined within those parameters by the public is certainly enhanced.

Empirical Evidence of Agenda-Setting

The primary focus of agenda-setting research has been on the role played by the media in shaping the public's political consciousness. The 1972 study of McCombs and Shaw investigates the agenda-setting capacity of the media, newspapers, TV and magazines, used by a sample of Chapel Hill, North Carolina residents. The research aims at "matching what Chapel Hill voters said were key issues of the 1968 campaign with the actual content of the mass media used by voters during the campaign" (McCombs and Shaw, 1972:177). The study finds an extremely high positive correlation between the issues given the most coverage in the media and the respondents' assessment of the important issues. The authors conclude that "the media appear to have exerted a considerable impact on voters'

judgments of what they considered the major issues of the campaign..." (McCombs and Shaw, 1972:180).

Benton and Frazier's 1976 research tests the relative efficacy of newspapers and television as agenda-setters. Additionally, these researchers examine the extent to which users of each media type, newspapers and television, retain different levels of information about the economy as an issue: (1) awareness of the general issue; (2) awareness of specific causes or proposed solutions to problems associated with the general issue of the economy; and (3) knowledge of pro and con rationales associated with the causes or proposed solutions to problems. Residents of Minneapolis, Minnesota, were surveyed and a content analysis of media coverage of economic issues was carried out. Benton and Frazier's findings indicate that newspapers, but not television, appear to influence information holding at levels two and three. That is, the respondents who rely more heavily on newspapers are more likely to exhibit an awareness of proposed solutions and specific knowledge about proposals pertaining to the issue of the economy.

Another test of the relative strength of newspapers and television as agenda setters was conducted by Palmgreen and Clarke (1977). They expected to find that newspapers would be the stronger agenda-setter regardless of whether the issues were local or national ones. A sample

of respondents in Toledo, Ohio, was interviewed and asked to name problems or issues that faced the nation or Toledo which they thought the federal government in Washington or the local government should try to solve. A content analysis of Toledo's newspapers and television coverage of 55 issues was conducted.

Contrary to their expectation, Palmgreen and Clarke's findings indicate that television is a stronger agenda-setter when it comes to national level issues, while newspapers are the major agenda-setters on local issues.

Later research by Clarke and Fredin (1978) indicates that the use of newspapers is more strongly correlated with political reasoning than is use of television. Their results, based on a nationwide sample, indicates that newspapers are superior to television as "agents of information to help people identify assets and liabilities of important political contenders [senatorial candidates]" (Clarke and Fredin, 1978:156).

A study conducted by Atwood, Sohn and Sohn (1978) examines how much newspapers set the agenda for community discussion. Using a small southern Illinois city that had no local television station, they used methods of content analysis to examine the daily newspaper and also interviewed a sample of residents. Statistically significant correlations were found between the newspaper's

content and the issues discussed by the respondents.

Research done by Gilberg, et al (1980) addresses a question raised earlier by McCombs. That is, "whether the media themselves really set the agenda or simply reflect the agenda set by their information sources" (Gilberg et al, 1980:585). Gilberg and his colleagues studied whether or not the State of the Union address given by President Carter in 1978 influenced the subsequent media agenda or whether the media influenced the president's address. A content analysis of the president's address established that it dealt with eight issues. The number of news stories pertaining to these eight issues were identified in two newspapers, the Washington Post and the New York Times, as well as in news broadcasts of the three major networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC, for four-week periods before and after the president's address. Contrary to the researchers' expectations, their findings indicate that the president's address was influenced by the media's agenda rather than vice versa. The correlations between the media's pre-speech agenda and the president's agenda were stronger in all cases than those between the post-speech media agenda and the president's address. A question remains, however, as to the antecedents of the media's agenda.

Recent work by an interdisciplinary team at the Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research focuses on

a broader perspective of agenda-setting and makes significant strides in testing the causal link between a media report of an issue and the salience of that issue among the general public, government elites, and special interest leaders, and its impact on public policy (Cook et al, 1983). In terms of the influence of the media on the general public, their research methods were sufficiently rigorous to support the conclusion "that watching the target program [on television] influenced public views of issue importance..." (Cook et al, 1983:25). Government officials were also influenced, but the interest group leaders were not, probably because the issue was already important to them. There was an impact on policy, but not because the program was aired on television. Rather, Cook and her colleagues found the determining factor to be the extensive collaboration between the journalists who investigated the story and the U.S. Senators who held hearings on the topic after the story aired. The authors raise a serious question: "This role, which teams journalist and public official as Fact Finder, Presenter of 'Reality,' and Creator of Policy Result, may be seen by some as inimical to the democratic process" (Cook et al, 1983:33).

In sum, these empirical studies sustain the notion that the media are influential sources of information for the public. What we know beyond our actual experiences

about the relative importance and definitions of the day's issues are, to a degree, shaped by the media.

The Effects of the Consensual Paradigm

Limiting social knowledge is the paramount result of media's use of the consensual paradigm. To the extent that knowledge is imparted, it is within a narrow framework (Young, 1981).

There are many dimensions of stratification in this society--for example, race, class, and sex. Cohen and Young (1981:428-9) refer to the "extreme social segregation [that exists] between groups." This limited or infrequent interaction places many people in the position of relying on the media as the primary or sole source of information pertaining to people who are different from themselves and on issues about which they have no personal knowledge. The media provide, in a segregated or stratified society, a major source of knowledge as to what the consensus is concerning social problems. The media "conjure up for each group, with its limited stock of social knowledge, what everyone else believes...the mass media present to the population frameworks, grounded in conservative thought, by which social problems are to be interpreted" (Cohen and Young, 1981:431-432).

Writing more than two decades ago, Lazarsfeld and Merton (1960) highlight several functions of the media which serve to contribute to social conformism. They discuss the status conferral function, by which they mean that the "mass media bestow prestige and enhance the authority of individuals and groups by legitimizing them" (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1960:498). Also, by publicly exposing deviations from societal norms, the media function to preserve and reinforce those norms. The publicity which surrounds the public exposure of deviant behavior is thought to require that people take a stand on the issue. Pressure is exerted for a public reaffirmation and application of the social norm (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1960). Finally, these authors refer to a narcotizing dysfunction which results from the vast supply of information that is heaped on the public by the media. "Exposure to this flood of information may serve to narcotize rather than energize the average reader...[and] he comes to mistake knowing about problems...for doing something about them" (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1960:502).

As the following passage illustrates, Lazarsfeld and Merton conclude that the media support the existing social and economic structures:

To the extent that the media of mass communication have had an influence upon their audiences, it has stemmed not only from what is said, but more significantly from what is not said. For these media not only continue to affirm the status quo but, in

the same measure, they fail to raise essential questions about the structure of society. Hence, by leading toward conformism and by providing little basis for a critical appraisal of society, the commercially sponsored mass media indirectly but effectively restrain the cogent development of a genuinely critical outlook (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1960:503).

It is not sufficient to merely accept the premise that news is ideological; it is important that we understand some of the causes of this phenomenon. The next section addresses this concern.

Explaining the Ideological Character of News: The Newsmaking Process

This section reviews the pertinent literature concerning some of the actual practices of journalists and of news organizations more generally. How news is defined, where it is sought, and how it is presented help explain its ideological nature. The theoretical perspectives of Gans, Fishman, and Tuchman are particularly relevant to our concerns.

News Is About Knowns

The results of Gans' (1979) empirical observations of television and magazine newsmaking processes lead to conclusions concerning the sources and value content of news that are germane here. Of all the considerations affecting news gathering, newsmaking, and ultimately, news content, he places primacy on journalists' reliance

on officials as sources to explain why news is mostly about "Knowns (especially)...those in official positions" (p. 9) and why news deals mostly with the subjects of "nation and society--their persistence, cohesion, and the conflicts and divisions threatening their cohesion" (p. 19). When "Unknowns" do appear in news stories it usually signals the violation of some societal value or a threat to societal cohesion.

News about Knowns and Unknowns is further dichotomized in the types of stories in which they appear (Gans, 1979). Knowns are more often included in presentations of the orderly, routine, and day-to-day activities of leaders in their role of maintaining or restoring social order. On the other hand, ordinary people, Unknowns, are the predominant actors of stories dealing with social or moral disorder.

The media's heavy reliance on official sources has more to do with issues of social stratification and efficiency than with deliberate exclusion of Unknowns. The hierarchical structure outside the newsroom is operative within it as well. "The economically and politically powerful can obtain easy access to, and are sought out by, journalists; those who lack power are harder to reach by journalists and are generally not sought out until their activities produce social or moral disorder news" (Gans, 1979:81).

The need to generate a continuous flow of timely news stories fuels journalists' reliance on officials as sources. By meeting the tests of "past suitability," "productivity," "reliability," "authoritativeness," and "articulativeness" (Gans, 1979) officials, and consequently their perspectives, remain ingrained as a major force in the newsmaking process, thus perpetuating the consensual paradigm in the content of news stories.

News contains preference statements, or what Gans (1979) calls enduring values. He identifies eight such values which enter the news unconsciously because they are "built into news judgment" (p. 182). Two are of particular interest to us, "responsible capitalism" and "individualism." Within the context of the responsible capitalism value, news is likely to portray "...that the government must help the poor, but only the deserving poor, for 'welfare cheaters' are a continuing menace..." (Gans, 1979:47). The value placed on individualism by the news translates into preference for "self-made" people who "overcome poverty" (p. 50) and into the display of disdain "about the decline of the work ethic" (p. 51). A further consequence of the value on individualism is the tendency to see the failings of private enterprise as isolated "bad apples." This results in the news being "...blind to possible structural faults within the system, which in turn reduces the likelihood of stories

that question the legitimacy of the present economic order" (Gans, 1979:206).

By doing business as they do, Gans concludes that journalists, and hence media presentations, serve a range of functions that mainly benefit the powerful segments of this society. For example, in its roles of "leadership tester," "supplier of political feedback," and "power distributor," the media are key in the recruitment and selection of government leaders, they serve as "intra-governmental organs of communication--professional newsletters for public officials," and they confer power by providing publicity (Gans, 1979:291,292). Moreover, functioning as "moral guardians," and as a "barometer of order," the media perpetuate "the dominant...societal values by publicizing and helping to punish those who deviate from the values" (Gans, 1979:293). The ultimate function of the media, Gans argues, is as an agent of social control. By constantly relaying the words and deeds of the official actors, by warning about the evil of disorder and extremism of any form, by exaggerating the effectiveness of government's ability to quell disorder, and by assuming consensus in the moral and value spheres, the media contribute to "discourag[ing] people from acting and speaking in ways disapproved of by holders of power" (Gans, 1979:295).

The Bureaucratic Subsidy of News

Fishman (1980) focuses on the routine practices of newswriters to get to his primary concern--"the creation of news" (p. 13). The theoretical perspective flowing from his study of a California newspaper is embedded in the notion that "...the crucial factor which determines how newswriters construe the world of activities they confront" is the "routine work methods" of journalists (Fishman, 1980:14).

It is practicality prevailing, rather than any overt conspiracy, that gives news its ideological character. "Reliance on bureaucratic raw materials" (Fishman, 1980:140) is a practical necessity of newsmaking. However, these raw materials are ideological before they become news because of bureaucracies' need to rationalize and legitimize themselves. The bureaucratic connection is so strong that Fishman suggests that we should "think of news as the outcome of two systems which produce accounts: a system of journalistic accounts and, underlying this a system of bureaucratic accounts" (1980:141).

The huge amount of material that is needed, as well as the temporal and spatial requirements of newswriting make government bureaucracies and news organizational bureaucracies natural allies. More often than not the result is news presentations that are essentially bureaucratic accounts of phenomena.

In addition to the sheer provision of raw materials, bureaucracies provide authoritative accounts of occurrences. This develops into what Fishman (1980:144-145) calls "the normative logic of news reporting... Newswriters are pre-disposed to treat bureaucratic accounts as factual because news personnel participate in upholding a normative order of authorized knowers in society... [A] newswriter will recognize an official's claim to knowledge not merely as a claim, but as a credible, competent piece of knowledge."

The ultimate symbiotic relationship between news production and governmental bureaucracies is an economic one. Fishman (1980:150) goes so far as to speak of an "invisible bureaucratic subsidy of news." He explains:

...whatever the management of a news organization has established as its minimal labor force in the newsroom, one thing is certain: this minimum is much smaller than what it would be if journalists could not rely on bureaucrats and officials outside the news organization to do much of their work for them (Fishman, 1980:151).

The bottom line of Fishman's analysis is the ideological character of news. He uses the term, ideology, in the sense that it is a means of not knowing much that is outside the mainstream, or bureaucratic perspective. The everyday practices of newswriting serve to promote the interests of existing legitimate institutional arrangements.

News As A Means Not To Know

Having developed from fieldwork at several newspapers and a television station, Tuchman's theoretic formulations provide additional specificity to understanding the processes and consequences of newswork. She draws on Erving Goffman's concepts of frame and strip to set the stage for her theory of news. A "frame is the principle of organization which governs events ...at least social ones...and our subjective involvement in them," while a "strip is an arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of ongoing activity" (quoted in Tuchman, 1978a: 192). Tuchman (1978a:7) explains how "frames transform occurrences and happenings (i.e., strips) into defined events." News is analogous to a windowframe; the size, makeup, and location of the window constrain what is revealed.

In her book, Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality (1978a), Tuchman raises a series of questions which sum up the scope of her theoretical inquiry pertaining to news. The first question asks how certain events or happenings, i.e., strips, come to the attention of newswriters for processing into news stories. Another question asks how it is possible for newswriters to process information into news stories when each event or occurrence is usually considered an idiosyncratic phenomenon. Tuchman asks three other questions which I view as hypotheses,

ways of explaining why some occurrences do not become news. She asks: "Are some items not related because knowledge is embedded in stratification systems?... Are some items not noticed because they are taken for granted as aspects of the social world? Are some items not noticed because of newswriters' perspectives as professionals, their trained incapacity?" (Tuchman, 1978a:8-9)

Tuchman likens the search for news to the casting of a net. The idea of a net conjures up a mesh-like fabric through which some occurrences will fall out and not become news; while a more tightly woven fabric would allow less to fall through the cracks and not become news.

Getting caught in the news net is only the first step. "The assessment of newsworthiness is a negotiated phenomenon, constituted in the activities of a complex bureaucracy designed to oversee the news net" (Tuchman, 1978a:37).

Some of the fodder caught in the news net is transformed into news stories. Newswriters and their organizations assume that readers are interested in happenings that take place in specific areas, or deal with specific organizations, or center on specific topics. Therefore, the news net is generally cast in ways that divide the world into geographical, organizational, and topical turfs (Tuchman, 1978a). More importantly, though, Tuchman's analysis shows that the news net is cast so that it

synchronizes with the spacing and timing of legitimated institutions.

The news net is also cast in a way that has a temporal rhythm to it. As Tuchman points out, "[T]he rhythm of news work is designed to catch those occurrences that happen at the appropriate time at the appropriate place" (Tuchman, 1978a:40). Further, the notion of time is used to typify the way in which various types of news are thought to occur. The typification of news as hard, soft, spot, developing, or continuing, is based on the concept of time--whether or not an occurrence is scheduled or unscheduled--and the urgency of dissemination, in order to keep the news story current (Tuchman, 1978a).

The pace and organizational structure of newswork generally preclude the coverage of issue-oriented stories. "Events are concretely embedded in the web of facticity, the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the traditional news lead. Issues are not..." (Tuchman, 1978a:134). Substantive concepts, the ingredients of issues, are seen as abstractions because they are not observable and cannot be covered by the ordinary journalistic methods. As such, issues are prone to being dismissed as "not newsworthy" since "events, not issues, [are] the stuff and substance of hard news" (Tuchman, 1978a:139). The consequence of this narrow definition of news is the regular presentation of stories on a given topic that appear unrelated to each

other, that lack context, and that therefore, defy the audience's gleaning the structural connections between a series of occurrences.

Newsworkers' understanding of two interrelated concepts--professionalism and objectivity--help shape the assessment of newsworthiness. Tuchman (1978b) outlines a series of ways in which these concepts interact and result in the media becoming means not to know.

As I previously stated, Tuchman asserts that the news net is cast so as to coincide spatially and timewise with the operation of legitimated institutions. The result of this synchronization is that "reporters are much less prone to learn of news occurrences generated by social movements and political dissidents" (Tuchman, 1978b: 109).

The concept of media professionalism allows objectivity to be claimed to the extent that newsworkers are able to demonstrate that they follow specific methods, or "strategic rituals," in ascertaining the facts for their stories (Tuchman, 1972). That is, the way in which information is presented is thought to be tantamount to the objectivity of their information. Tuchman cites four strategic procedures which newsworkers use in order to claim objectivity.

One such method is the presentation of "both sides of the story," or the presentation of conflicting

possibilities. Objectivity can be claimed because neither side's information is favored. Ostensibly the consuming public decides for itself which side of the information is fact or fiction. The presentation of supporting evidence is a second method used to substantiate newswriters' claims of objectivity. This corroboration can be a third party's view or some other "fact" that draws the same conclusion as the one offered. A third method is the "judicious" use of quotation marks. This strategic procedure supposedly puts distance between the newswriters and the information in the story. Quotation marks are also used to question the legitimacy of a person, group, or occurrence. The final strategic method which Tuchman identifies is also the most problematical aspect of objectivity: structuring an article's information so that the most important material is presented first. To the extent that a story begins with the five W's--who, what, when, why (and how)--objectivity can be claimed. In reality, it is most often the case that subjective selection between competing facts is occurring in the name of news judgment.

Stories that do not readily reveal use of these strategic rituals are supposed to be easily distinguishable as feature or human interest stories, or news analysis or interpretive stories. In these cases it is permissible for articles to contain value judgments.

Tuchman concludes that use of these strategic methods has serious consequences. They can lead to newswriters' having selective perception and mistakenly believing that facts speak for themselves. Further, these procedures are used as a discrediting device and as a way for newswriters to interject their own opinion (Tuchman, 1972).

In her more recent work, Tuchman views these strategic methods, in toto, as a means of legitimating existing institutional arrangements because they serve to create and control controversy. The shared notion of what is and is not news among news professionals "leave[s] the same sorts of hole in the news net" (Tuchman, 1978a:23). More often than not, the presentation of more than one side of a story does not reach beyond legitimated spokespersons. Even when the views of a dissident group are tapped, it is usually via a quasi-legitimate representative designated by the media as spokesperson (Tuchman, 1978b).

The interaction between the concepts of professionalism and objectivity come together in yet another way, resulting in news being a means not to know. Substantive economic, social or political issues are treated by the media as reified phenomena. Tuchman observes that the reporting of economic problems, for example, is treated in the same manner as reports of tornadoes or earthquakes (Tuchman, 1978b). That is, emphasis is placed on isolated

and mysterious occurrences that are beyond human control rather than on explanations of the problematical aspects. Official institutional representatives are pictured as doing everything possible to control or cope with the particular situation at hand. The consuming public is thus reassured that everything possible is being done.

In sum, Tuchman's theoretic formulation tells us that the news net is cast spatially and temporally so that it coincides with the workings of legitimate institutions. The notions of professionalism and objectivity operate to mesh facticity with official spokespeople. A common result is that newswork precludes emphasis on substantive issues. If the appropriate context of a news occurrence is to be found in the social stratification system or in some other aspect of the social world that should be explained rather than taken for granted, then it is likely that reporters' "trained incapacity" will keep the full story undiscovered; these topics will not successfully pass the newsworthiness tests.

This trained incapacity, or not knowing, is ideological. "Viewing ideology as interested procedures people use as a means not to know connotes that ideology prevents knowledge by limiting inquiry--by closing off the possibilities of an analytic examination of social life" (Tuchman, 1978a:179). Tuchman's analyses of newswork and its products all substantiate the ideological

characterization, in that it shows how "news limits access and transforms dissent...legitimizes the contemporary state by eschewing analysis through ahistoricity, the logic of the concrete, and an emphasis on the contingency of events rather than on structural necessity" (1978a:177).

All of the material presented so far refers to news stories. I now look briefly at the role of editorials in shaping public opinion and public policy.

The Editorial As A Special Case

Just as important as printing the news "courageously and impartially," Hohenberg asserts that a newspaper must "serve the public interest and provide the community with effective leadership" (1960:381). The editorial page is viewed as one of the major vehicles of public service. Hohenberg goes on to argue that editorials must exceed "the narrow interests of the publisher and the prejudices of the editor...[and] be the voice of the community" (1960:384). Berry (1976) identifies seven purposes that editorials serve: (1) to influence opinion; (2) to call attention to a wrong; (3) to enlighten readers; (4) to help a cause; (5) to praise or congratulate; (6) to present an essay; and (7) to comment lightly on the news.

Hohenberg's and Berry's idealism is tempered when more is understood about editorials' relationship to

public opinion. There are essentially two types of editorials, those in which the press in speaking its own mind, and those which claim to speak for the public at large (Hall et al, 1981). Both types are potentially important influences in that they can either reinforce the prevailing view on a topic or challenge a view by claiming to represent some mythical majority. But the second type of editorial is thought to be particularly powerful:

This 'taking the public voice,' this form of articulating what the vast majority of the public are supposed to think, this enlisting of public legitimacy for views which the newspaper itself is expressing, represent the media in its most active, campaigning role--the point where the media most actively and openly shape and structure public opinion (Hall et al, 1981:347; emphasis in the original).

The influence of editorials results from their being aimed at the influential reader rather than the average reader. "[I]n full realization that average readers usually pass up editorials, sensible editors plan, argue, and persuade in an effort to appeal to the molders of public opinion in their community..." (Hohenberg, 1960:384). Hall and his colleagues elaborate on this theme when they describe the double-edged role the media play "between the apparatus of social control and the public" (1981:348). On the one hand, the media can help justify official perspectives, thus reinforcing them in the mind of the public. Or the media can bring

its own perspective to bear in the name of representing public opinion. Thirdly, and perhaps more important, either of these editorial roles can be used by the official, primary definers for their own ends.

Summary: The Consensual Paradigm and Welfare

The consensual paradigm emanating from the American value system dictates that the provision of welfare is defined negatively because it collides head-on with the cherished and revered values of individualism and the work ethic. The paradigm further subsumes the notion that poverty results from the inadequacies of individuals rather than from structural defects in the economic, political, and social systems.

Another way to view the interrelatedness between news and capitalist ideology is to see news as myth. "Myths are the truths about society that are taken for granted" (Bennett, 1980:167). A number of scholars make the connection between myth and political control, myth and social policy, and myth and news.

In the course of a lifetime, each person is exposed to and absorbs many myths. In fact, a great deal of the political debate surrounding public policy issues in general, and welfare policy in particular, centers on myth. As Bennett (1970:173) states, "One set of familiar

myths attributes the problem of poverty to various individual failings of the poor [and] the policy proposals that flow from this myth are generally aimed at correcting these individual problems."

Newsmaking falls prey to the delimiting effects of the consensual paradigm. Journalists' heavy reliance on bureaucratic accounts especially narrows the range of topical considerations and interpretative frameworks that can become news. Newswriters themselves are socialized in the context of the paradigm. This, coupled with their skewed ideas of professionalism and objectivity, results in what Tuchman (1978a) calls the "trained incapacity" of journalists.

The selective perception that flows throughout media presentations is ideological. Alternative explanations or critical assessments are not generally captured in the news net; if they are, it is unlikely that they will succeed in negotiating the tests of newsworthiness. The consequence is that what is defined as news reinforces and legitimates existing institutional arrangements.

I propose that the welfare and poverty news agenda can be shown to have distinct characteristics that are traceable to the consensual paradigm. After the research questions and methods are explained, Chapter IV details the empirical findings which test this assertion.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

The Research Questions and Hypotheses

Certain expectations about the nature of media reports of welfare policies and recipients emerge from the literature review. Generally, I expect that the presentations of welfare and poverty news will have characteristics that can be traced to the consensual paradigm and that the newspapers' editorials and articles will reflect some of the key values on which this society rests. I anticipate that newspapers which are substantially different in political orientation and audience, as the New York Times and New York Daily News are, will tend to be similar in their editorial opinions and news treatment of welfare-related topics.

A basic premise of this inquiry is that in the United States the mass media serve to perpetuate capitalist ideology and values. I anticipate that the press will view welfare policies and recipients in the context of its relationship to a market economy which primarily values individualism, the work ethic, self-reliance, and achievement. Additionally, two newswork practices which

help ensure an ideological dimension to news are expected to be found among the journalists who write welfare stories --a heavy reliance on official sources and on staged events.

In order to examine my expectations this research addresses the following questions:

- (1) What welfare-related themes are covered most often by the press?

I hypothesize that:

editorials and articles will more frequently discuss and report reduction of welfare topics than reduction of poverty topics; and

the topics most frequently discussed in editorials will also be more frequently reported in articles.

- (2) Which topics receive the most prominent display?

I expect that:

editorials and articles discussing or reporting reduction of welfare topics will be more prominently displayed than those dealing with reduction of poverty themes.

- (3) What is the effect of politics on the press' presentations?

I hypothesize that:

articles reporting reduction of welfare topics will be more prominently displayed during presidential election years than during non-presidential election years.

- (4) Does a particular image of welfare recipients and programs emerge in the press that is consistent with the American value system?

I anticipate that:

editorials and articles are more likely to characterize welfare recipients and programs in unfavorable terms that conform to prevailing stereotypes than in a favorable manner.

- (5) Do welfare-related presentations challenge or substantiate the consensual paradigm?

I expect that:

editorials and articles will more frequently discuss and report the actions and pronouncements of officials than of persons without legitimate status, and thus, the opportunity to challenge the consensual paradigm is lessened.

- (6) How do the press' presentations on welfare themes relate to the structural determinants of poverty?

I hypothesize that:

editorials and articles will more frequently discuss and report events as if they are unrelated occurrences or the isolated acts of individuals than provide structural connections and pertinent linkages between events.

The Design and Scope of Analysis

To test the working hypotheses concerning newspaper coverage of welfare issues, a comparative study was undertaken of two New York City newspapers, the New York Times and the New York Daily News. As noted in Chapter I, during the 1970s the size of New York's welfare population, the characteristics of the welfare recipients, and the controversial nature of the program's administration were among

the reasons for the selection of the New York press as the locus of inquiry.

Selection of the Times and the Daily News presents the opportunity to compare the coverage of welfare topics in two newspapers that are thought to be distinctly different. The Times, often referred to as the paper of record, is considered a prestige paper, attracting an upper income, professional audience. When Weiss (1974) surveyed leaders in a cross-section of political and economic sectors, she found the New York Times to be "the reading matter they most have in common....It comes closest to being the national newspaper of the elite" (p. 5). It ranked third in circulation among daily newspapers in the United States in each of the years examined in this study.

The Daily News, on the other hand, is a tabloid, mass appeal newspaper, thought to be attractive to working class and low income populations. The News had the largest circulation among daily papers in the United States during the study years.

Another difference between the papers is their political orientation. As evidenced by their support of presidential candidates, the Times is considered a Democratic/liberal paper, while the Daily News is considered a Republican/conservative one. In 1972, the Times endorsed McGovern, and the Daily News endorsed Nixon. For president in 1976, Carter was the Times' choice, while

the Daily News preferred Ford. The Weiss (1974) survey of leaders provides corroboration of the Times' liberal perspectives; the results revealed significant correlations between holding liberal views on a number of issues and reading the Times.

Data for this study were collected for four years during the 1970s--1972, 1974, 1976, and 1978. From the late 1960s through 1976, welfare was a prominent domestic policy issue at the national level. The expansion of the welfare rolls locally from the late 1960s through the early 1970s, and the subsequent political debates made the decade of the 1970s a period when welfare was likely to get extensive coverage by the press. Data from the four years make possible another feature of the study design-- comparison of the papers' coverage of welfare topics during presidential election years and non-presidential election years.

Tests of the working hypotheses require data concerning the subject matter of editorials and articles on welfare topics, the relative attention, or news play, given to various subjects, the sources of information, the extent to which articles deal with events or issues, and the presence and direction of bias in the images of welfare recipients and programs.

The pertinent variables for examining editorials are:

Independent variables

1. Newspaper
2. Attention
 - a. editorial occupies lead position
 - b. length of editorial

Dependent variables

1. Topics discussed
2. Geographical focus
3. Position of person referred to
4. Event or issue orientation
5. Type of welfare program referred to
6. Presence and direction of image bias

The study of news stories uses the following variables:

Independent variables

1. Newspaper
2. Attention
 - a. page placement--front or inside
 - b. attention index--comprising headline width, page placement, length of article, and use of illustration
3. Year of publication--presidential election years vs. non-presidential election years.

Dependent variables

1. Topics discussed
2. Geographical focus
3. Source of articles' information
4. Event or issue orientation
5. Type of welfare program referred to
6. Presence and direction of image bias

Sample Selection

The universe of editorials relating to welfare for each of the four study years is used. The New York Times Index indicates the precise dates on which editorials pertaining to welfare subjects appeared. To identify the editorials pertaining to welfare in the New York Daily News, however, it was necessary to visually inspect each issue of the newspaper for each of the four study years. A total of 165 editorials are analyzed. Table 3-1 shows the frequency distribution by year and newspaper for editorials.

The news stories analyzed in this study represent a sample of the New York Times welfare-related articles and the universe of Daily News articles. From the New York Times Index I determined that a total of 1247 welfare-related articles appeared for the four study years --548 in 1972, 288 in 1974, 276 in 1976, and 135 in 1978.

Table 3-1

Distribution of Editorials Dealing With Welfare
by Year, by Newspaper

<u>Year</u>	<u>Newspaper</u>		<u>Total</u>
	<u>Times</u>	<u>News</u>	
1972	40	45	85
1974	11	21	32
1976	8	25	33
1978	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>15</u>
Total	66	99	165

Slightly more than 25 percent of the Times articles were selected for the sample. The sample size for each of the four years is proportional to the frequency with which welfare-related articles were published. A systematic sample using every nth article was drawn from the New York Times Index. The selected articles were located on microfilm, read, and coded.

The lack of an index for the Daily News necessitated visual inspection of all issues for each of the four study years to identify welfare-related articles. All issues were available in hard copy at the New York Public Library Annex. A total of 230 articles were identified, read, and coded. Table 3-2 provides the distribution of articles in the sample, by year and newspaper.

Table 3-2

Distribution of Articles Dealing With Welfare
by Year, by Newspaper

<u>Year</u>	<u>Times</u>	<u>Newspaper</u>	
		<u>News</u>	<u>Total</u>
1972	125	98	223
1974	75	46	121
1976	75	47	122
1978	<u>50</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>89</u>
Total	325	230	555

The data were collected between November 1979 and January 1980. To test the reliability of the coding categories, a 10 percent subsample of articles and editorials was randomly selected at the end of February 1980 and recoded a second time--55 articles and 16 editorials from the original sample. A coefficient of reliability¹ of .75 or better was obtained for all of the coding categories used in this analysis.

$$^1 \text{ C.R.} = \frac{2M}{N1 + N2}$$

where:

C.R. = coefficient of reliability

M = number of agreed upon coding decisions

N1 = number of observations made at first coding

N2 = number of observations made at second coding

Content Analysis Procedures

This research follows a long history of using methods of content analysis to extract data from some form of communication. As a research method, content analysis involves the systematic classification of the communication's content into predetermined categories which are thought to measure the theoretical concepts being tested. Further, the method requires specifying the units of analysis, the units that will be used for recording or classification, and a specific system of enumerating the occurrence of an attribute.

In this study the unit of analysis is the individual article or editorial, that is, in most of the statistical analysis I refer to the number of articles or editorials that contain certain attributes. However, two recording units are used for some of the variables; the lead paragraphs of articles and editorials are coded separately from the body. For articles, I define the lead as the first three paragraphs of the story, and the body is the remaining portion. For editorials, the lead is defined as the first paragraph only, and the balance is considered the body. The variables dealing with subject matter and geographical focus are coded separately for the lead and the body. For all other variables the recording unit is the entire article or editorial. This distinction between the contents of the lead and of the

body is crucial because one of the cardinal rules of writing stories for the press is that the most important information--the who, what, when, where, why, and how--is supposed to be found in the opening sentences.

The presence or absence of an attribute within the recording unit constitutes the way in which observations are enumerated. However, to develop a complete profile of the editorials' and articles' content, proper coding of five variables (subjects discussed, source, geographical focus, type of program, and image bias) required allowing for more than one response. For example, editorials and articles frequently deal with more than one subject. Therefore, the instructions permitted coding up to three themes from the lead paragraph(s) and up to three from the body. The result is percent distributions for these variables which exceed 100.0 since I chose to reflect at all times the percent of editorials or articles having an attribute, rather than the percent of responses.

Coding Categories

Topics Discussed

To develop the themes pertaining to welfare that I could expect the press to cover, a pilot study was conducted. The pilot study used randomly selected articles appearing during the 1970s in four newspapers across the

country--the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Chicago Tribune, and the Washington Post. A total of 113 articles from these papers was read and analyzed; 41 topics relating to welfare were identified and subsequently used in the coding of the articles and editorials in this study.

Source of Information

Articles were coded as to whether or not the information was attributed, and if so, to whom. Fifteen types of official and non-official sources were used. For editorials, the same 15 categories applied, but the coding decision involved determining to whom the editorial referred.

Geographical Focus

The subject matter of articles and editorials was coded in terms of geographical focus. The categories distinguished between a local New York City focus and various gradations up to a national focus.

Event- or Issue-Orientation

Articles and editorials were classified as to whether or not they were predominantly event- or issue-oriented. An event-oriented story deals with a definite happening pinpointed in space and time, conveying the details about that event. An issue-oriented story gives

background or overview information concerning a relatively timeless issue or problem. These definitions are patterned after those used by Ryan and Owen (1976:636). For the orientation to be considered predominant it had to begin in the lead paragraphs of the article or editorial and be present in at least one half of the remaining paragraphs.

Type of Welfare Program

Articles and editorials were coded in terms of whether or not a specific welfare program was mentioned, and if so, which one.

Presence and Direction of Bias

Articles and editorials were classified according to whether or not they contain judgmental adjectives and descriptive phrases that were favorable, unfavorable, or neutral to welfare recipients and programs.

Physical Properties Categories

Articles were classified regarding the day of the week the story appeared, page placement of the story, length of the story, headline size, and whether or not the article was accompanied by an illustration. Day of week was broken down into weekday or Sunday. Page placement for the New York Times articles was broken down into front page (including split page), or inside page. For the Daily News, page placement was coded as either front

page or inside page. However, front page for the Daily News was considered pages one through five; being a tabloid, text rarely begins on the actual front page. Article length was defined as the number of words. Headline size was measured as the column width of the headline. A photograph or any kind of chart or graph was considered an illustration. With the exception of page placement, these same categories were used to classify editorials. An additional category--whether or not the editorial was in the first editorial space--was used.

The Analytical Construct

Measuring the ideological and value content of media presentations is an extremely elusive endeavor. At best it can only be approached by making inferences after analyzing proxy indicators of these abstract concepts. As the research questions and hypotheses suggest, I propose to infer the ideological and value content of welfare-related editorials and articles by demonstrating that most often they:

- emphasize certain topics at the expense of others in a way that selectively favors a particular viewpoint;
- consistently portray an image of welfare recipients and programs that locates the causes and cures of poverty within the behavior of those getting aid and within the programs' operations, thus exonerating the functioning of the economic system;

- rely so heavily on one type of information source that problem definitions and policy prescriptions are inevitably skewed in one direction; and
- render structural linkages between occurrences invisible by emphasizing the atypical and dramatic and isolated events at the expense of the underlying, background, or context of the situation, thus defying development of alternative perspectives.

I use four dichotomous variables to measure the concepts listed above:

- the extent to which the content of editorials and articles focuses on reducing welfare or reducing poverty themes;
- the extent to which editorials and articles characterize welfare recipients and programs in an unfavorable or favorable manner;
- the extent to which editorials and articles use government officials and documents or non-official sources such as the poor and their advocates; and
- the extent to which editorials and articles are event-oriented or issue-oriented.

Reduction of Welfare vs. Reduction of Poverty

The first level of analysis tabulates the frequency of ten general themes (derived from collapsing the 41 topics used in the coding) that characterize what the editorials and articles find newsworthy: (1) Lowering welfare costs; (2) Federalizing welfare; (3) Administration of welfare; (4) Sanctions against welfare agency; (5) Court or legislative actions; (6) Welfare's impact on local area; (7) Welfare's impact on society; (8) Benefits received

by recipients; (9) Behavior of recipients; and (10) Other. While comparisons of the papers on these distributions provides some insights into their differences and similarities, collapsing the detailed data into a dichotomy more nearly reflects the concerns of this study.

After excluding the "Other" category, the remaining nine themes are aggregated into the dichotomous categories. Six of the themes--lowering costs, administration, sanctions against agency, local impact, societal impact, and behavior of recipients--are grouped to form what I call a focus on the reduction of welfare. The other three--federalizing welfare, court and legislative actions, and benefits--comprise a focus on the reduction of poverty.

The six components of the welfare-reduction perspective are themes which, when taken together, reflect the definitions and policy prescriptions of poverty and welfare that are consistent with the dominant view, the consensual paradigm. Conversely, the themes comprising the poverty-reduction perspective suggest the intrusion of an alternate view or at least a questioning of the prevailing one.

It is important to note the process which led to the development of these dichotomous categories for analyzing the subject matter of articles and editorials. In retrospect I would call the process an inductive one

--reasoning from the specific to the general. The challenge was to interpret the frequency data for the ten themes used to capture the subject matter of the editorials and articles examined in this study.

While providing useful information, learning, for example, that various proportions of articles focused on each of the ten themes did not seem to add to an understanding of the ideological character of news stories. Measurements of the ten themes, individually, were not sufficient as proxy indicators, able to sustain inferences about the ideology or value content of the newspapers' presentations.

Progression from the analysis of the ten individual themes to the conceptualization of the 'reducing welfare' versus 'reducing poverty' dichotomy occurred in a somewhat serendipitous fashion as I read and re-read the theoretical materials pertaining to the use of a consensual paradigm by the media. When I began to articulate what views about welfare recipients and programs the paradigm could be expected to contain, it gradually became clear that six of the categories used in the classification of the subject matter replicated the spirit of the paradigm, while three of the remaining four did not. The idea of treating the subject matter variable as a dichotomy started to take shape.

However, it was one of the many re-readings of the materials about welfare as a social policy issue,

especially Salamon's (1977;1978) discussions of the elusive nature of substantive welfare reform, that provided clarity concerning the 'reducing welfare-reducing poverty' concept as I use it. (See Chapter I, p. 3.) The realization that this dichotomy captured a distinction from which I could then infer the ideological nature of editorials and articles helped to form and clarify the hypotheses which flow out of the first three research questions.

Unfavorable vs. Favorable Images

Each editorial and article was examined for the presence of judgmental adjectives, phrases and/or inferences to describe welfare recipients and programs. When such descriptions were found it was then determined if they depicted a favorable or unfavorable characterization. The object is to distinguish those instances where there appears to be an explicit effort to create an image of recipients as "undeserving" and of programs as "lax, poorly administered, or too benevolent."

The measurement of this concept serves as an indicator of the papers' role in perpetuating negative perceptions of welfare policies and recipients of aid by framing their presentations within existing and familiar stereotypes.

Official vs. Unofficial Sources

A key concept in the literature pertinent to the newsmaking process is journalists' reliance on "official," or "institutional," or "bureaucratic" sources for the raw materials that ultimately become news. The need for a steady and timely flow of information that is authoritative and credible are among the reasons cited for this phenomenon.

Despite the very real and pressing reasons that underly the reliance on official sources, the result of the practice is thought to be a severe stricture on the "interpretive framework" (Hall et al, 1981) used to explain a given occurrence. It is the official source that acts as the "primary definer" of social problems and social policies. Presenting the official interpretations, usually at the expense of any other views, is a major reason for the ideological character of news.

The data on sources and story attribution is collapsed into a dichotomy, official versus non-official, so that the extent to which welfare-related presentations contain non-legitimated views can be assessed.

Event-orientation vs. Issue-orientation

Another important concept in the literature on newsmaking has influence on the ideological nature of news. A definition of newsworthiness that prefers the atypical, unusual, and dramatic with such frequency and

regularity that this type of occurrence comes to be seen as the ordinary, closes out more substantive elaborations that are thought to be too complex or innately dull. What results is the presentation of story after story on a given topic, all lacking context to tie them to their roots in the political, economic, or social systems.

I examine the degree of event- and issue-orientation of welfare-related editorials and articles to see what chance there is to glean from them some understanding of the underlying issues comprising the welfare or poverty problems.

Data Analysis: Statistical and Qualitative

The 41 subject matter categories used in the coding of each editorial and article are collapsed into ten major themes for the analysis. These aggregate categories are sufficient to describe some of the differences between the newspapers' welfare-related content and facilitated statistical analysis. However, for the major portion of the analysis, 9 of the 10 major themes are further collapsed into a dichotomy: articles and editorials dealing with reduction of welfare versus those dealing with reduction of poverty.

For editorials, the statistical analysis consists primarily of comparing the relative frequency of

the dependent variables between the two newspapers. Further, the subject matter of editorials is analyzed while controlling for length and position on the page.

In addition to comparisons of the relative frequency of the dependent variables between papers, articles are also analysed using an attention score which measures news play. The score is a composite index that combines four variables as follows:

1. Headline width: 0 for one column heads; 1 point for 2-3 columns; and 2 points for 4 or more columns.
2. Position in newspaper: 1 point for any New York Times story on page one, or for a story on a split page; 1 point for any New York Daily News story on pages 1-5 (as explained earlier, this distinction was necessary due to the dearth of front page text for the Daily News); 0 for articles appearing on inside pages.
3. Length of story: 0 for articles less than 250 words; 1 point for articles 250 words or more.
4. Use of illustration: 0 for a story with no illustration; 1 point if story is accompanied by an illustration.

The attention score is a variation of that used by Budd (1964) in his comparison of news play given stories related to the United States by eight Australian and New Zealand newspapers.

Spearman correlation coefficients were computed between each index item and the total index, to examine the strength of the relationships. The results are displayed in Table 3-3.

Table 3-3

Spearman Correlation Coefficients
Individual Index Items with Total Index

<u>Index Items</u>	<u>Times</u>	<u>Newspaper</u>	
		<u>News</u>	<u>Total</u>
Headline Width	.77	.78	.77
Page Placement	.38	.55	.46
Article Length	.67	.71	.67
Illustration Used	.50	.61	.57

P < .001 for all correlations

While all of the relationships are statistically significant, headline width and article length show the strongest positive correlations with the total index; the correlations between page placement and use of illustration with the total index are more moderate.

The subject matter themes are analyzed using the attention index as an independent variable. To facilitate the analysis, the six possible scoring intervals, 0 through 5, are collapsed into three, high (4-5), medium (2-3), low (0-1). To discern whether the differences in attention given to articles emphasizing reduction of welfare versus those emphasizing reduction of poverty are significant, the T test is used. The T test examines the difference between the mean, or average, scores of two groups, and determines if the observed difference is

statistically significant.

Articles and editorials are also examined qualitatively in search of recurring patterns in the language used to describe welfare recipients and programs which connote favorable or unfavorable images. Examples of the text of articles and editorials are cited as supporting evidence of the ideological and value orientation that color reporting of welfare-related topics.

General Characteristics of Welfare-Related Editorials

Some general characteristics of the papers' editorials are displayed in Table 3-4. The first notable point is that editorials dealing with welfare subjects were more prevalent in 1971 than in any of the other study years. The 85 editorials appearing that year constitute better than 50 percent of the total number reviewed. This no doubt reflects the unusual interest in welfare because of then President Nixon's having introduced a very controversial welfare reform program, the Family Assistance Plan (FAP). By 1978, editorial interest wanes to a trickle. The number of editorials is very similar in both papers in 1972 and 1978. However, during the other two study years, the Daily News editorialized on welfare-related subjects more frequently than did the Times.

Table 3-4
Characteristics of Editorials

A. Percent Distribution by Year

<u>Year</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
1972	61	46	52
1974	17	21	19
1976	12	25	20
1978	11	8	9
	101*	100	100
N	66	99	165

* Does not equal 100 due to rounding.

B. Percent Referring to Local and Non-Local Topics

<u>Geographical Reference</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
Local-NYC	35	64	52
Non-Local	76	45	57
	111*	109*	109*
N	66	99	165

* Exceeds 100.0 due to multiple responses, i.e., an editorial could refer to more than one place.

C. Percent Distribution by Length

<u>Number of Words</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
< 100	12	49	34
101-200	18	44	34
201-300	30	7	16
301-400	24	0	10
401 >	15	0	6
	99*	100	100
N	66	99	165

* Does not equal 100 due to rounding.

Table 3-4
(continued)

D. Percent in Lead Position

<u>In Lead Position</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
Yes	27	26	27
No	73	74	73
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>
N	66	99	165

E. Percent Distribution by Day Appeared

<u>Day of Week</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
Mon-Sat.	97	97	97
Sunday	3	3	3
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>
N	66	99	165

The two newspapers differ considerably in terms of the geographical focus of their editorial columns on welfare subjects. The Times is more likely to deal with non-New York City or non-local topics. On the other hand, the Daily News is more likely to discuss welfare-related topics that are pertinent to New York City only. As will be seen later, the Daily News most often discusses the New York City welfare system in particular, or the administrators charged with running it.

As expected, the papers are very different in terms of the length of the editorials dealing with welfare subjects. Less than one-third of the Times editorials

are under 200 words, while 93 percent of the News editorials are this short. None of the News editorials exceeds 300 words, but 39 percent of the Times editorials do. This is an obvious difference between the papers, regardless of subject discussed.

However, the papers are remarkably similar in the proportion of welfare-related editorials that occupy the lead position on the editorial page, slightly more than one-quarter in each. They are identical in that 97 percent of the editorials of both papers appear on weekdays rather than on Sundays.

General Characteristics of Welfare-Related Articles

Just as we saw for editorials, Table 3-5 shows that welfare topics are more prevalent in both papers' 1972 news pages than in any of the other study years. On average, 40 percent of the articles examined appeared in 1972. The Times' sample was made proportional to the frequency of welfare-related articles in each of the study years. The News articles included in the study represent the universe. Yet there are extraordinary similarities in the distributions. As will become clearer in later sections, in 1972 welfare peaked as a national issue.

Table 3-5
Characteristics of Articles

A. Percent Distribution by Year

<u>Year</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
1972	39	43	40
1974	23	20	22
1976	23	20	22
1978	15	17	16
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>
N	325	230	555

B. Percent Referring to Local and Non-Local Topics

<u>Geographical Reference</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
Local-NYC	50	74	60
Non-Local	62	33	50
	<u>112*</u>	<u>107*</u>	<u>110*</u>
N	325	230	555

* Exceeds 100.0 due to multiple responses, i.e., an editorial could refer to more than one place.

C. Percent Distribution by Headline Width

<u>Width of Headline Number of Columns</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
One	42	22	33
Two	28	31	29
Three	13	26	18
Four or More	17	22	19
	<u>100</u>	<u>101*</u>	<u>99*</u>
N	325	230	555

* Does not equal 100 due to rounding.

Table 3-5
(continued)

D. Percent Distribution by Length

<u>Number of Words</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
< 250	36	42	39
250-500	34	54	42
501-750	22	4	15
751-1000	5	0	3
1001-1250	2	0	1
1251-1500	1	0	1
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>101*</u>
N	325	230	555

* Does not equal 100 due to rounding.

E. Percent Distribution by Page Placement

<u>Page Placement</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
Front or Split	15	24*	19
Inside	85	76	81
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>
N	325	230	555

* For News, front page defined as pages 1 through 5. As a picture-oriented tabloid, narrative rarely begins on the actual front page.

F. Percent Distribution by Use of Illustrations

<u>Type of Illustration</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
Photograph	9	30	18
Charts	3	1	2
None	88	69	80
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>
N	325	230	555

Table 3-5
(continued)

G. Percent Distribution by Day of Week Stories Appeared

<u>Day of Week</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
Mon.-Sat.	82	85	83
Sunday	19	15	17
	101*	100	100
N	325	230	555

* Does not equal 100 due to rounding.

The balance of Table 3-5 shows some similarities and some differences between the papers on several general characteristics. Reading the Times rather than the News gives one a better chance of learning about welfare in some area other than New York City. The Times articles more frequently referred to either all of New York State, some other state, or the nation. The non-locally focused articles account for 62 percent of the Times articles, while 50 percent focus on New York City. By contrast, the News articles are predominantly New York City focused: nearly three-quarters of the News articles discuss New York City. In fact, the News articles are more than twice as likely to be locally oriented than have any other perspective.

The headlines for welfare-related articles in the Times are more than twice as likely to be one or two

columns wide than three or more columns wide. By contrast, the headlines for the News articles are about equally divided between those that are one or two columns wide and those three or more columns wide.

The majority of both papers' articles are 500 words or less. However, for the News the percentage is 96. The Times has a sizable group of articles, 30 percent, that exceeds 500 words. This difference is likely to hold for any subject these papers report.

Because the News is a picture-oriented tabloid, it rarely has text on the front page. For this study, the front page for the News is considered as pages one through five. Welfare-related articles appear slightly more often on the front page of the News than of the Times.

As one would expect, the News is considerably more likely to use photographs with its welfare-related articles. The welfare-related stories of both papers appear overwhelmingly during weekdays.

Attention Index

A composite index was constructed to measure attention given articles by the newspapers studied. The index combines four variables: length of article, page placement, headline width, and use of illustrations. Scores of 0 through 5 were possible. The index

is used primarily to compare the relative attention given the various subject matter themes.

The distribution of scores for the Times and the News is shown in Table 3-6. The difference between the average score for the papers is statistically significant. On average, the News gives more attention to welfare-related topics than the Times does. Over three-quarters of the Times articles have an attention score of 2 or less, while only 22 percent have a score of 3 or more. The News, on the other hand, has considerably fewer articles with an attention score of 2 or less, 63 percent, and 37 percent with a score of 3 or more.

Table 3-6

Percent of Articles Scoring at Each Attention Index Interval,
by Newspaper

<u>Newspaper</u>	<u>Attention Index Score</u>						<u>Total</u>	<u>Mean Score</u>
	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>		
<u>Times</u> N=325	19	27	32	15	6	1	100	1.66**
<u>News</u> N=230	12	24	27	22	7	8	100	2.13**
<u>Total Sample</u> N=555	16	26	30	18	7	4	101*	1.86

* Does not equal 100 due to rounding.

** T = 4.12; DF = 441.69; p < .001.

CHAPTER IV

WELFARE AS A NEWS TOPIC: THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

I present and discuss the study's findings in the order of the research questions and hypotheses outlined in the previous chapter. As a rule, for each set of findings, the discussion of the Times and News editorials comes first, followed by that pertaining to news articles.

First, I describe what the papers' welfare-related editorials and articles talk about. That is, what themes within the vast topic of welfare are deemed newsworthy, and with what frequency. Then, the hypotheses concerning the expected predominance of themes dealing with reduction of welfare are addressed, followed by an assessment of the extent to which the topics discussed in editorials converge with those reported in the news.

The issue of prominent display, or newsplay, vis-a-vis the topics discussed or reported is dealt with next. I examine data pertinent to a series of hypotheses which posit that editorials and articles about reduction of welfare will get more newsplay.

Continuing the analysis of what the papers talk about, and the amount of newsplay different themes get, I look at the effect of presidential elections on the newsplay articles covering reduction of welfare topics receive.

Whether there is a pattern to the papers' portrayal of welfare recipients and programs is the next area of concern. The analysis addresses hypotheses that expect recipients of aid and welfare programs to be generally cast in negative, unfavorable terms that coincide with the prevailing stereotypical images.

The remaining sections of the chapter examine evidence concerning two key journalistic practices that I think explain in large measure why the welfare-related stories are the way they are. First, I present data relevant to the sources of the stories about welfare. My focus is the expectation that the raw materials for the papers' editorials and articles will come overwhelmingly from official or legitimated sources, thus effectively closing out the views of the poor themselves and of those who are their advocates.

The final section presents the analysis pertinent to the expected event-orientation of the media. I show that reading either paper provides little opportunity to glean much about substantive issues inherent in the welfare and poverty debate, thus rendering invisible the

true nature of these social problems and the inadequacies of the policy prescriptions.

The Message About Welfare

Editorial Opinions

Ten themes are used to classify what the papers' welfare news is about. Which topics did the Times and the News comment on editorially during the study years?

Table 4-1 displays the proportion of editorials which discuss each of the ten themes. The two papers

Table 4-1

Percent Distribution of Subjects Discussed in Editorials, by Newspaper

<u>Subjects Discussed</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
A. Lowering Welfare Costs	17	43	34
B. Federalizing Welfare	59	13	30
C. Administration of Welfare	11	22	18
D. Sanctions Against Agency	13	16	15
E. Court/Legislative Actions	7	7	7
F. Welfare's Impact on Local Area	7	2	4
G. Welfare's Impact on Society	6	2	3
H. Benefits Received by Recipients	13	7	9
I. Behavior of Recipients	4	3	3
J. Other	0	8	5
	137*	123*	128*
N	54	95	149

* Exceeds 100 due to multiple responses; i.e., an editorial could discuss more than one subject.

differ substantially in terms of which welfare-related subjects command the lion's share of their editorial space. We see that the Times most often deals with federalization of welfare--59 percent of its editorials. On the other hand, the News editorials most often center on lowering welfare costs--43 percent of its editorials.

Federalization of welfare programs was a major issue during the decade of the 1970s. Included in this category are such topics as the advantages and disadvantages of a federal takeover of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, and the anticipated savings this would mean for states and localities. Also included in this category are specific discussions of Nixon's Family Assistance Plan (FAP)--the major welfare proposal of the decade--and other reform plans proposed either by Carter in 1976 or by some of the legislators. Finally, the category also includes discussions of the one major change that was made in welfare policy during the 1970s, the enactment of the Supplemental Security Income Program for the aged, blind, and disabled population. This program is, in fact, the first and only instance in this country for a guaranteed income plan, but notably, it applies only to the 'deserving' poor.

The major significance of discussions of federalizing welfare is that the concept runs counter to the prevailing view of how welfare should be administered.

It should be recalled that one of the main remnants from the 17th century English Poor Laws is the local administration of welfare. Thus, to this day we have in this country a range of welfare policies throughout the states that have very different application procedures and pay vastly different benefits. Federalizing the system, on the other hand, would be tantamount to a national policy on welfare, requiring national standards and processes. More importantly, federalizing welfare would be an acknowledgement that poverty is a national problem.

The theme, lowering welfare costs, includes such topics as reducing fraudulent receipt of welfare, reducing the ineligibility rate, increasing child support by absent or deserting parents, increasing the number of welfare recipients required to take or seek jobs, and other discussions of statistical information concerning the cost of welfare or the size of the rolls. This theme captures the spirit of general concern that there is too much welfare and that it is too easily obtained.

Although the topic of lowering welfare costs commands the second largest percentage of the Times editorials, it is a distant second, 59 percent versus 17 percent. The second most frequently discussed topic for the News is that of administration of welfare; 22

percent of its editorials fall within this category. The administration category incorporates discussions of the welfare offices' use of computer technology to detect duplicate receipt of assistance, of increasing or improving the eligibility checks done on recipients, and the many audits of the welfare offices' operations. The thrust of the administration topics is usually whether the welfare bureaucrats are efficiently, and above all effectively, controlling recipient fraud and abuse.

The statistics we just reviewed are influenced heavily by editorial opinions expressed in 1972 by both papers. As we saw earlier, more than half of the editorials examined were published in 1972. The years 1974 and 1976 exhibited considerably less editorial interest, and by 1978 both papers rarely editorialized on welfare subjects. This declining editorial interest parallels the decline in the number of welfare-related news stories published as the decade progressed.

Continuity and Change in Editorial Opinion

In some instances, both the Times and the News take similar positions on issues, and at other times they express views that are diametrically opposed. However, even when the papers' views are similar there is considerable difference in tone.

The Times is consistently critical of Nixon for backing down on his own welfare reform proposal. The paper frequently, during 1972, took the position that Nixon was giving in to the politics of the matter: "The conclusion is inescapable that Mr. Nixon decided that in an election year he would rather have the welfare issue than his own welfare reform, particularly inasmuch as passage could only come about by affronting and overriding his own right-wing supporters" (Times: August 1, 1972). A number of other editorials are just as critical of Nixon, if not more so.

In 1972, the Times is also consistently in favor of the guaranteed income aspect of Nixon's Family Assistance Plan (FAP) proposal. However, it is interesting to note that the paper does not call it a guaranteed income; rather, it is usually referred to as "a guaranteed floor."

As we saw, the News infrequently comments on welfare reform, and when it does, it makes the point that Congress should enact the "substance of Nixon's proposed welfare reform except for the highly dubious and dangerous dole of \$2,400 a year for poor families of four." (News: May 9, 1972). Substance to the News means the workfare aspects of FAP rather than the concept of a guaranteed income.

Another example of the Times' consistency can be found in its editorial opinions on the issue of workfare. The workfare concept proposes that welfare recipients should be forced to work an equivalent number of hours to cover the amount of their welfare grant, assuming minimum wage pay. The Times took a number of opportunities to be very critical of Senator Russell Long and the Senate Finance Committee's proposals for workfare. The following typifies the position of the Times:

The so-called reform proposals put forward by the Senate Finance Committee would make this dismal situation [existing welfare system] even worse. The starvation wage, forced work plan... would degrade the poor, vastly increase costs to the taxpayers, and engender administrative chaos. (Times: June 16, 1972)

Later that same year the Times sees fit to be even more pointed in its criticism:

Mr. Nixon is thus using the work ethic issue, or non-issue, as a device for appealing to the emotions and even the bigotry of millions of people who work for a living and who are prepared to believe that those who do not are shiftless, lazy, and inferior....What is needed to safeguard the work ethic are an economic policy to create more jobs and a social policy to eliminate racial discrimination. (Times: November 16, 1972)

The case of 1972 presidential aspirant McGovern's welfare reform plan, an explicit proposal for income redistribution, is another matter. The Times expresses skepticism:

The McGovern proposals demand searching criticism....Too sudden and drastic a shift to income redistribution might actually intensify other problems such as unemployment and lagging productivity....His welfare proposals, which would provide income supplements not only for the poor but for many workers in the middle class would be extremely costly. Would the benefits to society be worth those costs? (Times: May 6, 1972)

The News is adamantly opposed to McGovern's proposal:

Little support exists for socialistic schemes that would swell welfare outlays....The illusion that government is all-wise, all-powerful, and possesses a magic foundation which spews money for free services and cures for all ills will die hard. But we think most citizens have the native wit and good sense to understand the folly, expense, and danger of rampant welfare-statism if the facts are presented. (News: November 9, 1972)

While the Times consistently argues for passage of the Family Assistance Plan, and the guaranteed income concept, it never specifies a preferred amount, just that \$2,400 is too low. When the National Welfare Rights Organization protested for a specific amount, \$6,500, as a minimum annual income, the Times characterizes the group as "ultra militants and agitators for utopian solutions" (Times: March 28, 1972; June 26, 1972; August 1, 1972). The group is further considered to be complicating the liberals' efforts, and therefore not helping poor people. It is to be noted that the \$6,500 figure is roughly \$1,500 above the 1972 poverty level for a family of four. The Times' portrayal of NWRO coincides

with Miliband's (1969) suggestion that views falling outside the consensus are sometimes aired, but in such a way that reasonable people can dismiss them.

The subject of spending for social service programs provides another instance of the Times' advocacy, in strong terms, for welfare. When Nixon vetoed a social services appropriation in 1972, the Times editorial response is scathing:

The swollen military budget, the misdirected agricultural subsidies, the public works pork barrel, all these and other wasteful expenditures Mr. Nixon signs into law. Only when Congress appropriates 1.8 billion more than he had requested for the nation's social needs does he discover a perfect example of reckless spendingThe President has again called attention to the inverted priorities governing his conduct of the nation's affairs. (Times: August 19, 1972)

The News, on the other hand, supports cutbacks in federal spending for social service programs on several occasions.

The local focus of the News is evident in its targets for criticism or praise. The News editorials are consistently strident in criticizing a number of targets, including John Lindsay for having a welfare policy that is too liberal, the Human Resources Administration's executives for being too lax in monitoring welfare, and in expressing a generally negative attitude toward recipients.

When the News uses its editorial pages to focus on topics which extend beyond New York City, several

themes are prevalent. They include urging taxpayers to help curb welfare abuse by reporting information to the New York State Welfare Inspector-General, criticizing the HEW regulations that grant fair hearings, or due process, to welfare recipients before their grants are terminated, and urging Congress to restore some powers to the states so that the states can deny welfare when they see fit.

Despite the drastic decline between 1972 and 1974 in the number of editorials devoted to welfare (85 vs. 32), the topics covered changed very little. The Times continues to advocate for welfare reform, especially for a negative income tax or a guaranteed annual income; the New York governor's decision to increase welfare payments is praised, and President Ford's proposed budget cuts are chastised for being too hard on the poor, the aged, and the infirm. The News continues its strident criticism of the Human Resources Administration, and its praise of the New York State Welfare Inspector-General for rooting out "the cheats and chiselers."

As noted earlier, welfare-related topics find little space in the editorial columns of the Times in 1976. While the Times urged President Carter to attempt some incremental welfare reform, it concedes that major reform is politically and economically impractical at that time. Other than taking several opportunities to

criticize Ronald Reagan's proposal to transfer welfare programs to state governments, the Times had very little to say on the subject of welfare during 1976.

In 1976 the News becomes even more explicit in its attacks on the administration of welfare and on welfare recipients. The themes running through its editorial pages that year include: the call for welfare 'cheats' to be treated as felons; urging Congress to investigate welfare 'chiseling' which it says costs the nation millions of dollars instead of reinvestigating the Kennedy and King assassinations; the notion that the able-bodied have to be prodded into taking jobs; and the conclusion that AFDC mothers move to New York City to receive welfare benefits based on the 'evidence' that two-thirds of welfare mothers were born outside of New York.

On occasion, both papers attack the Human Resources Administration's management in similar ways, and both urge the New York City Mayor to select a welfare administrator who has a 'business' background rather than a 'social work' background. Also, both papers editorialize on the huge costs of welfare in New York City particularly, and urge at least a federal takeover of the costs.

In 1978 both papers call for welfare reform. However, by this time neither paper is arguing for any drastic change in the welfare system except for a federal

takeover of the money payments. In fact, the Times calls the Carter administration's welfare reform proposal a utopian dream, and praises Carter for abandoning it. The News frames its call for welfare reform in the context that staggering welfare costs are strangling New York and other cities.

The Bottom Line of Editorials:
Reducing Welfare or Reducing Poverty?

The first hypothesis about the nature of the papers' coverage of welfare topics expects that both the Times and the News will more frequently discuss reduction of welfare in their editorials than reduction of poverty. That is, the papers will comment most often on topics which more nearly reflect the predominant views about welfare and poverty. The results displayed in Table 4-2 fail to substantiate the hypothesis completely. For the News the hypothesis is sustained, but for the Times it is not.

When we look at the aggregate data as a dichotomy, comparing editorials focusing on reduction of welfare with those focusing on reduction of poverty, the differences between the two papers are revealed clearly.

Table 4.2¹ shows that on average the proportion of

¹This table aggregates the frequency data from Table 4-1 for the nine themes into two categories and shows the average percentage of articles reporting on

Table 4-2

Percent of Editorials in Each Reduction of
Welfare Category and in Each Reduction of
Poverty Category, by Newspaper
(Weighted Average*)

<u>Aggregate Category</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
Reduction of Welfare	12	30	22
Reduction of Poverty	47	10	22
N	54	87	141

*Average is weighted by number of mentions in each applicable subject category; "Other" category excluded.

Times editorials in each of the poverty reduction categories substantially exceeds that in each of the welfare reduction categories--47 percent versus 12 percent. Thus, editorials concerning poverty-reduction outnumber those concerning welfare-reduction in the Times by about four to one. The reverse is true for the News editorials; by a margin of three to one, reduction of welfare editorials are more prevalent than reduction of poverty ones--30 percent versus 10 percent.

In sum, the statistical data show a distinct difference between the papers; Times editorials overwhelmingly focus on the reduction of poverty, while the subject of News editorials is most often the reduction of welfare.

each of the six themes which form the welfare-reduction focus and the average for each of the three themes which constitute the poverty-reduction focus. Subsequent tables manipulate the data in similar fashion.

When we examine the content of the editorials qualitatively, looking for examples of language that coincide with public opinion, popular stereotypes, and generally with the prevailing consensus about the causes and nature of poverty, the evils of welfare provision, and the moral turpitude of relief recipients, they are plentiful in the News. As we saw, the News' comments on welfare emphasize consistently the fraudulent receipt of public assistance, the ineligibility of a large number of recipients and the ineffectiveness of the welfare bureaucracy to control these problems.

An examination of the Times editorials, on the other hand, reveals considerable information about the issues of welfare reform, the paper's rather consistent advocacy that reform include federalization and a guaranteed income, and occasional comments concerning the benefits received by the recipients.

The Content of News Stories

In the following sections attention focuses on the papers' news pages. These questions are asked: What are the similarities and differences in the frequency with which the Times and the News present stories falling within each of the ten subject matter themes? When writing about the same event or issue, are the papers' stories similar or different? Are news stories

more likely to focus on reduction of welfare or on reduction of poverty? Is there a discernible pattern between the topics discussed in editorials and those reported in news articles?

Table 4-3 presents the percent distribution of subjects discussed in the articles' lead paragraphs. It shows that in the opening paragraphs of welfare-related articles, both papers more frequently discuss subjects pertaining to lowering welfare costs--38 percent of the Times articles and 50 percent of the News articles. As described earlier, this theme covers such topics as reducing welfare fraud, removing ineligible from the rolls, and getting deserting fathers to support their children.

The administration of welfare accounts for the next largest share of article content, 23 percent of the Times articles and 27 percent of the News articles.

In the majority of instances, the themes reported in the opening paragraphs dominate in the balance of the story. Less than two-fifths of the sampled articles include the discussion of additional subjects in the body of the article that are not identified in the lead paragraphs. When additional topics are included in the body of the story they more frequently fall within the lowering welfare costs theme, as is the case with the articles' lead paragraphs.

Table 4-3

Percent Distribution of Subjects Discussed
in Articles, by Newspaper

<u>Subjects Discussed</u>	<u>Times</u> §	<u>News</u> §	<u>Total</u> §
A. Lowering Welfare Costs	38	50	43
B. Federalizing Welfare	20	14	17
C. Administration of Welfare	23	27	25
D. Sanctions Against Agency	14	24	18
E. Court/Legislative Actions	16	9	13
F. Welfare's Impact on Local Area	10	7	8
G. Welfare's Impact on Society	6	4	5
H. Benefits Received by Recipients	16	10	13
I. Behavior of Recipients	8	6	7
J. Other	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
	155*	154*	152*
N	287	230	517

* Exceeds 100 due to multiple responses, i.e.,
an article could discuss more than one subject.

Continuity and Change in Welfare News

At the local level, 1972 was a year for frequent reiteration of the theme that the welfare rolls were expanding and extremely costly because of massive fraud, abuse, and ineligibility of the recipients. Throughout the year there is a running battle between the local New York City Human Resources Administration and the State Welfare Inspector General, and numerous other

public officials. Examination of the New York Times Index reveals that during several weeks of 1972 there are daily articles featuring the fraud and abuse theme. The amount of money said to be wasted is astronomical. Articles make reference to scores of millions of dollars--\$200 or \$250 or \$400 million--that are being wasted or improperly paid. Careful reading usually reveals that these estimates are extrapolations from small samples that are not necessarily representative.

For example, a March 2, 1972, Times article reports the New York State Welfare Inspector General's estimation that 10 to 15 percent of the City's welfare recipients are ineligible, wasting up to \$180 million dollars annually. Near the end of the story one learns of the "admittedly limited study" of one welfare office out of more than forty. Several months later, the Inspector General raised his estimate of the extent and cost of recipient ineligibility. A story in the June 1, 1972, issue of the Times reports the Inspector General's news conference in which he released his new estimate of annual losses--between \$240 and \$400 million dollars. This estimate is based on the review of 70 welfare cases out of more than 500,000.

By the fall of 1974 a connection was being made between New York City's fiscal crisis and the escalating cost of welfare. This prompts an interest in

whether either paper's coverage of welfare topics during the first half of the decade differs from that appearing during the latter half. To address this question I examine the themes of articles appearing during 1972 and 1974 as one group, and compare the distribution with that for the themes appearing during 1976 and 1978, as a second group. I refer to the groups as early-decade and late-decade.

Some of the results are especially informative. The likelihood of articles reporting topics concerned with lowering welfare cost is significantly greater during the late-decade. This is the case for both papers. The 38 percent of articles dealing with lowering welfare cost shown in Table 4-3 for the Times changes radically depending on whether the time is early-decade or late-decade; 29 percent for the early-decade compared to 51 percent for the late-decade period. This theme is similarly affected by the time period in the News; 41 percent for the early-decade period, and 64 percent for the late-decade period. See Table A-1 in Appendix.

None of the other themes shows this sensitivity to the early- and late-decade time periods in the Times, but in the News the administration of welfare theme is affected, although to a lesser degree than we saw for the lowering welfare cost theme.

This analysis seems to substantiate much the same phenomenon that Golding and Middleton (1982) point to in Britain; the fostering of a welfare backlash of sorts due to a downturn in economic conditions.

The Papers' Reports of the Same Event

In 67 separate instances we are certain that a story appearing in each paper is the result of the same stimulus. The criteria for identifying this subset are closeness in publication dates of the stories--within five days of each other--mention of the same source(s), and the content leaves no doubt that the 'who, what, when, where, and why' of the stories are the same.

These 134 articles (67 in each paper) are analyzed separately to see if more can be learned about the papers' similarities. Table 4-4 reports the percent distribution of themes discussed in the lead paragraphs of this group of articles.

The major finding is the remarkable similarity in the way the papers structure the focus of the opening paragraphs of these stories. The themes ranking in first, second, and third places are identical: lowering welfare costs, administration of welfare, and sanctions against the welfare agency. The rank order for the other categories differs by no more than one in either direction, i.e., articles about federalization of

Table 4-4

Percent Distribution of Subjects Discussed in Subset
of Articles Where Each Newspaper's Story Was Based
on Same Stimulus

<u>Subjects Discussed</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %
A. Lowering Welfare Costs	54	52
B. Federalizing Welfare	12	15
C. Administration of Welfare	37	33
D. Sanctions Against Agency	23	27
E. Court/Legislative Actions	15	13
F. Welfare's Impact on Local Area	8	8
G. Welfare's Impact on Society	3	0
H. Benefits Received by Recipients	6	9
I. Behavior of Recipients	8	8
J. Other	0	0
	166*	165*
N	67	67

* Exceeds 100 due to multiple responses, i.e., an article could discuss more than one subject.

welfare rank fourth for the News and fifth for the Times, while those pertaining to the activities of courts or legislatures rank fourth for the Times and fifth for the News. It appears, then, that the lens through which the reporters and editors looked at these 67 events is powerful enough to evoke nearly identical decisions regarding news.

The Major Emphasis of Articles:
Reducing Welfare or Reducing Poverty?

Our hypothesis suggests that in their news pages both the Times and the News will report more frequently on reduction of welfare than on reduction of poverty. The data shown in Table 4-5 support the hypothesis. Typically, larger shares of articles in both papers are devoted to each of the topics included in the reduction of welfare category than to those in the reduction of poverty category. It is to be noted, however, that the margin of difference between the averages is considerably greater in the News than in the Times. The News articles are likely to report on reduction of welfare nearly three times more often than on reduction of poverty--33 percent versus 11 percent. By contrast, only 6 percentage points separate the proportions in the two categories in the Times--24 percent versus 18 percent.

In those instances where additional themes are discussed in the body of the article, the reduction of welfare subjects also predominate, but by a very slim margin in the case of the Times. In the case of the News, the additional topics covered in the body of the sampled articles focus more often on welfare reduction than on poverty reduction, at roughly the same three to one ratio that we see in the lead paragraphs.

Table 4-5

Percent of Articles in Each Reduction
of Welfare Category and in Each Reduction
of Poverty Category, by Newspaper
(Weighted Average*)

<u>Aggregate Category</u>	<u>Times</u> §	<u>News</u> §	<u>Total</u> §
Reduction of Welfare	24	33	28
Reduction of Poverty	18	11	15
N	277	233	500

*Average is weighted by number of mentions in each applicable subject category; "Other" category excluded.

The striking similarities we saw in that subset of stories written in response to the same event are even more pronounced when the data are viewed in the reduction of welfare versus the reduction of poverty dichotomy. Table 4-6 shows that the papers' presentation of these 67 stories is nearly identical. On average, articles pertaining to topics concerning reduction of welfare outnumber those dealing with reduction of poverty by approximately three to one in each paper.

Table 4-6

Percent of Articles in Each Reduction
of Welfare Category and in Each Reduction
of Poverty Category in a Subset of
Newspapers' Stories Based on the Same Stimulus
(Weighted Average*)

<u>Aggregate Category</u>	<u>Times</u> §	<u>News</u> §
Reduction of Welfare	38	37
Reduction of Poverty	13	13
N	67	67

*Average is weighted by number of mentions in each applicable subject category; "Other" category excluded.

Convergence or Divergence:
The Messages of Editorials and Articles

Another hypothesis covering the papers' welfare-related messages suggests that the topics most frequently reported in news articles will parallel those most frequently discussed in editorials. Table 4-7 addresses this issue by comparing the rank order of the nine subject themes in editorials and articles.

The data do not support the hypothesis for the Times. Times editorials most often discuss the federalization of welfare issue; the lowering welfare costs theme is a distant second, while discussions of sanctions against the welfare agency and of recipients' benefits tie for third place. Among the Times news stories,

Table 4-7

Percent Distribution and Rank Order of Subjects
Discussed in Editorials and Articles, by Newspaper

<u>Subjects Discussed</u>	<u>Percent Distribution and Rank</u>							
	<u>Times</u>				<u>News</u>			
	<u>Edi- torials</u> §	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Arti- cles</u> §	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Edi- torials</u> §	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Arti- cles</u> §	<u>Rank</u>
A. Lowering Welfare Costs	17	2	38	1	43	1	50	1
B. Federalizing Welfare	59	1	20	3	13	4	14	4
C. Administration of Welfare	11	5	23	2	22	2	27	2
D. Sanctions Against Agency	13	3.5	14	6	16	3	24	3
E. Court/Legislative Action	7	6.5	16	4.5	7	5.5	9	6
F. Welfare's Impact on Local Area	7	6.5	10	7	2	8.5	7	7
G. Welfare's Impact on Society	6	8	6	9	2	8.5	4	9
H. Benefits Received by Recipients	13	3.5	16	4.5	7	5.5	10	5
I. Behavior of Recipients	4	9	8	8	3	7	6	8
J. Other	0	-	4	-	8	-	3	-
	137*		155*		123*		154*	
N	54		287		95		230	

*Exceeds 100 due to multiple responses, i.e., editorials and articles could discuss more than one subject.

however, the first and second places are occupied by the lowering welfare costs and administration themes; the federalization theme is third. In short, the rank order of subjects discussed in Times editorials bears no resemblance to that for articles.

On the other hand, there is considerable convergence between the themes covered in the News editorials and articles. The subjects occupying ranks one through five for its editorials and articles are the same.

When the data are aggregated into the reduction of welfare/reduction of poverty dichotomy, Table 4-8, we see that on average the Times editorials predominantly focus on reduction of poverty while its articles are primarily directed to reduction of welfare. For the News, however, welfare-reduction themes are predominant among both editorials and articles.

Summary

In sum, the statistical analysis shows that the major share of the welfare newshole in both papers goes to reduction of welfare. Although the difference is less dramatic in the Times than in the News, articles dealing with such themes as reducing fraud, removing ineligible from the rolls, and finding deserting fathers are more successful at negotiating the newsworthiness assessments (Tuchman, 1978a) of reporters

Table 4-8

Percent and Rank Order of Editorials and Articles
in Each Reduction of Welfare Category and in Each
Reduction of Poverty Category, by Newspaper
 (Weighted Average*)

<u>Aggregate Categories</u>	<u>Average Percentage and Rank</u>							
	<u>Times</u>				<u>News</u>			
	<u>Edi- torials</u> %	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Arti- cles</u> %	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Edi- torials</u> %	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Arti- cles</u> %	<u>Rank</u>
Reduction of Welfare	12	2	24	1	30	1	33	1
Reduction of Poverty	47	1	18	2	10	2	11	2
N	54		277		87		223	

*Average is weighted by number of mentions in each applicable subject category; "Other" category excluded.

and editors than are stories on any of the topics within the reduction of poverty construct.

The data also show that when exposed to the same news generating stimulus, striking similarities are apparent in the focus of both papers' stories.

The papers are distinctly different, however, when it comes to the same topics predominating in both editorials and articles. Within the News, the data reveal a great deal of overlap; nearly equal proportions of editorials and articles fall within the welfare-reduction and poverty-reduction categories. No convergence of this sort is apparent in the Times; its editorials clearly concentrate on reduction of poverty, while welfare-reduction predominates in the articles.

The Relative News Play Given Reducing Welfare and Reducing Poverty Themes

In examining the relationship between certain physical properties of editorials and articles, attention is given to measures for news play or prominence and the welfare topics discussed or reported.

To analyze editorials the measures of prominence are based on whether or not an editorial occupies the first space on the editorial page--the lead position--and the length of the editorial. I expect editorials in the lead position, as well as longer editorials, to

discuss reduction of welfare more frequently than poverty reduction.

The subject matter of articles is first examined when page placement alone--front versus inside--is controlled. The hypothesis is that front-page articles will focus more frequently on reduction of welfare than will articles on inside pages. The objective is to see if a single measure of news play is sufficient to explain which welfare topics the papers deem most important.

As indicated earlier, an attention score is used to explore more fully the relationship between prominence of display and subject matter discussed. A second hypothesis in this context is that articles concerned with reduction of welfare are expected to have higher attention index scores than those featuring reduction of poverty.

The methods and data used to examine the hypotheses are discussed below.

The Cases of Editorials

Table 4-9 compares the frequency of appearance of themes in editorials in the lead position with those not in the lead position. The first observation, however, is that welfare-related topics seldom occupy the lead editorial position in either paper. Interestingly,

Table 4-9

Percent Distribution of Subjects Discussed in Editorials,
by Newspaper, by Page Position

In Lead Position on Page

<u>Subjects Discussed</u>	<u>Times</u>			<u>News</u>		
	<u>Yes</u> %	<u>No</u> %	<u>Total</u> %	<u>Yes</u> %	<u>No</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
A. Lowering Welfare Costs	7	20	17	48	41	43
B. Federalizing Welfare	86	50	59	16	11	13
C. Administration of Welfare	0	15	11	20	23	22
D. Sanctions Against Agency	0	18	13	20	14	16
E. Court/Legislative Actions	14	5	7	12	6	7
F. Welfare's Impact on Local Area	7	8	7	0	3	2
G. Welfare's Impact on Society	7	5	6	0	3	2
H. Benefits Received by Recipients	7	15	13	4	9	7
I. Behavior of Recipients	0	5	4	4	3	3
J. Other	0	0	0	4	10	8
	128*	141*	137*	128*	123*	123*
N	14	40	54	25	70	95

* Exceeds 100 due to multiple responses; i.e., an editorial could discuss more than one subject.

identical proportions of each paper's welfare-related editorials--26 percent--appear in the lead position.

Whether the editorial occupies the lead position or not, the Times discusses the issue of federalization of welfare most frequently. On the other hand, topics falling within the category of lowering welfare costs are most frequently discussed in the News regardless of where the editorial is situated.

The data are looked at in the aggregate in order to compare the editorials that focus on the reduction of welfare with those focusing on reduction of poverty. Table 4-10 shows the average percentage of editorials concerned with each theme in the aggregate categories; the distributions are broken down by whether or not the editorial occupies the lead position. Clearly, the Times discusses reduction of poverty more frequently in its editorials occupying the first position on the page. On average, of those Times editorials so situated, 71 percent deal with the topics about reduction of poverty, compared to only 7 percent dealing with reduction of welfare, a ratio of about ten to one. On the other hand, those Times editorials not occupying the lead position are less than three times as likely to deal with reduction of poverty as reduction of welfare--39 percent versus 15 percent.

Table 4-10

Percent of Editorials in Each Reduction of Welfare Category
and in Each Reduction of Poverty Category by Newspaper, by Page Position
 (Weighted Average*)

<u>Aggregate Category</u>	<u>Editorial</u>					
	<u>In Lead Position on Page</u>					
	<u>Times</u>			<u>News</u>		
	<u>Yes</u> %	<u>No</u> %	<u>Total</u> %	<u>Yes</u> %	<u>No</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
Reduction of Welfare	7	15	12	34	28	30
Reduction of Poverty	71	39	47	13	9	10
N	14	40	54	24	63	87

* Average is weighted by number of mentions in each applicable subject category; "Other" category excluded.

In the case of the News Table 4-10 shows a minimal difference between the average proportions of editorials covering reduction of welfare and reduction of poverty when position of the editorials is controlled. The editorials in the lead position are about two-and-one-half times more likely to focus on reduction of welfare than on reduction of poverty, while the editorials not in the lead position are about three times more likely to deal with reduction of welfare.

The hypothesis asserting a relationship between an editorial's placement and the theme discussed is not supported. It is not sustained for the Times where editorials in the first position on the page are considerably more likely to discuss reduction of poverty than reduction of welfare. For the News there is a minimal difference between the frequency with which topics regarding reduction of poverty and reduction of welfare are discussed, when page position is controlled, but not in the expected direction; the ratio of welfare-reduction to poverty-reduction editorials is greater when the editorials are not in the lead position.

The next measure of news play is obtained by comparing the length (number of words) of editorials discussing reduction of welfare and reduction of poverty.

Previously we saw that generally there are considerable differences between the papers in terms of

the length of their welfare-related editorials. Sixty-one percent of the Times editorials are less than 300 words, while 39 percent are longer. All of the News editorials are under 300 words, and 93 percent are 200 words or less. This kind of difference would be expected regardless of the topic.

We expected longer editorials to discuss reduction of welfare more frequently than shorter ones. Again, the data do not support the hypothesis for the Times, as Table 4-11 indicates. In fact, the opposite is true--the longer the Times editorial, the less likely it is to deal with reduction of welfare. The Times editorials which exceed 300 words are more likely to focus on reduction of poverty. The Times editorials in the 301 to 400 word range are roughly four times more likely to discuss themes dealing with reduction of poverty than reduction of welfare, while those over 400 words are about seven times more likely to deal with the subjects about reduction of poverty.

In contrast, the data support the hypothesis concerning the relationship between length and subject matter in the case of the News. Longer editorials in the News--those in the 200 to 300 word range--on average discuss topics within the category of reduction of welfare more frequently than shorter editorials. However, the average proportion of reduction of poverty editorials

Table 4-11

Percent of Editorials in Each Reduction
of Welfare Category and in Each Reduction of
Poverty Category, by Length of Editorial,
by Newspaper
(Weighted Average*)

<u>Length</u>	<u>Times</u>		<u>News</u>	
	<u>Reduction</u> <u>of Welfare</u> %	<u>Reduction</u> <u>of Poverty</u> %	<u>Reduction</u> <u>of Welfare</u> %	<u>Reduction</u> <u>of Poverty</u> %
< 100	100	0	29	8
100-200	23	43	31	14
201-300	24	39	62	22
301-400	13	52	0	0
401 >	10	72	0	0
Average	12	47	30	10
N	54		87	

*Average is weighted by number of mentions in each applicable subject category; "Other" category excluded.

also increases with length. This means that the ratio of reduction of welfare editorials to reduction of poverty editorials does not increase with length of editorial in the News. The ratio of articles concerning welfare reduction to those about poverty reduction in both the shortest News editorials (those less than 100 words) and the longest (those exceeding 200 words) is roughly the same.

Some of the News editorial headlines are especially catchy, ostensibly to fan the fire of the popular notion that welfare benefits are too easily obtained, and that the welfare bureaucracy does not effectively control the increasing rolls. The following are examples of headlines for editorials in the lead position and for those that are longer than average. They are typical of News editorials advocating lower welfare costs and suggesting that the welfare bureaucracy is inept: "Re-life Crackdowns--Hooray." "Running Out Of Taxpayers," "Ripping Off The Taxpayer," "Great Foodstamp Ripoff," "Fudging Welfare Figures," "Living It Up At HRA," and "Another Case of the Slows."

The News Play of Welfare Articles

The first expectation stated concerning the prominence of display of welfare-related articles is that those reporting on themes about reduction of welfare are more likely to appear on the papers' front pages than on inside pages. Tables 4-12 and 4-13 provide data that relate to this proposition. In both papers, front page articles report subjects pertaining to lowering welfare costs more frequently--42 percent of the Times and 67 percent of the News articles. These proportions exceed those for the same category when the

Table 4-12

Percent Distribution of Subjects Discussed in Articles,
by Newspaper, by Page Placement

<u>Subjects Discussed</u>	<u>Page Placement</u>					
	<u>Times</u>			<u>News</u>		
	<u>Front</u> %	<u>Inside</u> %	<u>Total</u> %	<u>Front**</u> %	<u>Inside</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
A. Lowering Welfare Costs	42	37	38	67	44	50
B. Federalizing Welfare	18	20	20	7	16	14
C. Administration of Welfare	18	23	23	29	27	27
D. Sanctions Against Agency	12	14	14	16	23	24
E. Court/Legislative Actions	15	16	16	7	10	9
F. Welfare's Impact on Local Area	9	10	10	7	6	7
G. Welfare's Impact on Society	6	6	6	2	4	4
H. Benefits Received by Recipients	12	17	16	4	12	10
I. Behavior of Recipients	9	8	8	7	5	6
J. Other	0	4	4	4	3	3
	141*	155*	155*	150*	150*	154*
N	33	254	287	55	175	230

* Exceeds 100 due to multiple responses; i.e., an article could discuss more than one subject.

** Front page defined as pages one through five.

Table 4-13

Percent of Articles in Each Reduction of Welfare Category
and in Each Reduction of Poverty Category, by Newspaper, by Page Placement
 (Weighted Category*)

<u>Aggregate Category</u>	<u>Page Placement</u>					
	<u>Times</u>			<u>News</u>		
	<u>Front</u> %	<u>Inside</u> %	<u>Total</u> %	<u>Front**</u> %	<u>Inside</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
Reduction of Welfare	26	24	24	45	31	33
Reduction of Poverty	16	18	18	7	13	11
N	33	244	277	53	170	223

* Average is weighted by number of mentions in each applicable subject category; "Other" category excluded.

** Front page defined as pages one through five.

articles are on an inside page--37 percent and 44 percent respectively. With the exception of the administration of welfare category for the Times and the sanctions against welfare agency category for the News, the other individual themes comprising the focus on reduction of welfare show relatively minor differences when page placement is controlled.

However, when the data are aggregated into the reduction of welfare versus the reduction of poverty dichotomy, as Table 4-13 does, the hypothesis that articles reporting on reduction of welfare are more likely to appear on the front pages of the papers is supported, though just barely for the Times. By only a two percentage point margin, front page Times articles, on average, more often report topics with the reduction of welfare focus than those on inside pages do, 26 percent versus 24 percent. For the News, the margin of difference is considerably greater; on average, 45 percent of front page articles deal with reduction of welfare compared to 31 percent of those on inside pages.

It is important to note that the predominance of welfare-reduction articles over poverty-reduction ones that we saw in Table 4-5 continues to hold when page placement is controlled. In fact, for both papers the predominance not only holds, but increases for articles appearing on the front page.

Measuring News Play with a Composite Index

To facilitate the analysis in this section we collapse the six possible scores into three categories: low incorporates scores 0 and 1; medium includes scores 2 and 3; and high includes scores 4 and 5. Table 4-14 displays for the three attention levels, the percentage of articles reporting on each theme.

In the Times, the welfare-related articles having high attention scores are more likely to report topics in the administration of welfare category, followed by those constituting the behavior of welfare recipients theme. Those categories making up the reduction of poverty construct--B, E, H--are least likely to have high attention scores.

What is the nature of the stories which commanded placement on the front page, had headlines of at least four columns, contained 250 words or more, or were accompanied by a photograph or chart? I examine some of the articles which received high attention. An example of a high attention article that reports on one of the administration of welfare topics can be found in a story that appeared in the February 1, 1972, issue of the Times. This story began on the first page, was rather long--864 words--had a four-column headline, and contained a photograph of an HRA official. The

Table 4-14

Percent Distribution of Articles Scoring Low, Medium, High
on Attention Index by Subject Category, by Newspaper

<u>Subjects Discussed</u>	<u>Attention Index Score</u>					
	<u>Times</u>			<u>News</u>		
	Low (0-1) %	Medium (2-3) %	High (4-5) %	Low (0-1) %	Medium (2-3) %	High (4-5) %
A. Lowering Welfare Costs	39	39	20	55	43	56
B. Federalizing Welfare	20	22	5	15	14	11
C. Administration of Welfare	23	21	30	27	30	22
D. Sanctions Against Agency	15	13	10	21	29	17
E. Court/Legislative Actions	22	12	0	15	6	6
F. Welfare's Impact on Local Area	8	12	10	5	8	6
G. Welfare's Impact on Society	5	6	15	5	3	3
H. Benefits Received by Recipients	15	18	10	7	14	3
I. Behavior of Recipients	6	8	25	4	6	8
J. Other	4	2	15	1	3	8
	157*	153*	140*	155*	156*	140*
N	130	137	20	83	111	36

* Exceeds 100 due to multiple responses; i.e., an article could discuss more than one subject.

headline reads "City's New View of Welfare: A Job For Businessmen." In essence, the story features the views of a newly appointed HRA official who comes from the private sector and is Harvard-educated in business administration. The idea that the story advances is that welfare should be administered by people trained in management and business techniques rather than by those having social work backgrounds.

The antisocial behavior of welfare recipients, particularly an association with drug addiction, and the notion of family disintegration are among other topics which receive high attention in the Times. For example, a front-page Times story appearing March 13, 1972, has a headline which reads, "Rising Welfare Here Laid to Family and Addict Ills." The story exceeds 500 words, and contains a photograph of a state official. The article gives the details of a report released by the state official that purports to show that the rise in welfare is due to the disintegration of the black and Puerto Rican family, rather than to unemployment or other economic causes.

The same week finds a March 16, 1972, front-page article with the headline, "Addicts Termed a Peril to Welfare." The 700-plus word article is based on the HRA Commissioner's press conference and paints the picture that the major problem with welfare is the drug

addiction of the recipients.

On other occasions, front-page welfare stories in the Times report on the fraudulent receipt of welfare, on the need to reduce the proportion of recipients who are ineligible, and some of the numerous charges leveled against the welfare bureaucracy by the various oversight bodies.

For the News articles, the subjects occupying the first four ranks were the same, regardless of whether the attention interval is low or high. However, at both the low and high attention levels, articles reporting topics about lowering welfare cost outnumbered the other themes by a wide margin. Two of the subject matter categories making up the reduction of poverty construct--E, H--are least likely to have high attention scores.

When the News articles receiving high attention are examined qualitatively, the topics within the theme of lowering welfare cost that recur over and over are how many welfare recipients there are, and how much welfare is costing. The numerous attacks on the local welfare bureaucracy, especially those by the state welfare Inspector General, are frequently among the News high attention stories.

Consider this example of the News high attention articles: a January 7, 1972 headline reads, "Budget

Shows One in Six Will Get Relief in 1973." The story gives the details of the Human Resources Administration's proposed budget, the extent to which it is an increase over the prior year's budget, and concludes that welfare is the city's number one fiscal concern. A backdrop of stories like this helps underscore the negative reports of rampant recipient fraud and inept administration.

When the mean attention scores for each of the subject-matter categories are reviewed in Table 4-15 we see some similarities between the Times and the News. Both papers give most attention to those articles that deal with the behavior of welfare recipients. Stories dealing with the behavior of welfare recipients include reports of such things as the incidence of separation, divorce, and desertion among welfare families, or the use of drugs and alcohol by recipients of aid, or the absence of the work ethic among those on relief. The least attention goes to those welfare-related articles that focus on topics pertaining to the activities of courts or legislatures. For the other categories, the rankings of the two papers bear no resemblance.

Reducing Welfare vs. Reducing Poverty:
Is There a Difference in News Play?

Table 4-16 collapses the data which show the distribution of articles by subjects and attention levels

Table 4-15

Average Attention Index Score and Rank Order
of Articles by Subject Category, by Newspaper

<u>Subject Discussed</u>	<u>Times</u>		<u>News</u>	
	<u>Avg. Score</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Avg. Score</u>	<u>Rank</u>
A. Lowering Welfare Costs	1.53	7	2.14	4
B. Federalizing Welfare	1.49	8	2.00	6
C. Administration of Welfare	1.74	5	1.98	7
D. Sanctions Against Agency	1.65	6	2.16	3
E. Court/Legislative Actions	1.33	9	1.62	9
F. Welfare's Impact on Local Area	2.00	3	2.27	2
G. Welfare's Impact on Society	2.06	2	1.75	8
H. Benefits Received by Recipients	1.78	4	2.09	5
I. Behavior of Recipients	2.08	1	2.62	1
J. Other	1.70	-	3.00	-
N		325		230

into the dichotomous categories. A similar phenomenon is apparent in both papers. Among each paper's low- and medium-level attention articles, the ratio of welfare reduction to poverty reduction is nearly identical, but when it comes to the high attention articles, this ratio changes markedly. The likelihood of the Times high attention articles focusing on reduction of welfare

Table 4-16

Percent of Articles in Each Reduction of Welfare Category and in Each
Reduction of Poverty Category, by Attention Index Score, by Newspaper
(Weighted Average*)

<u>Aggregate Category</u>	<u>Attention Index Score</u>					
	<u>Times</u>			<u>News</u>		
	<u>Low (0-1)</u> %	<u>Medium (2-3)</u> %	<u>High (4-5)</u> %	<u>Low (0-1)</u> %	<u>Medium (2-3)</u> %	<u>High (4-5)</u> %
Reduction of Welfare	25	24	21	37	31	36
Reduction of Poverty	20	18	8	13	13	8
N	125	135	17	82	108	33

* Average is weighted by number of mentions in each applicable subject category; "Other" category excluded.

instead of poverty reduction is better than two-and-one-half to one; the comparable ratio for the News is more than four to one. In the papers' low- and medium-level attention articles, the same ratio is considerably closer.

We hypothesize that articles reporting reduction of welfare subjects will have higher attention index scores than those discussing topics concerned with reduction of poverty. The aggregate data in Table 4-17 test the hypothesis. The data show that, on average, for both papers, those articles focusing on reduction of welfare have higher mean attention scores than those focusing on reduction of poverty--1.72 versus 1.53 for the Times and 2.13 versus 1.92 for the News. Thus, the hypothesis is sustained for both papers. This means that typically articles reporting on welfare reduction have wider headlines or are longer or are more often on the front page or use illustrations more often than articles reporting on reduction of poverty.

Summary

To take stock of the preceding analyses that address questions about the relationship between prominence of display and the types of welfare themes discussed or reported, several summary observations are in order. When it comes to the papers' editorials, the

Table 4-17

Attention Index Score and Rank Order for Articles
in Each Reduction of Welfare Category and in
Each Reduction of Poverty Category, by Newspaper
(Weighted Average*)

<u>Aggregate Category</u>	<u>Times</u>		<u>News</u>	
	<u>Avg. Score</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Avg. Score</u>	<u>Rank</u>
Reduction of Welfare	1.72	1	2.13	1
Reduction of Poverty	1.53	2	1.92	2
N	308		223	

*Average is weighted by number of mentions in each applicable subject category; "Other" category excluded.

findings indicate that the News generally gives more prominent display to welfare reduction than it does to poverty reduction. The opposite is the case for Times editorials. Our expectations, then, are sustained by the News data, but challenged by the Times.

For news articles, the picture is different. All measurements of newsplay vis-a-vis topics reported suggest that stories covering themes about welfare reduction are generally displayed more prominently than those dealing with reduction of poverty. Typically, topics on welfare reduction are more often reported on the paper's front pages. Further, the combination of variables comprising the attention score are distributed in such a way that articles reporting on themes in the category

of reduction of welfare have higher average scores.

Welfare as Presidential Election Year News

In the opening chapter, the political character of welfare was established. Former Presidents Nixon and Carter included the welfare issue in their campaign rhetoric and subsequently proposed legislation to overhaul the system, but to limited avail. Their challengers for office and various Senate and House leaders also included welfare issues of one kind or another in their repertoires of what-is-wrong and what-is-needed.

Much of the news coverage in both papers during the federal election year reveals how the public, politicians, or other persons view welfare recipients and policies. Nixon's welfare reform plan--which included the concept of a guaranteed income--was still being debated in 1972. Part of the reason for the plan's demise can be seen in these remarks attributed to one of the most conservative senators, Russell Long:

I'm willing to stay here until Christmas to educate the Senate on the dangers of this idea of a guaranteed annual income. Some of us are convinced this area of guaranteeing income for not working would destroy this country. (Times: October 4, 1972)

Even though Nixon's plan has been characterized as progressive by many, it was probably his conservative rhetoric that inspired some temporary support for the

proposal. For example, a News article which quotes Nixon demonstrates this:

This year must be the year in which we raze the ramshackle welfare system....America's welfare system is a failure that grows worse every day. Too many Americans can get more money by going on welfare than by going to work....The basic immorality of the system still prevails; in most states welfare still offers a man a bounty to desert his family. (News: March 28, 1972)

By contrast, McGovern's plan for welfare reform and a guaranteed income received little coverage in the New York City press except for a few derisive references and the evidence suggests that it was solidly rejected by the public.

An interesting explanation has been offered for the differences in the public's perception of and support for the Nixon and the McGovern proposals for a guaranteed income: "The most significant difference between the...plans was not the amount of the stipends or their probable impact on society and the economy, but the way in which the plans were symbolized" (Bennett, 1980:172). The reasoning was that McGovern's failure to couch his proposal in familiar symbols cost him popular support. On the other hand, Nixon's pronouncements about the Family Assistance Plan were continuously framed in terms of what it would do to punish or rehabilitate recipients who were reluctant to work rather than in the context of a guaranteed income.

No comprehensive plan for changing the welfare system has as yet garnered sufficient support for congressional passage. This fact affected the manner in which Nixon's Family Assistance Plan (FAP) was viewed. For all intents and purposes FAP was a plan for a guaranteed annual income, and as such, represented an attempt to bring about a major shift in the American approach to welfare. The political rhetoric contained in most of the reform proposals in the 1970s contained references to "workfare" and exhortations that what the country needed was more work rather than more welfare.

The portion of the 1972 GOP platform pertaining to welfare reform provides one clue to the thinking that prevailed at that time:

We insist that there are too many people on welfare rolls who should not be there....We reject as unconscionable the idea that all citizens have the right to be supported by the Government, regardless of their ability or desire to support themselves and their family. (Times: August 21, 1972)

In 1976, the issue of welfare reform is still on the national agenda, but not to the extent that it had been in 1972. The Democratic party platform plank concerning welfare reform shows some vestiges of the prevailing preoccupation with getting welfare recipients to work:

We should move toward replacement of our existing inadequate and wasteful system with a simplified system of income maintenance, substantially

financed by the federal government, which includes a requirement that those able to work be provided with appropriate available jobs or job training opportunities. (Times: July 14, 1976)

More typical of the 1976 coverage of issues of welfare reform are the many pleas of local politicians that the federal government absorb more of the cost of welfare. Welfare costs are blamed partially for New York's fiscal crisis and for property tax increases around the state.

Even though there is, as we have seen, some coverage of issues like those dealing with welfare reform or the impact of welfare on recipients' work ethic, the welfare-related news during each of the presidential election years and in both papers is dominated by stories about "welfare queens," "welfare cheaters," "welfare fraud," "illegal relief," "relief gyms," "inept administration," and "crime in welfare hotels."

As we saw earlier in this chapter, the Times editorials during 1972 strongly advocate comprehensive welfare reform while the News editorials are lukewarm. By the last half of the decade, however, editorially the Times concedes that major reform is not possible and both papers limit their urgings to a federal takeover of welfare costs as a means of granting fiscal relief to states and localities.

This backdrop is relevant to the comparison of the content of welfare news stories during election years

and years which are not. We anticipate that the heat of the political debate about welfare during the presidential election years is such that those articles reporting on reduction of welfare get more news play than those covering reduction of poverty.

News Play in Presidential Election Years

For both papers, the proportion of articles having high attention scores is less in 1974 and 1978 than during the presidential election years. Only three percent of the Times' 1974 and 1978 articles have high attention scores, compared to 10 percent with high scores in the years 1972 and 1976; 9 percent of the News articles in 1974 and 1978 have high scores compared to 19 percent in the presidential election years. Conversely, the proportion of articles having low scores is less in both papers during the presidential election years than during the 1974 and 1978 periods, 41 percent versus 52 percent for the Times and 30 percent versus 47 percent for the News.

Table 4-18 presents the mean attention scores for each theme, while controlling for time period. Recall that each article could receive a score of 0 through 5, based on headline width, length of article, page placement, and use of illustrations. The most

Table 4-18

Average Attention Index Score and Rank Order of Articles by Subject Category,
During Presidential Election Years and Non-Presidential Election Years,
by Newspaper

<u>Subjects Discussed</u>	<u>Average Score and Rank</u>							
	<u>Presidential Election Years</u>				<u>Non-Presidential Election Years</u>			
	<u>Times</u>		<u>News</u>		<u>Times</u>		<u>News</u>	
	<u>Avg.</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Avg.</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Avg.</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Avg.</u>	<u>Rank</u>
A. Lowering Welfare Costs	1.66	8	2.44	2	1.35	6	1.56	5
B. Federalizing Welfare	1.70	7	2.35	4	1.26	7	1.60	4
C. Administration of Welfare	1.81	5	2.26	5	1.59	3	1.54	6
D. Sanctions Against Agency	1.71	6	2.36	3	1.50	5	1.79	3
E. Court/Legislative Actions	1.64	9	2.00	6	1.04	9	1.20	8
F. Welfare's Impact on Local Area	2.19	3	2.70	1	1.75	1	1.40	7
G. Welfare's Impact on Society	2.55	1	1.75	9	1.17	8	0.00	9
H. Benefits Received by Recipients	1.90	4	2.00	6	1.59	3	2.15	2
I. Behavior of Recipients	2.36	2	1.86	8	1.70	2	3.50	1
J. Other	2.17	-	3.33	-	1.00	-	1.00	-
N	175		145		112		85	

significant finding is that in all but two instances the mean attention score for each theme is larger in the election years than in the non-election years. The exceptions are the categories of behavior of recipients and welfare benefits for the News. In every instance, the Times gives more attention to all welfare-related topics in presidential election years than it does in the 1974 and 1978 periods.

Reducing Welfare vs. Reducing Poverty:
The Influence of Politics

I expected that the extra pressure of political rhetoric emanating from office-holders and office-seekers would result in added emphasis during the presidential election years on the themes defined as constituting a focus on the reduction of welfare.

Tables 4-19 and 4-20 display the aggregate data for the Times and News respectively. Examining each paper's articles that received high attention shows that themes about reduction of poverty have less chance of being prominently displayed during election years than during non-election years. Among the Times articles with high attention scores, the ratio of articles focusing on welfare-reduction to those dealing with poverty-reduction is more than three to one--20 percent versus 6 percent. During the non-presidential election years, however, the news play predominance of the reduction of

Table 4-19

Percent of Articles in Each Reduction of Welfare Category and in Each Reduction of Poverty Category, by Attention Score Index, During Presidential Election Years and Non-Presidential Election Years (Times) (Weighted Average*)

<u>Aggregate Category</u>	<u>Attention Index Score</u>					
	<u>Presidential Election Years</u>			<u>Non-Presidential Election Years</u>		
	<u>Low (0-1)</u> %	<u>Medium (2-3)</u> %	<u>High (4-5)</u> %	<u>Low (0-1)</u> %	<u>Medium (2-3)</u> %	<u>High (4-5)</u> %
Reduction of Welfare	26	24	20	24	26	50
Reduction of Poverty	16	18	6	24	19	33
N	69	86	14	56	49	3

* Average is weighted by number of mentions in each applicable subject category; "Other" category excluded.

Table 4-20

Percent of Articles in Each Reduction of Welfare Category and in Each Reduction of Poverty Category, by Attention Score Index, During Presidential Election Years and Non-Presidential Election Years (News) (Weighted Average*)

<u>Aggregate Category</u>	<u>Attention Index Score</u>					
	<u>Presidential Election Years</u>			<u>Non-Presidential Election Years</u>		
	<u>Low (0-1)</u> %	<u>Medium (2-3)</u> %	<u>High (4-5)</u> %	<u>Low (0-1)</u> %	<u>Medium (2-3)</u> %	<u>High (4-5)</u> %
Reduction of Welfare	35	33	38	40	27	38
Reduction of Poverty	11	10	9	16	20	13
N	43	71	25	39	37	8

* Average is weighted by number of mentions in each applicable subject category; "Other" category excluded.

welfare articles is considerably less.

The same phenomenon occurs in News articles. Among those with high scores, the ratio of welfare-reduction to poverty-reduction articles is better than four to one during the election years, but only three to one in the 1974 and 1978 time period; that is, topics on poverty-reduction are slightly more prevalent when there is no presidential election.

Even more decisive evidence of the papers' tendency to give more news play to reduction of welfare during the election years is seen in Table 4-21. During presidential election years, the mean attention score for articles concerned with reduction of welfare in the Times is 1.87; the comparable figure for non-election years is 1.48. For the News the mean attention score for welfare-reduction articles appearing in the presidential election years is 2.34, but only 1.72 during the 74/78 time period. It is to be noted that articles reporting on reduction of poverty also have higher mean attention scores during the presidential election years than during the non-election years, even though they are rarely among those most prominently displayed.

Summary

It seems clear that there is a relationship between national-level political debate and controversy

Table 4-21

Attention Index Score and Rank Order for Articles in Each Reduction
of Welfare Category and Each Reduction of Poverty Category,
During Presidential Election Years and Non-Presidential
Election Years, by Newspaper
(Weighted Average*)

<u>Aggregate Category</u>	<u>Average Score and Rank</u>							
	<u>Presidential Election Years</u>				<u>Non-Presidential Election Years</u>			
	<u>Times</u>		<u>News</u>		<u>Times</u>		<u>News</u>	
	<u>Avg.</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Avg.</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Avg.</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Avg.</u>	<u>Rank</u>
Reduction of Welfare	1.87	1	2.34	1	1.43	1	1.72	1
Reduction of Poverty	1.76	2	2.16	2	1.26	2	1.68	2
N	169		139		108		84	

* Average is weighted by number of mentions in each applicable subject category; "Other" category excluded.

on the subject of welfare and the amount of news play the papers give welfare-related articles. During presidential election years we are apt to find both papers giving considerably more news play to welfare-reduction than they do during non-election years. In addition, the interrelatedness of politics and welfare as a social policy issue is such that just about all reports on the subject are more prominently displayed during the presidential election years.

Images of Welfare Recipients and Programs

The material presented so far alludes to the kinds of images the papers paint of welfare recipients and programs and to the manner in which they are displayed. Recalling the types of themes that make up the categories of reduction of welfare and reduction of poverty enables us to infer that to the extent that themes concerning reduction of welfare are more frequently and more prominently discussed and reported than those about reduction of poverty, a negative perception of welfare recipients and programs is advanced.

The aim now is to focus more pointedly on the papers' images of welfare recipients and programs. We anticipate that editorials and articles are more likely to characterize recipients and welfare programs in unfavorable terms that conform to the prevailing

stereotypes.

The first, although indirect, indicator of the papers' creating stereotypical images is found in the lack of precision they display when referring to welfare recipients. There are a number of different types of welfare programs: Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Home Relief or General Assistance as it is called in some states, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) which covers the poor who are aged, blind and disabled, Medicaid, food stamps, and some would argue that Social Security is a social welfare program rather than an insurance program. If either paper represents public opinion these various categories of welfare assistance do not mean very much.

Most editorials and articles do not refer to a specific welfare program at all. Only 27 percent of the Times editorials specify a program and a mere 8 percent of the News editorials indicate the program being discussed, as Table 4-22 shows.

In the majority of both papers' articles, no specific type of welfare program is mentioned; rather, the word, welfare, is used in an amorphous way. However, the Times is about twice as likely to specify the welfare program being referred to than is the News; 41 percent of the Times articles mention the type of welfare program compared to only 20 percent of the articles

Table 4-22

Percent of Editorials Referring to
Specific Welfare Program, by Newspaper

<u>Welfare Program</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
AFDC	18	6	11
Home Relief	2	0	1
SSI	17	0	7
Medicaid	5	0	2
Food Stamps	2	1	1
Social Security	5	1	2
None Mentioned	73 122*	92 100	84 108*
N	66	99	165

* Exceeds 100 due to multiple responses; i.e., an editorial could refer to more than one welfare program.

in the News.

As Table 4-23 shows, when a welfare program is specified, it is most often the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program. With the exception of the welfare program for the aged, blind, and disabled, Supplemental Security Income, AFDC is mentioned more than twice as often as any other welfare program in the Times' coverage. It is interesting to note that the Home Relief Program, which costs New York City the most and is comprised of recipients who are ostensibly "employable,"

Table 4-23

Percent of Articles Referring to
Specific Welfare Programs, by Newspaper

<u>Welfare Program</u>	<u>Times</u> §	<u>News</u> §	<u>Total</u> §
AFDC	26	13	20
Home Relief	12	7	10
SSI	16	4	11
Medicaid	6	4	5
Food Stamps	5	2	4
Social Security	2	0	1
None Mentioned	59 125*	80 110*	68 119*
N	325	230	555

*Exceeds 100 due to multiple responses; i.e., an article could refer to more than one program.

is mentioned considerably less often by both papers than the AFDC program.

As a general rule, welfare recipients especially are only categorized implicitly as deserving or undeserving.

Editorial Images

Our hypothesis suggests that both papers' editorials are more likely to characterize welfare recipients and welfare programs in unfavorable than in favorable ways. Table 4-24 presents data on this question.

Table 4-24

Percent of Editorials That Are Favorable
and Unfavorable to Welfare Recipients
and Programs, by Newspaper

<u>Direction of Bias and Subject</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
Favorable/Recipients	2	0	1
Favorable/Programs	2	13	9
Unfavorable/Recipients	12	29	22
Unfavorable/Programs	23	40	33
Neutral	68 107*	30 112*	46 111*
N	66	99	165

*Exceeds 100 due to multiple responses; i.e., an editorial could contain favorable and unfavorable references to recipients and programs.

Each editorial was examined for the presence of judgmental adjectives, phrases, and inferences to describe welfare recipients or welfare programs. It was then determined whether or not these judgmental statements were favorable or unfavorable to recipients or programs. Editorials not containing explicit judgmental language were coded as neutral.

The table shows that most--68 percent--of the Times welfare-related editorials are neutral; yet, better than a third of its editorials exhibit unfavorable language or inferences. When the Times shows bias, it is

most often unfavorable to welfare programs, followed by editorials unfavorable to welfare recipients. The instances where the Times is considered biased against recipients are those in which the editorials exhibit the indiscriminate use of such words or phrases as "welfare cheats or chiselers." On the occasions in which the Times was unfavorable to various welfare programs, the administration of the programs was frequently the target of most complaints; for example, the instances where the Human Resources Administration's executives are chastised for poor administration.

The News editorials, on the other hand, are more likely to show bias against welfare recipients and programs than to be neutral or favorable to recipients and welfare programs. Most often, unfavorable bias is seen in the News characterizations of recipients as cheats, chiselers, leeches or the use of a variety of other negative terms; and attacks against the administrators of the welfare agency in New York for allowing recipient cheating. The instances of favorable depiction of welfare programs include the News' giving praise to programs instituted to catch the "cheats," "chiselers," or "leeches."

The News' descriptions of welfare recipients are especially virulent. Consider these examples:

More leeches...will be found when Sugarman's forces carry out their pending face-to-face recertification program for all welfare cases.. Let's not rest until every relief fraud has been exposed, booted, and, where possible, prosecuted. (News: September 15, 1972)

Many a father in lower income brackets nowadays just disappears, reasoning that welfare will take care of his wife and children. Or he feigns a disappearance and is careful to be away from home when social service workers come around. (News: March 14, 1972)

New York, New Jersey, California have enough problems providing for bona fide residents in genuine need. It's time they refused to become dumping grounds for those who move about shopping for the richest handouts....Industrial states are defenseless against nomadic dole seekers. (News: January 25, 1972)

Times welfare-related editorial headlines are generally innocuous. We found only one instance of the word, welfare, being coupled with another word, mess, to connote a negative meaning. On the other hand, a significant number of the News editorial headlines link the word welfare with obviously negative words or phrases such as "vanishing pappies," "dope fiends," "cheats," "robbery," "giveaway," "ripoff," and "fraud"; and with suggestions of remedies cast in symbolic language such as "collaring," "flushing," "crushing," "cracking down on" the "cheats."

The hypothesis that editorials are more likely to characterize welfare recipients and programs in unfavorable terms is only partially supported. It is sustained for the News but not for the Times. News

editorials are likely to characterize welfare recipients and programs unfavorably, while the Times is most often neutral.

The Prevalence of Negative Images in Articles

Table 4-25 displays the proportion of articles exhibiting bias and the proportion considered neutral. Sizable percentages of both papers' articles show no attempt to create either a favorable or unfavorable picture of welfare recipients and programs--47 percent of the Times articles and 39 percent of the News articles. The more important finding, however, is that more than half of the articles cast recipients and programs in a negative light.

The papers are remarkably similar in the extent to which they use language or inferences that depict recipients and programs unfavorably--54 percent of the Times articles and 53 percent of the News articles. Conversely, the papers rarely create a favorable image of welfare recipients, although a sizable minority of articles are favorable toward welfare programs. In the bulk of these instances the papers praise any administrative aspect of the welfare program that is geared to reducing ineligibility or uncovering welfare "cheats."

Table 4-25

Percent of Articles That Are Favorable
and Unfavorable to Welfare Recipients
and Programs, by Newspaper

<u>Direction of Bias and Subject</u>	<u>Times</u> §	<u>News</u> §	<u>Total</u> §
Favorable/Recipients	4	2	3
Favorable/Programs	10	17	13
Unfavorable/Recipients	32	23	28
Unfavorable/Programs	22	30	25
Neutral	47 115*	39 111*	43 112*
N	325	230	555

*Exceeds 100 due to multiple responses; i.e., an article could contain favorable and unfavorable references to recipients and programs.

Since articles favorable to recipients are such oddities, I examine the few cases that depict recipients of aid in a positive light.

The first example is an exceptionally long--more than 1300 words--human interest story appearing in the Times on January 22, 1972. The headline reads, "Welfare Maze Traps a Proud Mother." The story features an industrious working mother of several children who holds two jobs and is unhappy about receiving welfare. The article centers on bureaucratic harassment of the woman, noting that the welfare office is requiring her

to take court action against her estranged husband. The story infers that she is being treated unfairly.

Another Times article that depicts a favorable image of welfare recipients appears on August 1, 1972. This story features several welfare recipients who have been placed in work-relief jobs in order to "earn" their grants. The recipients are quoted as happy to be working and city officials are quoted to the effect that the program is saving money. Another story features work-relief recipients later that same month, August 28, 1972, and quotes welfare officials' statements that the recipients are outperforming regular civil service workers in their job performance.

Two 1976 articles, one appearing November 28, 1976, and the other December 1, 1976, feature a disabled person and the elderly as victims of the welfare bureaucracy. A picture of the disabled man appears on the Times front page. The message of that story is that the Social Security Administration which administers welfare for the aged, disabled, and blind poor, is insensitive to the needs of people like the featured man.

On April 16, 1978, a Times feature story describes a mother of two teenage boys who have part-time jobs, noting that no matter how hard she tries to be frugal she cannot make ends meet on the welfare benefits she receives.

One of the stories from the News showing favor to recipients is similar to one of the favorable Times stories. Welfare recipients participating in a work-relief program are featured, and city officials are quoted as saying that these recipients work better than regular civil servants. (News: February 10, 1972)

There are only two other cases in the News that depict recipients favorably. One is a January 9, 1972, story that reports in considerable detail the contents of an HEW pamphlet that was released in an attempt to dispel some of the myths about welfare recipients. The other example from the News is a July 12, 1974, article featuring a man who won \$10,000 in a lottery. The story depicts the man as being victimized by the welfare bureaucracy which is requesting that the man repay the city for the benefits he received in the past from his winnings.

The recurring theme that ties together the articles in the Times that are favorable to recipients is the stress on their working. The other examples fall clearly in the "deserving" category in that the featured recipients are elderly or handicapped. In all instances it is the welfare bureaucrats who are at fault.

The headlines of articles are classified as negative or not negative, based on the extent to which the words "welfare" or "relief" were combined with other

words or phrases that have a negative connotation. Negative headlines are those that combine the words "welfare" or "relief" with such words as "fraud," "theft," "forgery," "cheats," "dope addicts," and "gyp." The use of such combinations is the exception rather than the rule in both papers, but the News headlines contain such terms more often than the Times headlines--23 percent versus 11 percent.

It is instructive to see if the various types of welfare programs receive differential treatment in terms of favorable, unfavorable, or neutral coverage. For that portion of articles that specify a particular welfare program, Table 4-26 cross-classifies welfare program type by the direction of bias. The data show that the Times is considerably more likely to refer to the welfare types in neutral language than is the News --66 percent versus 38 percent. An unfavorable image of the AFDC program or AFDC recipients is more likely to be found in those articles that contain judgmental language or inferences.

A University of Pennsylvania researcher who studied welfare recipients in New Jersey describes the pariah status of AFDC recipients:

These traditionalist welfare mothers are not the bottom of the barrel of the dominant class system in America, they are outside the system. The lowest class in a class system has a significant function; they are the drawers of water and the hewers of wood, but the labor of the

Table 4-26

Percent of Articles That Are Favorable and Unfavorable,
by Welfare Program, by Newspaper

<u>Direction of Bias and Subject</u>	<u>Times</u>					<u>News</u>				
	<u>AFDC</u>	<u>HR</u>	<u>SSI</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>AFDC</u>	<u>HR</u>	<u>SSI</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
Favorable/ Recipients	2	3	2	2	8	0	0	0	0	0
Favorable/ Program	6	6	4	3	19	13	7	7	9	36
Unfavorable/ Recipients	21	8	8	5	41	20	9	2	9	40
Unfavorable/ Program	13	7	11	12	43	24	13	2	9	49
Neutral	<u>24</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>66</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>38</u>
	66	35	43	35	177*	73	38	20	31	163*
N					134					45

* Exceeds 100 due to multiple responses; i.e., an article could contain favorable and unfavorable references to recipients and programs.

bulk of the people we studied is irrelevant to the larger system. If it were not for moral and ethical considerations, the rest of society would just as soon they go away. (Times: August 7, 1978)

The hypothesis which suggests that the articles in both papers will characterize welfare recipients and programs more frequently in an unfavorable than in a favorable way is supported. Both papers show unfavorable bias more often than favorable bias toward both recipients and welfare programs, and both papers are more likely to exhibit unfavorable bias than to be neutral.

Summary

In sum, we see that the term welfare is often used loosely; reference to a specific welfare program is the exception rather than the rule.

Editorials and articles frequently characterize recipients and programs as deserving or undeserving, although there are differences in the degree to which they do this. Times editorials tend to be neutral more often than biased in either direction. Times articles, however, are more often unfavorable to recipients or programs than they are neutral. News editorials and articles exhibit unfavorable bias more often than neutrality.

Favorable images of recipients appear rarely in either paper. The presentation of welfare programs

in a favorable light usually involves praise for efforts that purge ineligible and cheats from the rolls. The AFDC program itself, as well as the recipients of this category of aid, garner the least favor.

The Key Determinants of Welfare News

The preceding analyses describe what the papers discuss in editorials and report on in articles, the intensity of the news play given various topics, the effect of national politics on which themes are covered, and the images of welfare recipients and programs that emerge. Our attention shifts now to possible explanations that might account for the nature of welfare editorials and news stories. First, we ask, what are the sources of welfare-related news? It is expected that the views of those in positions of authority will succeed at surviving the tests of newsworthiness, while the views of the poor themselves and their advocates who are without official status will not.

Secondly, we address the prevalence of a phenomenon that may account for news presentations' frequent lack of context and background information, that is, the tendency to emphasize events rather than issues. I expect that the papers will discuss and report unrelated events and the isolated acts of individuals more often than issues which span time and provide linkages

between occurrences.

Sources: Bureaucratic Accounts of Knowns

Editorial Referents

It should be recalled from the opening pages of this chapter that the Times and the News are distinctly different in terms of the themes they discuss in their welfare-related editorials. The Times editorials overwhelmingly focus on reduction of poverty while the News most often discusses reduction of welfare. However, the papers are remarkably similar when it comes to whose actions and ideas get mentioned and discussed. The Times refers to the actions of officials about fourteen times more often than it does to those without official status, while the ratio for the News is about thirteen to one in favor of reference to official actors. Table 4-27 shows that the data support the expectation that both papers will discuss the actions and pronouncements of officials more frequently than those of persons without legitimate status.

The national character of the Times and the local orientation of the News are reflected in the data. The Times editorials are more likely to discuss the ideas of federal officials than those of state or local officials. The Times' editorial emphasis on themes concerned with poverty-reduction, especially the issue of the

Table 4-27

Percent of Editorials Referring to Official
and Non-official Persons, by Newspaper

<u>Referent</u>	<u>Times</u> §	<u>News</u> §	<u>Total</u> §
Official	212	173	189
Non-official	15 227*	13 186*	14 203*
N	65	98	165

*Exceeds 100 due to multiple responses; i.e.,
an editorial could refer to more than one actor.

federalization of welfare accounts for this. Compared to the News, the Times editorials are nearly three times more likely to refer to national topics. The opposite is the case for the News. References to state and local concerns outnumber references to national topics by better than two to one. The News editorials, we can recall, most often criticize the New York City welfare system in general, and those charged with administering it in particular.

Sources of News Stories

Both papers are scrupulously careful to attribute their welfare-related stories to some source, and to include it in the opening paragraphs of the articles. Table 4-28 indicates that the overwhelming majority of articles include attribution in the story lead, and that

Table 4-28

Percent of Articles Including Attribution
in Story Lead, by Newspaper

<u>Attribution in Lead</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
Yes	85	92	88
No	13	8	11
No Attribution	$\frac{2}{100}$	$\frac{0}{100}$	$\frac{1}{100}$
N	325	230	555

only a tiny fraction of articles--2 percent of the Times and none of the News--contain no attribution. Further, the overwhelming proportion of both papers' articles attribute information to their sources without quotes--better than 90 percent in each case. This would include the many variations of "he or she said" or "according to." However, direct quotations are also used frequently, in about two-thirds of all the articles.

Neither newspaper seems to have a beat reporter assigned to cover welfare news. While the majority of articles in both papers had bylines--61 percent of the Times and 84 percent of the News--no one reporter's stories dominates the news coverage in either paper. The Times has one reporter who wrote 16 percent of the articles in our sample, and the News has one reporter who wrote 17 percent of the stories in our sample.

In the instances of both reporters, the bulk of these stories appear in 1972. At other times, both papers' news coverage of welfare-related topics is spread over numerous reporters.

Recall from the earlier discussions that both papers most often report on reduction of welfare, especially topics concerned with lowering welfare costs and the administration of welfare. These include stories about the extent of welfare fraud and efforts to reduce it, the extent of recipient ineligibility and efforts to contain the problem, the extent to which desertion is the cause of rising rolls and efforts to locate the absent parents, and numerous stories that pit one level of government against another--presenting charges and countercharges related to any or all of the topics just enumerated. To whom do reporters turn for this information?

The hypothesis suggests that both papers will more frequently report the pronouncements and actions of officials than of those without legitimate status. Table 4-29 shows that this is undoubtedly the case for both papers. The Times reports welfare-related information attributed to officials better than six times more often than information attributed to persons without official status--141 percent versus 21 percent. Persons without official status have even less of a chance that

Table 4-29

Percent of Articles Using Official
and Non-Official Sources, by Newspaper

<u>Type of Source</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
Official	141	146	143
Non-official	21 162*	15 161*	19 162*
N	318	230	548

* Exceeds 100 due to multiple responses; i.e., an article could discuss more than one source.

their views will be aired in the News, since attributions to officials exceed those to persons who are not officials by better than nine to one--146 versus 15 percent.

Official sources include political office holders and declared aspirants for office, heads of government agencies, and government-issued reports or documents. Non-official sources include welfare recipients or advocacy groups, academics, and business people.

Both papers rely more heavily on local New York City officials than on federal or state officials. However, this is true to a greater extent for the News than for the Times; 61.3 percent of the News articles attribute the information to local officials, while 50.9 percent of the Times do. The News is more than twice as likely to use local officials as sources than federal officials, but the margin of difference for the Times is not as great.

Both papers attribute story information in nearly equal degrees to state officials and various official reports.

Summary

In sum, there is a striking absence of the views of persons who do not have official status in the papers' presentations. The editorials do not include this perspective and the papers' news stories rarely draw on other than government officials for their information. Even when there is an emphasis on reduction of poverty as is the case in Times editorials, the discussions do not include the perspectives of either the poor or their advocates.

The Absence of Structural Connections in the News

Again, we should recall how the papers are similar or different in the subject matter they discuss in editorials and report in articles. Their editorial content is significantly different; the Times overwhelmingly emphasizes reduction of poverty while the News stresses reduction of welfare. The news stories in both papers are more likely to report on reduction of welfare. I focus now on how informative their accounts are likely to be.

Do the editorials and articles pertaining to welfare provide indications of the structural relationship between economic and political processes on the one hand and poverty and welfare programs on the other? I expect that the presentations of welfare topics will not yield substantive knowledge of such connections because of the tendency of the papers to discuss and report events as if they were successive unrelated occurrences.

Editorials and articles were coded as either centering predominantly on an event, or centering predominantly on an issue. To be considered event-oriented, the editorial or news story has to deal with a happening that is pinpointed in space and time, and has to convey the details about the event. To be classified as issue-oriented, the editorial or article has to discuss a topic in terms of background factors, present an overview of the subject, or show how the phenomenon is linked to some larger social system. In order for the classification to be considered predominant it has to prevail not only in the lead paragraphs of the editorial or article, but also in at least one-half of the remaining paragraphs.

The Case of Editorials

Table 4-30 shows the percentage of editorials that are event- and issue-oriented.

The Times editorials are overwhelmingly issue-oriented--82 percent in contrast to the 18 percent that

Table 4-30

Percent of Editorials Event-Oriented
and Issue-Oriented, By Newspaper

<u>Orientation</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
Event	18	61	44
Issue	82	30	51
Mixed	$\frac{0}{100}$	$\frac{9}{100}$	$\frac{6}{101}^*$
N	66	99	165

* Does not equal 100 due to rounding.

are event-oriented. The News editorials, on the other hand, are twice as likely to be event-oriented as issue-oriented--61 percent versus 30 percent. These differences are attributable to the differences in the subjects they discuss in the first place. The Times' heavy emphasis on topics pertaining to federalization of welfare lends itself to discussions that are issue-oriented.

In reading the Times editorials that discuss federalization of welfare, or welfare reform, one gets a sense of how extremely political the subject is, as well as a sense of the range of issues in the debates that occur on the subject. Especially in its 1972 editorials, the Times goes into considerable detail about the problems of certain aspects of Nixon's Family Assistance Plan (FAP) and their potential impact. For

example, there are editorials that explain the potential impact of FAP's low amount of guaranteed income, its workfare requirements, and its restrictive eligibility criteria. Some of these editorials advocate or recommend alternative strategies that should be considered. Further, there are editorials that discuss the workfare concept, particularly in the context of its being a political ploy and an attempt by conservatives to kill the proposal of a guaranteed income. There are other instances in which Times editorials point out the double standard that prevails between welfare programs for the "deserving" poor such as the aged, blind, and disabled, and programs for women and children.

The topics discussed in News editorials are concerned most often with lowering welfare costs and administration of welfare. Editorializing on these themes is usually prompted by specific reports of fraud or abuse or recipient ineligibility, that is, point-in-time events. These editorials rarely go beyond strong criticisms of the local welfare system and its administrators for failure to control recipient fraud and abuse, and for providing aid to ineligibles.

In the case of the papers' editorials, the hypothesis that they will not yield substantive information is only partially supported by the data. News editorials are more frequently event-oriented than

issue-oriented. One reads virtually nothing about issues of welfare and poverty beyond a series of discrete allegations, charges, and counter-charges, of rampant recipient fraud and abuse, and lax, inefficient bureaucratic controls. On the other hand, the hypothesis is not supported for the Times; its editorials are overwhelmingly issue-oriented.

Articles: Event- or Issue-Oriented?

The data shown in Table 4-31 indicate strongly that the stories in both papers almost always focus on events. While the Times has slightly more issue-oriented articles than the News, it too is primarily event-oriented. Again, the nature of the topics which constitute welfare news no doubt accounts for this emphasis on events rather than issues. Their tendency is to stress themes which relate to reduction of welfare. One result is coverage that continuously cites one group of government officials' charges of fraud and abuse and inept administration, and the responses and counter-charges of another group.

In addition, I suspect that the heavy emphasis on events is tied to the methods reporters use to obtain their welfare-related stories. Unfortunately, in about one-third of each paper's articles there are no clues as to how the story originated. Table 4-32 compares

Table 4-31

Percent of Articles Event-Oriented
and Issue-Oriented, by Newspaper

<u>Orientation</u>	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Total</u> %
Event	84	94	88
Issue	11	5	8
Mixed	6 101*	1 100	4 100
N	325	230	555

* Does not equal 100 due to rounding.

the percent of articles generated by various staged media happenings with the proportion of articles that resulted from reporters conducting interviews.

Stories that reflect a reporter's interviewing someone are the exception rather than the rule. Stories generated as the result of a specific happening--press conferences, press releases, hearings, speeches and the like--are likely to appear in the Times nearly four times as often as are stories based on a reporter's interview--51 percent versus 14 percent. The disparity is even greater in the News, with 59 percent of the welfare-related articles resulting from a scheduled event, and only 8 percent of the articles generated from an interview by a reporter. Both papers rely heavily on the release of government documents. Most often these are reports of the various oversight bodies that monitor the

Table 4-32

Percent of Articles Generated as a Result
of Political or Government Event or
Reporter Initiative, by Newspaper

<u>Story Result of</u>	<u>Times</u> §	<u>News</u> §	<u>Total</u> §
Press Conference	8	13	10
Press Release	7	5	6
Public Hearing	3	10	6
Political Speech	5	4	5
Release of Report	<u>28</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u>
Sub-total	51	59	55
Reporter Interview	14	8	12
Unknown	<u>34</u> <u>99*</u>	<u>33</u> <u>100</u>	<u>34</u> <u>101*</u>
N	325	230	555

*Does not equal 100 due to rounding.

local New York City welfare agency, for example, the numerous reports released by the New York State Welfare Inspector-General concerning the extent of recipient ineligibility and fraud. Or they are sometimes government released research reports which purport to explain some aspect of the welfare problem. In the latter context, it is informative to consider an example of the papers' using a report released by New York State Assemblyman Andrew Stein.

A striking example of the Times' vacillating between folk wisdom and studied reason can be seen in a discussion of what causes black families to need welfare assistance. At one point, a Times editorial states "the need for welfare arises from poverty....in truth, poverty is ...a national problem, a reflection of national economic dislocations, and failures in health and education programs." (Times: January 24, 1972)

In another instance, a connection between poverty and race is made: "Poverty and race are somberly linked in the statistics. Nearly half of all the city's Puerto Ricans are on relief and almost a third of the blacks, as against less than 4 percent of the 5 million whites." (Times: April 11, 1972)

In the interim, a March 13, 1972, Times headline reads: "Rising Welfare Here Laid to Family and Addict Ills." The story, in its opening paragraphs, immediately quotes Stein's conclusion: "The study [Stein's] shows the continued disintegration of the family structure within the black and Puerto Rican communities." The article quotes without comment the study's other major conclusion: "The size of the rolls are only minimally related to unemployment."

The News headline on the same day (March 13, 1972) reads: "Stein Fathers Relief Resolution." Its opening paragraphs focus on the theme of lowering welfare

costs, and quickly cite Stein's introducing a bill in the New York State Legislature: "In an attempt to make absent and deserting fathers responsible for their families on welfare...Assemblyman Andrew Stein proposed...a revision of the Penal Law which would make it a crime for an individual to abandon his spouse and children." Later in the story, Stein's findings are quoted: "It would be more accurate to tie the increase in public assistance to the continued disintegration of the family structure within the black and Puerto Rican communities....[He] charged that variations in the size of the welfare rolls in New York are only slightly related to unemployment."

The Times includes the Stein report findings in an editorial the next day, March 14, 1972. In the context of editorializing on the negative impact that welfare expenditures have on other government services and the need to reduce the ineligibility rate in New York City, the Times quotes without comment, and thereby legitimates, the findings of the Stein-Kisburg study:

The Stein-Kisburg study holds that the continuing rise in welfare rolls has little to do with economic conditions, as some assert, but largely reflects instead the continuing disintegration in black and Puerto Rican family life, forcing husbandless wives and dependent children onto the welfare rolls. The figures rise in periods of prosperity and periods of recession alike. (Times: March 14, 1972)

This example demonstrates the tendency of the papers to present information that lacks context and

reasonable structural connections so long as it can be attributed to someone. The papers use nearly identical quotations and neither offers a challenge to Stein's findings. The "judicious use of quotation marks" (Tuchman, 1972) transforms the authority's statements into facts--in this case Stein's. Further elaborations, corroboration, or interpretation are not provided.

Summary

The 'what' of welfare coverage is very much shaped by the 'who' of the journalist' sources, and the lack of depth and insight is a function of the event-orientation of the news, especially the reliance on staged media happenings such as the release of government reports and officials' press releases, press conferences, public hearings, and political speeches. The reliance by both papers on official bureaucratic sources for welfare news overwhelmingly exceeds the use of persons without such status. There is little doubt that a considerable part of what we learn from the press about welfare is virtually only that which government wants us to know.

In the final chapter, the empirical findings pertaining to New York press coverage of welfare topics are related more directly to consensual paradigm theory.

The essential question that I pose is: Do the editorials and articles examined promote a consensual view concerning welfare recipients and programs despite the differences in the papers' presentations?

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Welfare for the poor most often has negative associations. The receipt of welfare aid requires poor people to prove that they have failed in the economic, familial, and social spheres of society. Underlying the welfare system's benefit structure are the social values and assumptions about the causes of poverty and the appropriate policy prescriptions that emanate from capitalist ideology.

Welfare reform has been a domestic policy issue for fifteen years, and each federal administration has proposed legislation to address the "welfare mess." Yet despite the numerous changes in the welfare system that have occurred, substantive change remains elusive because agreement cannot be reached on what the problem is, and what solutions are required. The persistence of a welfare system that contains vestiges of the 17th century English Poor Law is the result of a set of social values which constitute capitalist ideology--an emphasis on individualism and the work ethic.

Using newspaper presentations as a vehicle for inquiry, this research set out to explore the ideological and value dimensions of welfare policies and programs. To review and take stock of this effort, there are several objectives of this final chapter. The first is to summarize the literature that describes the connection between capitalist ideology and the content of the consensual paradigm as it relates to views concerning the causes of poverty and to guidelines governing the provision of welfare aid. The second objective is to review the key aspects of media theory which explain why and how the media reflect this consensual paradigm in their presentations. The third objective is to summarize my examination of the coverage given by the New York Times and the New York Daily News to welfare-related topics and to place them in a theoretical context. I examine the extent to which the treatments of welfare topics by these papers conform to the consensual paradigm.

Poverty and Welfare: A Consensual Paradigm?

The components of the consensual paradigm that relate to the causes of poverty and the provision of welfare were described in the opening chapter. In this paradigm, poverty is generally attributed to individuals'

failings--the candidates for welfare are viewed as being at fault, consequently there is a disposition to provide welfare in a limited and grudging fashion. The literature reviewed in Chapter I suggests that the dominance of this set of beliefs about poverty and welfare often deflects attention from explorations of the economic and political dimensions of poverty, and from the development and implementation of corrective measures aimed at these systems.

George and Wilding (1976) argue that capitalist ideology ensures that a welfare system emanating from it will have certain characteristics. The emphasis on the work ethic and self-reliance implies that those who do not work must be worse off financially than those who do; since so many people work full time and still remain poor, as a rule recipients of welfare must be kept even below the nation's declared "poverty line." The result is the provision of minimum or subsistence level benefits. The high value placed on individualism mandates that welfare applicants prove individual failings in order to qualify for aid, and that the procedures imposed by the welfare bureaucracy inflict shame and stigma.

The results of public opinion polls demonstrate that a popular stereotype of the typical welfare recipient presents an image of someone who variously (a) prefers the dole to a job, (b) must be forced to work, (c) has children for the purpose of increasing the allotment,

(d) engages in frequent illicit sex, and (e) usually lies in order to get more money. The welfare bureaucracy tends to be perceived variously as having in a complementary way the tasks of (a) rehabilitating the morally bankrupt dole takers, (b) controlling the larcenous tendencies of clients by frequent and thorough eligibility investigations, and (c) supplying the least amount of aid for the shortest period of time.

In sum, locating the causes of poverty in individuals, limiting public support of those in need, and monitoring the behavior of recipients and potential recipients of funds and services for the needy constitute the essence of the consensual paradigm that defines the poverty problem and the social policies that are appropriate to remedy it. The paradigm should be viewed as ideology if one accepts Johnson's (1968:77) statement that "ideology consists of selected or distorted ideas about a social system or a class of social systems when these ideas purport to be factual, and also carry a more or less explicit evaluation of the 'facts.'" Shils (1968:66) informs us that "ideologies are relatively highly systematized or integrated around one or a few preeminent values..." The classic liberal values--individualism, self-help, the work ethic, competition, and personal achievement--comprise the core of capitalist ideology and thereby shape the form and substance of

American welfare policy.

The Press and the Consensual Paradigm

The media play a leadership role in the transmission of culture, including conceptions of poverty and welfare policy, and practice. Hall (1979:340) observes that:

...the mass media are more and more responsible (a) for providing the basis on which groups and classes construct an 'image' of the lives, meanings, practices, and values of other groups and classes...

Chapter II discusses how newswriters in television, news magazines, as well as the press, conceptualize, organize, and execute the tasks involved in creating news stories, including those concerned with welfare. Since all concerns and occurrences pertaining to poverty and welfare cannot become news, my research interest is whether some welfare topics and issues are systematically precluded in news stories and editorials. The sociological perspective adopted here sets forth the ideological character of media presentations and the expectation that consistent evidence of a welfare consensual paradigm will be found.

Sociological theory and various research studies explain how and why news gets an ideological character. The research of Tuchman (1978a; 1978b; 1972), Fishman (1980), Gans (1979) and others describe the routine

organization of news agencies and the work practices of journalists, and show how the use of restricted notions of professionalism and objectivity operate to limit reporting and comment on substance and issues outside the consensual paradigm. The indications are that the news net is timed and cast in ways to ensure that the "catch" is compatible with legitimated institutions and mainstream opinions. The accounts of the world that emanate from bureaucratic sources become the bases for much of the news. These institutional accounts tend to reflect the perspectives of officials who are actors in the events and definers of the issues that are reported and commented on. The heavy reliance of journalists on bureaucratic accounts is seen as the result of the practical need journalists have for continuous access to large amounts of information in order to produce a sufficient number of stories within prescribed deadlines.

An equally important imperative that explains journalists' reliance on institutional sources is what Fishman (1980) calls the "normative logic" of news workers. Journalists are thought to impute legitimacy to bureaucratic accounts because officials are viewed as "the authorized knowers in the society." In applying the "strategic rituals" that pass for objectivity (Tuchman, 1972) to raw materials from bureaucratic sources, journalists obviate the need to look beyond the existing

familiar framework for news story ideas or for alternate explanations. The definition of a problem and the policy prescription associated with it, in our case poverty and welfare, are limited to the "interpretive framework" of officials. This results in the media's strengthening the existing institutional arrangements.

In sum, the media transmit the welfare agenda of the "primary definers." The research reported here suggests that the range of topics placed on the agenda is limited by ideology, and that this limitation encourages the notion that the ideas and discussions about poverty and welfare that are presented are most acceptable.

The Coverage of Welfare News and Issues in the New York Press

This summary of the results of my examination of the coverage given by the New York Times and New York Daily News to welfare topics and their implications are organized around the questions that guided the research:

1. What welfare-related themes are covered most often by the press?
2. Which topics receive the most prominent display?
3. What is the effect of politics on press presentations?

4. Does a particular image of welfare recipients and programs emerge in the press that is consistent with the American value system?
5. Do welfare-related presentations challenge or substantiate the consensual paradigm?
6. How do the press' presentations on welfare themes relate to the structural determinants of poverty?

What Is Talked About:
Reducing Welfare or Reducing Poverty?

One aim of the analysis of editorials and articles was to determine whether the content focused on reducing welfare or on reducing poverty. The subject matter themes that comprise the focus on reducing welfare closely approximate the consensual paradigm because they project a stereotypical image of welfare recipients and prescribe a social control function for the welfare bureaucracy. Under the rubric of reducing welfare one finds editorials and news reports on the reduction of recipient fraud and ineligibility, the failure of absent fathers to support their illegitimate children, administrative procedures for fraud detection, charges of laxity in the control of welfare programs, the threats of rising welfare rolls to neighborhoods and society, and the reasons for recipients' poverty status and dependency.

The themes that fall within the category of reducing poverty on the other hand, do not conform as closely to the consensual paradigm. However, they are

not completely at odds with it. The themes in this category suggest recognition of some faults in the economic order and a need for changes in the social policies that deal with the poverty problem. Concern with reducing poverty covers discussions and reports of welfare reform, including proposals to federalize income maintenance programs, and to make entitlement procedures and benefits uniform, recipients' rights to due process before being declared ineligible for aid, and the adequacy of benefit levels.

It was anticipated that editorials and articles in both the Times and the News would discuss subjects about reduction of welfare more frequently than those dealing with reduction of poverty; and further, that the topics discussed in editorials most frequently would also be discussed most frequently in articles. The examination of the data pertinent to these concerns produced mixed findings. Distinct differences are found between editorials of the two papers: by an overwhelming margin, Times editorials discussed reduction of poverty more often, and conversely, News editorials discussed reduction of welfare more often. In the case of news articles, the data sustain the prediction that each paper is more likely to discuss reduction of welfare than reduction of poverty in its news pages.

In the Times, there is little similarity between the subject matter of editorials and articles. However, there is considerable overlap in the subject matter of editorials and articles in the News. The Times editorials, as stated above, are more likely to focus on reduction of poverty, while its articles are more likely to deal with reduction of welfare. In the News, both editorials and articles deal with reduction of welfare more often.

The data present a picture of the Times editorials not conforming to the consensual paradigm because of the tendency of the editorial writers to discuss topics that fall within the category of reduction of poverty. The News editorials, and the articles in both papers, tend to fall under the heading of reducing welfare and, therefore, conform to the consensual paradigm.

One conclusion of this investigation is that the papers do not duplicate each others' positions, especially on the editorial pages. However, on the whole, I conclude that news articles in both papers systematically preclude the presentation of themes concerned with reduction of poverty, as does the News in its editorials. Despite the Times' frequent discussion of poverty reduction in its editorials, this should not be construed to mean that it consistently presents notions that run counter to the consensual paradigm. When the content of the Times editorials

that discuss poverty-reduction is analyzed qualitatively, there are examples of the paper abandoning its support of a guaranteed income when the political mood of the country shifts to a more conservative stance, and instances where it quotes without comment, thus possibly legitimating, the stereotypical views of others. The departure by the Times editorials from the consensual paradigm is more the result of the topics within the category of reducing poverty being raised at all, and, therefore, perhaps made problematical, rather than the paper's overtly taking stands that conflict with the paradigm.

These findings about the nature of welfare news in the New York press are paralleled by those of Golding and Middleton (1982:Chapter 3). Their study of British press coverage of welfare reveals some important similarities in the types of themes deemed newsworthy by their media and ours. They point to the heavy emphasis on stories of fraud and abuse in both the elite and popular papers, and in the broadcast media. In British parlance, welfare recipients are pejoratively called "scroungers" or "spongers," and the media often describe them as threats to society's best interests. Golding and Middleton write that reports of fraud and abuse in the British press typically center on the recipients' "luxurious lifestyles"; suggest that everyone knows that fraud and abuse are extensive; portray aid as too

easy to obtain--"a soft touch"; proclaim that "more clamp downs"--policing and control mechanisms--are required; and generally develop a deserving versus undeserving image of welfare recipients. They add that the British press gives scant attention to the myriad of problems faced by the people forced to live on welfare, or to the magnitude of unclaimed benefits.

The Relationship Between Topics Discussed
and Prominent Display

The expectation was that editorials and articles congruent with the consensual paradigm would be more prominently displayed than those that focused on poverty reduction. Editorials occupying the lead position on the page were expected to discuss reduction of welfare more frequently than the other editorials. It was also expected that longer editorials would discuss reduction of welfare more frequently than reduction of poverty.

The findings show that page position is not related to the content of editorials in the News or the Times. Length of editorial did appear to be related to subject matter, but not in the expected direction: the longer Times editorials were more likely to deal with reduction of poverty than with reduction of welfare; News editorials, regardless of length, discussed reduction of welfare more often than reduction of poverty. However,

among the longer News editorials--those with more than 200 words--the gap between the proportions dealing with reduction of welfare and reduction of poverty narrowed.

Two measures of prominent display were used in the analysis of articles. One was page placement alone, that is, whether the article appeared on the paper's front page or not. The second measure was an attention score, a composite index combining four variables--headline width, length of article, page placement, and use of illustration. It was anticipated that articles that deal with reduction of welfare topics would be included on a paper's front page more often than on an inside page. Articles that discuss the reduction of welfare were expected to have higher attention scores than those that discussed the reduction of poverty.

The prediction of a relationship between the content of an article and its page placement is upheld, but by a rather narrow margin for the Times. The front page of each paper contains articles about reduction of welfare more often than its inside pages do. The attention score proved to be a considerably more important measure. In both papers articles covering themes which focus on reduction of welfare have higher attention scores than those reporting themes concerned with reduction of poverty. This means that, as a rule, welfare reduction articles are more likely to appear on the

papers' front pages, to have wider headlines, to be longer, and to use illustrations more often.

These findings on the relationship between news play and subject discussed are paralleled in the British study referred to earlier:

Abuse of [welfare], either by fraud or putative excessive claiming, is a major theme of news coverage and is given great prominence. Other significant news themes stress the financial difficulty for the nation in providing welfare, rather than the problems faced by people living on [welfare]. (Golding and Middleton, 1982:75)

Again, the conclusion to be drawn from the findings is that the editorial pages of the papers are different. Rather small percentage point differences provide moderate evidence that discussions of those topics which are equated with the consensual paradigm receive more prominent display on the editorial pages of the News than do themes focussing on reduction of poverty. The opposite is the case with the Times editorials. This suggests that the favorable placement and longer discussions variously placed on reduction of poverty and on reduction of welfare by each paper's editorials may send conflicting signals to their readers as to which perspective is more important. The physical presentation of the News editorials confirms the consensual paradigm while that of the Times editorials may lead to a questioning of the prevailing ways of defining the causes of poverty and the appropriate remedies.

The papers provide similar signals when it comes to their news articles, because the stories which fit the consensual paradigm consistently receive more news-play than those which do not, signifying to both audiences that this is the preferred viewpoint. The findings at least sustain speculation that the attention given articles containing the preferred definitions might influence the public's perception of the salience of these topics.

The Effect of Politics on Media Presentations

Poverty and welfare have meaning in the political arena whether one is referring to the narrow or partisan use of the term political, or to a more general meaning. In the former vein, a recent article attributes the failure of the welfare reform proposals of the 1970s to "the political tug of war between the left and right," and suggests that it is possible to separate the discussion of alternatives in welfare programs from ideology (Turem, 1902:24). Galper (1975:ix), however, applies the term "political" to welfare in a broader sense:

...political implies a concern with [welfare] as [it] reinforce[s] the values, institutions, and human behaviors on which our present social order rests or as [it] challenge[s] those values, institutions, and behaviors. The critical political question, then, is what role [welfare] play[s] as [it] support[s] the status quo or as [it] serve[s] as [an] agent of one or another variety of change.

The influence of politics on article content was measured by comparing the average attention scores of articles dealing with welfare reduction during the presidential election years studies, 1972 and 1976, with those of articles appearing during the non-election years, 1974 and 1978. I expected that articles reporting on themes about reduction of welfare would have higher attention scores during the 1972 and 1976 years than they would in the 1974 and 1978 time periods. The heightening of the welfare controversy in the charges and counter-charges of office seekers during the election years was expected to yield news stories which were more likely to appear on the papers' front pages, have wider headlines, more words, and use illustrations more often than similar stories that appeared during the non-presidential election years. The data sustain the prediction for both papers.

An additional phenomenon was observed during the analysis. It is not only true that articles about welfare reduction have higher attention scores during federal election years, but so do stories concerning poverty reduction. In fact, nearly all welfare-related articles received more news play during the federal election years.

The content analysis showed that a preoccupation with the work habits of welfare recipients prevailed regardless of time period. During the presidential election

years, reports of the political parties' proposals for welfare reform stress the work requirements, and this is true also during the non-election years. The view that welfare recipients must be forced to work that is a component of the consensual paradigm is clearly evident throughout each of the study years. Other stereotypical components of the paradigm are also frequently reported during both presidential election years and non-presidential election years. For example, the characterization of recipients as frauds or cheats and of the programs as lax and ineptly administered is sustained throughout each of the study years. The major difference is that during the presidential election years, reports of this nature are more prominently displayed than during the non-election time periods.

The influence of politics on the papers' coverage of welfare topics can be characterized as significant in a statistical sense, but not significant in terms of their preoccupation with certain content. Without a doubt, stories about the reduction of welfare get more newsplay during the federal election years; but equally significant is the fact that the most frequently reported topics, regardless of time period, are those which comprise the welfare-related consensual paradigm. At no time in either paper does the frequency of articles concerned with poverty reduction approach that for articles

about welfare-reduction. Therefore, the finding that poverty reduction got more news play in the election years is a curious one that I can only speculate about. This added emphasis on topics which "stretch" the paradigm somewhat may be the natural fallout from the intensity of the controversy over welfare that characterizes the presidential election years. Tuchman (1972) points out that journalists' notion of objective reporting requires that they follow certain prescribed methods or "strategic rituals." One such ritual is the presentation of both sides of the story so that balance can be claimed. In the case of coverage of welfare-related stories, reports on poverty reduction themes are probably thought to satisfy the balance requirement. However, as we will see later, journalists' overwhelming reliance on officials for the raw material that constitutes the news makes the claim to balance suspect.

Deserving or Undeserving:
The Images of Welfare

The heavy emphasis the media place on reducing welfare as measured by the frequency of such reports, and the amount of newsplay they receive, points indirectly to the conclusion that more often than not, welfare recipients and programs are depicted as undeserving of

society's largess. The analysis looked for additional evidence that a biased image of welfare recipients and programs is constructed by the press. I expected that presentations in both papers would characterize recipients and welfare programs in terms that are explicitly negative and pejorative more often than not.

The findings support this prediction for both papers in the case of news articles; the majority of articles contain language or make inferences that cast welfare recipients and programs in negative terms. The descriptive phrasing that characterizes reports about welfare recipients more often than not contains one or more of three stereotypes about people on relief: (1) the idea that welfare recipients frequently commit fraud by claiming benefits; this is related to the more general notion that to receive benefits is somehow tantamount to behavior that is morally or criminally deviant; (2) the general notion that recipients are lazy and work shy and must be forced to work; (3) the idea that recipients are likely to be profligate and intemperate generally, and sexually promiscuous in particular. The near constant repetition of these images emphasizes that welfare recipients are an undeserving lot. Compounding this negative presentation of recipients is the fact that the relatively few favorable descriptions of welfare programs tend to reinforce the negative images

of recipients; that is, welfare programs are only cast in a positive light, or praised, when they are thought to control or to change the deviant behavior of recipients.

There is no escaping the conclusion that stories which depict welfare recipients in favorable or positive terms are not very newsworthy. The few instances in which recipients are described in a positive vein serve to emphasize the consensual paradigm; the recipients in these stories are shown to be working against all odds, or they fall clearly within a deserving group--the aged, or the handicapped.

In the papers' editorials we find differences in the extent to which recipients and programs are portrayed negatively. In the News the same stereotypical images are found in its editorials that are found in its news stories. Readers of the News, therefore, get little opportunity to view recipients and programs in other than negative terms.

Although the Times editorials were found to be generally written in neutral language, the fact remains that nearly a third of its editorials contain negative images of recipients or welfare programs.

The preponderance of evidence points to a stance by the press that is congruent with the consensual paradigm--welfare recipients are undeserving and welfare programs are failing to control or to rehabilitate them.

This is true whether one looks at the frequency with which editorials and articles focus on reduction of welfare, or at the prominent display given to stories dealing with welfare reduction, or at the use of language containing explicit negative symbols.

Reliance on Official Sources

The dominance of bureaucratic or institutional sources for welfare-related news is supported by the data for both papers. Overwhelmingly, editorials discuss the ideas and actions of officials and their news pages report the views of the same officials. Alternate perspectives--for example, those of the poor themselves or of their advocates--are infrequent.

These findings suggest that an ideological dimension in news about welfare is assured since only one interpretive framework is in operation. In keeping with Tuchman's (1978a:179) theoretic formulation, the media presentations analyzed in this study are "a means not to know" about poverty and welfare from the perspectives of those who bear the brunt of poverty and feel the impact of welfare policies.

It is noteworthy that the British press shows a similar reliance on official sources when it comes to welfare news. Golding and Middleton (1982:121) speak

of "the monumental importance of the apparatus of the state and particularly of government and senior civil servants, in defining the amount, timing, and overall direction of social policy news."

The British authors speak further of the "relative obscurity" of the welfare clients and of the rare concern "with the impact of policy on those whose lives are largely or partially determined by the benefits and services of the welfare apparatus" (p. 122). This finding in the British press also parallels the findings of this study concerning the coverage of welfare topics in the Times and in the News. However, their use of the word "obscurity" when referring to welfare recipients in the news needs to be qualified from the perspective of this study. The references to recipients in the British papers and in the papers studied here do not suggest obscurity of the recipients per se, but rather the lack of attention to their views. Welfare recipients are talked about, not talked with.

There is one area in the treatment of news about welfare where the British press seems to be different from its New York counterparts. The Golding and Middleton (1982) finding suggests that pressure groups or interest groups are a second major source of welfare-related news. The British journalists seem to use these advocate groups not as a primary source of a news story

but to provide "expert comment on policy initiatives from government" (p. 119). This reflects the journalists' effort to provide "balance" to their stories. In my findings, there appears to be no attempt to balance the viewpoints provided. Information attributed to non-government sources of any type is rare; the proportion of articles attributing information to non-official sources is small compared to that for articles which rely on institutionalized sources.

The Event Orientation of the Press

How likely is it that either paper's welfare-related editorials and articles will contain background or overview information which addresses the connections between the occurrence of the moment and broader or longer-range aspects of the social system? I anticipated that the presentations of welfare topics would not provide substantive knowledge of such connections because of the papers' tendency to treat occurrences as if they were successive unrelated events. The data support the expectation in both papers' news stories; articles were found to be overwhelmingly event-oriented in that they focus primarily on the details of happenings that can be pinpointed in space and time.

This preoccupation with events is closely related to journalists' frequent reliance on media happenings

which are staged by government officials and politicians to generate news about welfare issues, policies, and developments. News stories about welfare frequently repeat the findings of government reports or are based on press releases, press conferences, or public hearings. Typically, these reports are issued and the press events are called by the staff of the various oversight bodies charged with monitoring relief giving in New York City. Therefore, they often reveal information about the extent of fraud and abuse, escalating costs, or the lax administration of the welfare system.

The papers differed in the extent to which their editorials provided information about the inter-relationships between economic and political processes on the one hand, and poverty and welfare programs on the other. The editorials of the News are just as likely to be event-oriented as its articles. Times editorials, however, provide more of an opportunity to gain an understanding of some of the issues, especially those pertaining to the debate about welfare reform.

The Times and the News: Alike or Different?

The findings from this inquiry show that when it comes to news about welfare topics, the Times and the News exhibit more similarities than differences. Even though they address different audiences and, during the

decade examined in this study, they endorsed presidential candidates from different political parties, the consensual paradigm as it relates to welfare recipients and programs seems to prevail.

The data revealed similarities in the papers in response to all of the hypotheses that address article content: the subject matter reported in their news stories--welfare reduction versus poverty reduction, the newsplay given articles that report on topics concerned with welfare-reduction; the effect of presidential elections on the newsplay of articles dealing with welfare-reduction, and the projection of negative images of recipients and welfare programs.

It is true that the papers' editorial positions on welfare themes were usually different. The Times discussed reduction of poverty more often than reduction of welfare, gave poverty-reduction more newsplay than welfare-reduction, and usually used non-inflammatory language to describe recipients and programs; the News editorials were found to have an opposite set of characteristics. Yet the magnitude of these differences is tempered somewhat by the data which show that the Times' frequent editorializing on the issues of reduction of poverty does not mean that it consistently took stands that run counter to the consensual paradigm.

The journalistic practice of relying heavily on official or bureaucratic sources for story information, and discussing the actions and pronouncements of the same people in their editorials, is very much in evidence in both papers. The result is the perpetuation and reinforcement of a limited perspective, that of the definers of the "poverty problem" and of the "welfare solution."

The articles in both papers usually lacked background and contextual information and, therefore, thwarted or defied the ease with which one could place welfare-related occurrences within the economic, political, or social spheres of society. The News editorials displayed this same tendency, but from the Times editorials it was possible to read some indepth analyses of at least one subject, welfare reform.

In the final analysis, I conclude that the coverage of welfare topics offered by the New York press is indeed ideological. The reality that is constructed by the press about the poverty and welfare 'problems' is in most instances clearly consonant with the values associated with our economic order. Only a small proportion of what is written challenges the consensual paradigm as it relates to welfare recipients and programs. The news stories and, often the editorials, of the newspapers studied are a means not to know about alternate problem definitions and policy prescriptions.

While the presentations examined would no doubt meet all of the journalistic criteria of reporting-- professionalism, objectivity, and balance--they are no less ideological. True to my theoretic expectation, there is an almost exclusive reliance on the officials of legitimate institutions for the raw material of welfare news. As a consequence, the news generated by these sources is likely to support, and ultimately reinforce, ideas that fall within the paradigm. After all, it is these officials and the institutions they represent, which are often the primary definers (Hall et al, 1981:340) of the problem or the managers of the ameliorative policies.

APPENDIX

**SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES
AND CODING SCHEDULE**

Table A-1

Percent Distribution of Subjects Discussed in Articles,
During Early-Decade and Late-Decade Time Periods, by Newspaper

<u>Subjects Discussed</u>	<u>Early-Decade 1972 & 1974</u>		<u>Late-Decade 1976 & 1978</u>	
	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %	<u>Times</u> %	<u>News</u> %
A. Lowering Welfare Costs	29	41	51	64
B. Federalizing Welfare	19	10	21	20
C. Administration of Welfare	24	22	21	36
D. Sanctions Against Agency	13	24	15	23
E. Court/Legislative Actions	18	8	13	11
F. Welfare's Impact on Local Area	12	8	6	5
G. Welfare's Impact on Society	6	3	6	5
H. Benefits Received by Recipients	17	13	15	6
I. Behavior of Recipients	9	8	8	2
J. Other	5	3	2	4
	<u>152*</u>	<u>140*</u>	<u>158*</u>	<u>176*</u>
N	174	113	144	86

* Exceeds 100 due to multiple responses; i.e., an article could discuss more than one subject.

Table A-2

Percent Distribution of Articles Scoring Low, Medium, High,
on Attention Index by Subject Category, During Presidential
Election Years and Non-Presidential Election Years (Combined Samples)

<u>Subjects Discussed</u>	<u>Attention Index Score</u>					
	<u>Presidential Election Years</u>			<u>Non-Presidential Election Years</u>		
	<u>Low (0-1)</u> %	<u>Medium (2-3)</u> %	<u>High (4-5)</u> %	<u>Low (0-1)</u> %	<u>Medium (2-3)</u> %	<u>High (4-5)</u> %
A. Lowering Welfare Costs	44	43	40	50	38	55
B. Federalizing Welfare	15	16	9	21	23	9
C. Administration of Welfare	26	26	24	22	24	27
D. Sanctions Against Agency	20	21	16	14	18	9
E. Court/Legislative Actions	15	9	4	25	11	0
F. Welfare's Impact on Local Area	5	10	9	8	10	0
G. Welfare's Impact on Society	5	6	9	4	2	0
H. Benefits Received by Recipients	12	15	2	12	18	18
I. Behavior of Recipients	5	7	9	5	8	36
J. Other	3	2	13	3	2	0
	150*	155*	135*	164*	154*	154*
N	115	160	45	98	88	11

* Exceeds 100 due to multiple response; i.e., an article could discuss more than one subject.

Table A-3

Percent of Articles in Each Reduction of Welfare Category and in Each Reduction
of Poverty Category, by Attention Score Index, During Presidential Election
Years and Non-Presidential Election Years (Combined Samples)
(Weighted Average*)

<u>Aggregate Category</u>	<u>Attention Index Score</u>					
	<u>Presidential Election Years</u>			<u>Non-Presidential Election Years</u>		
	<u>Low (0-1)</u> %	<u>Medium (2-3)</u> %	<u>High (4-5)</u> %	<u>Low (0-1)</u> %	<u>Medium (2-3)</u> %	<u>High (4-5)</u> %
Reduction of Welfare	29	28	25	30	25	40
Reduction of Poverty	14	14	7	21	19	15
N	112	157	39	95	86	11

* Average is weighted by number of mentions in each applicable subject category; "Other" category excluded.

Table A-4

Percent Distribution of Articles Scoring Low, Medium, High,
on Attention Index by Subject Category, During Presidential
Election Years and Non-Presidential Election Years (NY Times)

<u>Subjects Discussed</u>	<u>Attention Index Score</u>					
	<u>Presidential Election Years</u>			<u>Non-Presidential Election Years</u>		
	<u>Low (0-1) %</u>	<u>Medium (2-3) %</u>	<u>High (4-5) %</u>	<u>Low (0-1) %</u>	<u>Medium (2-3) %</u>	<u>High (4-5) %</u>
A. Lowering Welfare Costs	38	38	12	40	41	67
B. Federalizing Welfare	17	20	6	24	26	0
C. Administration of Welfare	28	21	29	17	22	33
D. Sanctions Against Agency	18	15	12	12	10	0
E. Court/Legislative Actions	17	12	0	29	14	0
F. Welfare's Impact on Local Area	7	11	12	9	14	0
G. Welfare's Impact on Society	3	7	18	7	4	0
H. Benefits Received by Recipients	15	20	6	16	14	33
I. Behavior of Recipients	6	7	24	7	10	33
J. Other	4	0	18	3	4	0
	153*	151*	137*	164*	159*	166*
N	72	86	17	58	51	3

* Exceeds 100 due to multiple responses; i.e., an article could discuss more than one subject.

Table A-5

Percent Distribution of Articles Scoring Low, Medium, High,
on Attention Index by Subject Category, During Presidential
Election Years and Non-Presidential Election Years (NY Daily News)

<u>Subjects Discussed</u>	<u>Attention Index Score</u>					
	<u>Presidential Election Years</u>			<u>Non-Presidential Election Years</u>		
	<u>Low (0-1)</u> %	<u>Medium (2-3)</u> %	<u>High (4-5)</u> %	<u>Low (0-1)</u> %	<u>Medium (2-3)</u> %	<u>High (4-5)</u> %
A. Lowering Welfare Costs	54	49	57	58	32	50
B. Federalizing Welfare	12	12	11	18	19	13
C. Administration of Welfare	23	31	21	30	27	25
D. Sanctions Against Agency	23	28	18	18	30	13
E. Court/Legislative Actions	12	5	7	18	8	0
F. Welfare's Impact on Local Area	2	10	7	8	5	0
G. Welfare's Impact on Society	9	4	4	0	0	0
H. Benefits Received by Recipients	7	10	0	8	24	13
I. Behavior of Recipients	5	7	0	3	5	38
J. Other	0	4	11	3	0	0
	147*	160*	136*	164*	150*	152*
N	43	74	28	40	37	8

* Exceeds 100 due to multiple responses; i.e., an article could discuss more than one subject.

Table A-6
Percent of Articles Quoting Sources,
Attributing Information Directly
Without Quoting, or Implying Attribution,
by Newspaper

<u>Method of Attribution</u>	<u>Times</u> 8	<u>News</u> 8	<u>Total</u> 8
Quotations	70	64	67
Direct/No Quotes	94	95	95
Attribution Implied	5 169*	5 164*	5 167*
N	318	230	548

* Exceeds 100 due to multiple responses; i.e., an article could include more than one method of attribution.

CODING SCHEDULE

Newspaper

(1) N Y Times (2) N Y Daily News

Date of Story

_____ (Actual)

Year Story Appeared

(1) 1972 (2) 1974 (3) 1976 (4) 1978

Day of Week Story Appeared

(1) Monday through Saturday (2) Sunday

Story Begins on Page

(1) Front -- N Y Times (2) Split -- N Y Times
 (3) Inside -- N Y Times (4) Page 1 through 5 --
 N Y Daily News (5) Inside -- N Y Daily News
 (9) N/A -- Editorial

Story Length--Number of WordsArticles:

(1) Under 250 (2) 250-500 (3) 501-750
 (4) 751-1000 (5) 1001-1250 (6) 1251-1500
 (7) 1501+

Editorials:

(1) Under 100 (2) 100-150 (3) 151-200
 (4) 201-250 (5) 251-300 (6) 301-350
 (7) 351-400 (8) 401-450 (9) 451-500 (0) 501+

Type of Story

(1) Straight News (2) Feature (3) Interpretive
 (4) Investigatory Report (5) Editorial

Is editorial in lead position:

(1) Yes (2) No

Story Has By-Line

(1) Yes (2) No

If yes, actual _____

Main Headline of Story

Actual _____

Column Width of Main Headline

(1) One (2) Two (3) Three (4) Four +

Main Headline Related to Story Lead

(1) Yes (2) No (9) N/A -- Editorial

Additional Headline(s) Used--e.g., Bank/Crossline/Jump Head/Subheads in Body

(1) Yes (2) No (9) N/A -- Editorial

If Yes, actual _____

Theme of Story Lead Related to Welfare--See list of themes attached.

(1) Yes (2) No

If Yes, theme(s) of Story Lead--code up to three:

(Theme 1) _____ (Theme 2, if any) _____

(Theme 3, if any) _____

Note: Article Lead = first three paragraphs
 Editorial Lead = first paragraph

Additional Themes in Body of Story

(1) Yes (2) No

If Yes, (Theme 4) _____ (Theme 5, if any) _____

(Theme 6, if any) _____

Describe/Cite Examples of Language UsedStory Information Attributed to or Editorial Refers To

(1) Yes (2) No (0) No attribution

- A) President -- incumbent
- B) Presidential aspirant(s)
- C) Political office aspirant(s)--other than Presidential
- D) Federal official--elected/appointed--other than President or HEW staff
- E) HEW secretary or assistants
- F) State official(s)--elected--e.g., Governor
- G) State official(s)--appointed--e.g., NYS Welfare Inspector General
- H) Local official--elected--e.g., Mayor
- I) Local official--appointed--e.g., NYC HRA Commissioner
- J) Official report/document(s)
- K) Welfare recipients/applicants/advocacy group
- L) Welfare agency staff who deal directly with recipients/union reps
- M) Lay person--e.g., community resident discussing welfare hotels
- N) Academic
- O) Business person--e.g., landlord, store owner

Attribution is Part of Lead(1) Yes (2) No (0) No attribution
(9) Not applicable, editorialMethod(s) of Attribution Used

(1) Yes (2) No (0) No attribution

- A) Quotation
- B) Direct, but no quote--e.g., she said, according to
- C) Attribution implied

Story Information Generated By

- (1) Press conference (2) Press release (3) Public hearing
- (4) Political campaign debate (5) Political speech--except campaign debate
- (6) Government document
- (7) Interview by reporter (9) Could not determine

Geographical Area(s) Story Lead Refers To

- (1) Yes (2) No
- A) New York City--any or all boroughs
- B) Counties surrounding NYC--e.g., Nassau/Suffolk/Westchester
- C) Other specific area of New York State, e.g., upstate, Buffalo
- D) Entire New York State.
- E) Other specific state/city--e.g., New Jersey, Connecticut
- F) National

Geographical Area(s) Balance of Story Refers To

- (1) Yes (2) No (0) None
- A) New York City--any or all boroughs
- B) Counties surrounding NYC--e.g., Nassau/Suffolk/Westchester
- C) Other specific area of New York State--e.g., upstate, Buffalo
- D) Entire New York State
- E) Other specific state/city/region--e.g., New Jersey, Connecticut, South
- F) National

Illustration(s) Used With Story

- (1) Photograph (2) Chart/Graph (9) None

Illustration(s) Related to Story Lead

(1) Yes (2) No (9) None Used

Welfare Program Referred To

(1) Yes (2) No (0) None

- A) Aid-to-Families-with Dependent Children (AFDC)
- B) Home Relief/General Assistance
- C) Supplemental Security Income (SSI)-IM for Aged/
Blind/Disabled
- D) Medicaid
- E) Food Stamps
- F) Social Security benefits

Use of Judgmental Adjectives/Phrases/Inferences

(1) Yes (2) No

- A) Favorable to recipients
- B) Favorable to programs
- C) Unfavorable to recipients
- D) Unfavorable to programs

Describe/Cite Examples of Language UsedIs Story Predominantly Event- or Issue-Oriented

(1) Event (2) Issue (9) Mixed

Note: Predominant = orientation of story lead and at least half of remaining paragraphs.
 Event-orientation = report of specific occurrence pinpointed in space and time; article conveys details about the occurrence.
 Issue-orientation = report of background or overview information concerning a problem or topic that spans a period of time.

Describe Any Other Notable Features of Article or Editorial

SUBJECT MATTER THEMES/DEFINITIONS/EXAMPLES

A. LOWERING WELFARE COSTS

- (1) Reducing fraudulent receipt of welfare--extent and/or cost of fraud; methods of discovering fraud; money savings attributed to discovery efforts; specific cases--persons named as being charged or indicted.
- (2) Reducing ineligibility rate/removing ineligibles from rolls--extent and/or cost of ineligibility; methods of discovering ineligibility; money savings attributed to discovery efforts; specific cases--persons named.
- (3) Increasing child support by absent/deserting parents (fathers)--extent and/or cost of non-support; methods of finding deserting parents and enforcing support; money savings attributed to enforcement procedures.
- (4) Increasing number of recipients required to take/seek jobs--existing/proposed programs to put recipients in jobs or training.
- (5) Cost of welfare/size of rolls--statistical information concerning increases/decreases in cost of programs and/or number of recipients.
- (6) Reducing fraud among providers of services to welfare recipients--extent/cost of fraud among doctors/other medical practitioners in medicaid program; fraudulent activities and/or provision of inadequate care by nursing home operators using medicaid funds.

B. FEDERALIZING WELFARE

- (1) Federal welfare reform from state/locality perspective--advantages/disadvantages of federal takeover of AFDC program; anticipated money savings for state/locality.
- (2) Federal welfare reform--major legislative proposals--Nixon's, Carter's, Moynihan/Cranston/Long's legislative proposals for changing welfare system; arguments/discussions for/against.

- (3) Supplemental Security Income--federalization (effective January 1974) of welfare programs for aged/blind/disabled; guaranteed income concept.

C. ADMINISTRATION OF WELFARE

- (1) Increasing the use of computer technology--computer matching (e.g., welfare rolls matched against unemployment insurance rolls to find people receiving both) activities; money savings attributed to effort.
- (2) Increasing/improving eligibility checks done on recipients/applicants--e.g., face-to-face recertification requiring re-determination/documentation of need periodically; increasing rejection rate.
- (3) Requiring employable recipients to comply with special procedures--e.g., participation in work relief programs and/or pick-up of welfare checks at State employment office; Stat. info-# in program; # dropped for failure to comply, etc.
- (4) Increasing/improving welfare agency employees' productivity--e.g., crackdown on absenteeism, developing performance standards; hiring businessmen from private industry to run welfare agency.
- (5) Audit activities (federal/state/local)--regular/special surveys of welfare cases to determine extent/nature/cost of ineligibility or fraud.

D. SANCTIONS AGAINST WELFARE AGENCY

- (1) Withholding federal or state reimbursement--penalty imposed by HEW/NYDSS because welfare agency's ineligibility rate was too high or for not registering enough recipients in work-relief program.
- (2) Charges/expose of poor administration--oversight groups'/persons' claims of lax/inept/wasteful practices by welfare agency.
- (3) Welfare agency staff work actions--e.g., strike, walk-outs; slow-downs; union's/HRA management's statements regarding causes.

E. COURT/LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

- (1) Court actions (Federal/State/Local)--lawsuits, court rulings regarding some aspects of welfare program and/or rights of recipients.
- (2) Legislative (Federal/State/Local) activities--reform proposals/debates/bill passage or defeat pertaining to welfare.

F. WELFARE IMPACT ON LOCAL AREA

- (1) Housing welfare recipients--connection made between welfare recipients and conditions of buildings/neighborhoods and crime; "welfare" hotels controversy; cost of paying rent for recipients; landlords' groups wanting to be paid directly by welfare agency.
- (2) Spread of poverty population--increase in number of poor people in areas of NYC other than officially designated poverty areas.
- (3) Effect welfare expenditures have on other government services/taxes--connection made between amount of welfare expenditures and inadequate police/fire/sanitation expenditures or higher taxes.

G. WELFARE'S IMPACT ON SOCIETY

- (1) Receipt of welfare by illegal aliens--extent and/or cost; methods of discovering; money savings attributed to discovery tactics; effect on economy.
- (2) Emigration habits of welfare recipients--statements/suggestions that recipients move from low benefit (e.g., Southern) states to high benefit (e.g., N.Y.) states.
- (3) Public opinion poll findings--beliefs/attitudes about welfare recipients/programs revealed by opinion polls.
- (4) Increase in percentage of population receiving welfare--discussions of impact of increase on economy, social structure.

H. BENEFITS RECEIVED BY RECIPIENTS

- (1) Benefit level--amount of benefits welfare recipients get; geographical comparisons; adequacy/inadequacy discussions; pro/con discussions about increasing or decreasing benefits.
- (2) Benefit determination systems--methods used by welfare agency to determine amount of entitlement --e.g., flat grants based on family size to cover all expenses or individual determination.
- (3) Social services for welfare recipients--e.g., day care centers for children, foster homes, senior centers, etc.; financing (increase/decrease) for such services; benefits of services.
- (4) Rejection of welfare applicants--rejection of eligible people; actions by welfare agency to remedy problem; delays in determining eligibility or issuing grants; use of residency requirements to reject applicants.
- (5) Welfare income vs. job income--discussions of whether people get more money from welfare than from work.
- (6) Fair Hearing Procedures--arguments pro/con regarding recipients' rights to hearing before losing benefits.
- (7) Medical needs of welfare recipients--discussion of existing or planned medical programs; financing medical care for indigent.

I. BEHAVIOR OF RECIPIENTS

- (1) Work habits of welfare recipients--(or of the 'poor')--work behavior of recipients and/or poor people under various circumstances (e.g., N.J./Denver/Seattle experiments); discussions about incentives/disincentives of welfare program(s).
- (2) Disintegration of welfare families--extent of separation/desertion/divorce; incidence of illegitimacy; discussion of causes of phenomenon.
- (3) Lifestyle of welfare recipients--How recipients live/behave (other than 2 above); aspirations for self and children.

- (4) Use of drugs/alcohol by welfare recipients-- pros/cons of addicts receiving welfare; special conditions for receipt of welfare.
- (5) Research pertaining to welfare recipients-- studies of recipients' behavior/social situation.
- (6) Effect of welfare programs on recipients--e.g., discussion of welfare programs' destroying work ethic.
- (7) Characteristics of welfare recipients--age, sex, education, marital status, race-ethnicity, health (physical/emotional).
- (8) Protest activities by welfare recipients and/or advocacy groups representing them--e.g., marches, sit-ins.

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