POOR TALK: SURVEYING SOCIAL SCIENCE DISCOURSE ON URBAN

POVERTY

A Thesis

by

RUBEN ANTONIO FARIAS

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

August 2012

Major Subject: Sociology

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Rogelio Saenz
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ABSTRACT

Poor Talk: Surveying Social Science Discourse on Urban Poverty. (August 2012)

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Understanding the dynamic relationship between culture and structure is a fundamental sociological question. Since the founding of the social sciences—when Marx explored the connection between the 'macrostructure' and popular culture or Weber studied the development of the 'protestant ethic'—to the present, the structure-culture dynamic has motivated and puzzled researchers. This thesis joins this longstanding conversation by focusing on social science research on poverty, or what is also called poverty knowledge.

Despite the tremendous size and breadth of poverty research, historians of poverty suggest that poverty knowledge demonstrates a frame. That is, a coherent, consistent understanding (and thereby study) of poverty. Building on prior research, the thesis seeks to: (1) verify whether poverty knowledge indeed does demonstrate a frame; (2) and if a frame is present, map the contours and shape of a poverty frame. I do so by focusing on social science research focused on urban poverty published from 1960 to 2010.

Conducting a content-frame analysis of 50 journal articles randomly sampled from a universe of 781 eligible articles reveals that poverty knowledge does demonstrate

elements of a frame. In particular, the sampled articles understand urban poverty as primarily an individual issue, and moreover, demonstrate an ambivalent evaluation of the urban poor's behavior and culture. The pressing question that arises from this research, and which has continued to drive research on the structure-culture dynamic, is: how do existing social practices ('society') — especially systems of inequality such as racism and patriarchy— influence our cultural understanding of urban poverty specifically and inequality generally. This is an important question for the social sciences in general, but especially for the areas of critical theory, framing research, poststructuralist discourse studies, the sociology of knowledge, and status construction theory.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

ENTERING INEQUALITY & POVERTY TALK

Inequality talk[1] is all around. Indeed, inequality talk, or what I also call inequality

discourse, is so widespread that it often goes unnoticed. But it does happen. Inequality

talk happens in political speeches and debates, in conversations with friends, in the halls

of power, and in people's living rooms.

Two discourse spaces in particular, the media and our everyday lives, illustrate

the prevalence of inequality talk. The media—be it newspapers, talk radio, television, or

the internet— reports daily on various forms of inequality. For instance, the growing

incidence of poverty in the United States as result of the 'great recession' received

prominent attention in national and local media outlets (see Tavernise 2011). Inequality

discourse also happens in our everyday lives. Inequality talk occurs when individuals

discuss with family or friends their reasons for choosing to live where they do: was it

because of the quality of the schools? (see Shapiro 2004 on how inequality factors in

these discussions). Is it a 'safe neighborhood' (see Sanchez-Jankowski 2008). Indeed,

inequality talk even happens in conversations about death. Consider the conversations

people have about why a family member did not receive adequate healthcare or

discussion on a family history of diabetes or heart disease. In short, whether listening

(and responding) to professional information outlets or in our interactions with friends,

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This thesis follows the style of *American Journal of Sociology*.
[1]That is, considerations on the topic of inequality.

colleagues, and family we often—night and day; year in year out—partake in and are exposed to inequality talk.

As is the case with many prevalent societal conversations, the academy has both participated and driven discourse on inequality. In particular, historians and sociology of knowledge scholars have explored a central question: how have the social sciences understood and studied inequality? In particular, how is inequality between binary groups (i.e. men/women, heterosexual/homosexual) conceptualized in the social sciences?

What have this diverse set of scholars found? Notably, academics—in specialty areas as diverse as colonialism (Said 1979), poverty (Ward 1989; Katz 1990, 1995; O'Connor 2000), and race (Scott 1997; McKee 1993) — report that social science discourse on binary group inequality consistently centers on two questions: (1) are binary groups different from each other? In particular, is the low-group (i.e. Orientals, the poor, non-whites) *different* from the high-group (i.e. Westerners, the non-poor, whites,); (2) to what extent , if at all, is the marginalized/low group *responsible* for the social marginalization they experience? That is, to what extent, if at all, do the actions (especially behavioral and cultural differences) of the low group reproduce or even cause forms of group inequality such as colonialism, poverty, and racism?

This research project aims to study whether the questions of difference and responsibility are consistently evident in inequality discourse of the social sciences. That is, does inequality talk generally demonstrate a focus on difference and responsibility? Despite compelling evidence provided by the above referenced authors, their claims

have not been independently corroborated, especially in terms of the import of the two above questions. Additionally, although the above cited works are packed with informative, detailed historical information, none of the works (excluding Said 1979, pp.15-25) provide a detailed account of their methodology and analytical framework. Hence, we are generally left asking, how exactly did the authors get to their compelling, but unspecified conclusions? Without methodological clarity, research on the inequality discourse of the social sciences—like all research— runs the risk of finding what it already believes (for a similar point, specifically in regards to the book *Poverty Knowledge*, see Kelly 2002, p.403).

This project concentrates on a particular dimension of inequality talk: poverty talk. Using a survey approach, I randomly sample social science discourse on poverty in order to determine the field's definition of (urban) poverty and their moral evaluations (i.e. positive/negative) of the (urban) poor. In particular, as a result of my particular interest in the intersection of poverty and race, I will specifically concentrate on the urban poverty[2] discourse in poverty talk.

Overall, this project is empirical and focused on theory construction. Using the rich roadmap provided by historiographers of the social sciences, I endeavor to empirically test for the prevalence of the above two questions (which I call the questions of difference and responsibility) and thereby contribute to building a theory on inequality talk generally, but especially social science inequality discourse. I see my

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[2] In focusing on urban poverty I do not mean to suggest that urban marginalization is simply the combination of class and poverty. Indeed, it is this kind of thinking that often cofound poverty and race (i.e. urban poverty = the non-white poor). Rather, my project focuses on urban poverty in order to understand how poverty and race (including whites and non-whites) both independently and in combination influence the discourse on urban poverty and the urban poor.

project as a marriage of interpretive historical research (and more broadly, interpretive humanism) with empiricism and methodological conventions of the social sciences.

The rest of this introductory chapter is composed of three parts. First, I will briefly discuss this project's analytical framework. Second, I will formally state the project's central research questions. Finally, I will elaborate on the nature (and dimensions) of inequality talk. I close by stating the significance of this project and providing an outline for the rest of the thesis.

COMING TO TERMS WITH PRIOR RESEARCH: A FRAME?

What idea or concept connects a diverse continuum of scholars that ranges from the academic disciplines of geography (Ward 1989), history (Katz 1990; O'Connor 2000; Scott 1997), humanities (Said 1979), and sociology (Mckee 1993)? Or put more colloquially, what idea or concept do these scholars seem to be 'bumping into'? What is the common phenomenon or academic puzzle these varied works and academic disciplines are all facing? Answering this question is central to coming to terms with inequality talk generally and social science inequality discourse in particular.

The issue that unites so many scholars involved in studying social science inequality discourse seems to be the issue of framing. Implicitly or explicitly, I argue that the varied works on the historiography of the social sciences all grapple with the idea of a frame. Following Entman (1993), I define the frame concept as: "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication context, in such a way as to promote *a particular problem definition*,

c*ausal interpretation*, *moral evaluation*, and/or *treatment recommendation* for the item described" (p. 52, emphasis added). The concept of a frame allowed me to come to terms with the question of how diverse fields seem to come to strikingly similar conclusions. Specifically, they all seem to be suggesting that inequality discourse is characterized by a frame. The work of McKee (1993) most clearly illustrates this. In *Sociology and the Race Problem*, he argues that: "the sociologists of race relation developed a distinct perspective on race relations, from which came the questions they asked, the concepts they developed, and the body of knowledge they claimed to possess" (McKee 1993, p.4). In other words, the sociology of race relations framed their topic in a particular, coherent manner. Though not using the language of framing, all the above cited scholars demonstrate an interest in understanding how their research topic was: (1) defined; (2) viewed in terms of causality; (3) moral evaluations; (4) solutions. Additionally, the research on the content and nature of social science inequality discourse indicates that, in the end, what most characterizes inequality talk was not its complexity or variety, but its coherence despite its variety. The following quote from Said (1979) on Orientalism underscores the seeming consistency across authors and eras in inequality discourse: "On the one hand there are Westerners…[who] are rational, peaceful, liberal….the [Orientals] are none of these things…out of what collective and yet particularized view of the Orient do these statements emerge?...what cultural forces produce such similarity in the descriptions of the Orient to be found in Cromer, Balfour, and our contemporary statement?" (p.49). The idea of a frame unifies what seemed like disparate, singular works.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS & HYPOTHESES

I have formulated several research questions that are central to this project. I divide these questions into general and empirical questions. General questions apply broadly to inequality talk in the social sciences. Empirical questions apply particularly to poverty talk and its study of urban poverty.

General Research Question

Does social science discourse on urban poverty—and more broadly inequality talk in social science discourse—demonstrate coherence in its definition and moral evaluation of urban poverty and the urban poor? In short, does poverty knowledge demonstrate elements that constitute a frame?

Empirical Questions

1. When conducting research generally focused on urban poverty and/or the urban poor, how often do the sampled articles study the behavior or culture of the urban poor?

2. What are the group comparison dynamics in poverty knowledge? In particular, how often does the project's sample conduct: (1) only an intragroup comparison; (2) only an intergroup comparison; (3) both, intragroup and intergroup comparisons?

3. To what extent to, if at all, are the urban poor seen as being collectively different from the non-poor by virtue of the urban poor's behavior and culture?

Specifically, to what extent do social science articles associate distinctive (i.e. 'different') behaviors with the urban poor? Similarly, to what degree do social science articles believe that the urban poor demonstrate a distinguishing culture?

4. What is poverty knowledge's moral evaluation of the behavior and culture of the urban poor?

Empirical Hypotheses

EH-1: Poverty knowledge will study the behavior or culture of the urban poor in the majority of its articles.

EH-2: The urban poor will be primarily compared to the non-poor (i.e. intergroup)

EH-3A: The majority of the poverty knowledge sample will understand the urban poor as being behaviorally different from the non-poor intergroup referent.

EH-3B-The majority of the poverty knowledge sample will understand the urban poor as being culturally different from the non-poor intergroup referent.

EH-4A: The majority of the poverty knowledge sample will articulate an ambivalent evaluation of the urban poor's behavior

EH-4B- The majority of the poverty knowledge sample will articulate an ambivalent evaluation of the urban poor's culture.

ON INEQUALITY TALK

In the *Sociological Imagination*, C. Wright Mills ([1959] 1999) provides a schema for understanding the connections between individuals and society, one which I apply to the

idea of inequality talk. The key terms are troubles and issues. Troubles are everyday things and events that affect individuals. Their counterpart is social issues, or everyday things and events that affect society. As Mills explains, "when, in a city of 100,000, only one man is unemployed, that is his personal trouble...but when in a nation of 50 million employees, 15 million are unemployed, that is an issue" ([1959] 1999, p.9). Accordingly, when I say inequality talk is all around I mean that inequality talk is experienced, debated, talked about, incorporated, processed, cried about, demonized, measured, and the like as an individual. That is, as a personal trouble. But inequality talk also happens at the societal level. A prominent example of inequality talk as an issue is professional information outlets such as the media, policy think tanks, and social science research. Professional outlets provides us with discourse (human communication material) in which inequality becomes understood as an issue. Utilizing Mill's framework we begin to understand that inequality talk is a multifaceted phenomena that includes both the issues of individuals and the troubles of society.

Poverty talk also demonstrates two additional qualities: depth and range. Overall, these two characteristics reflect my conceptualization of inequality, in survey terms, as a 'universe of discourse.' In terms of depth, poverty talk is profound in terms of the sheer amount of discourse items considering inequality. For instance, a search on WorldCat shows that 38,375 items are catalogued under the subject "inequality;" and this search does not include similar items classified under more specific terms (i.e. Inequality—United States). In addition, the universe of inequality talk also exhibits

tremendous breadth in terms of the diverse form (i.e. printed material, oral, visual, etc.) of human communication that consider the topic of inequality.

Thus, poverty talk is simply a deep and wide universe of discourse on inequality. An urban poverty discourse is that subset of inequality talk which specifically deals with urban poverty.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Until this point, I have discussed what inequality talk is and developed research questions that evaluate whether, and how, inequality talk is framed. Though these questions are important, one question remains: why does inequality talk matter? That is, why is it important to investigate for a frame to social science discourse on inequality generally, and the urban poor and poverty specifically?

As a result of poverty talk's sheer prevalence, size, and depth, discourse on inequality has a tremendous impact: from the individual to the societal. Indeed, poverty talk affects how individuals in their everyday interactions understand inequality as a personal issue (see hook 1999). Asking if poverty knowledge demonstrates a frame is part of an even larger and more abstract theoretical issue. Mainly, what is the relationship between structure and culture? Discourse, as human communication and a social practice, is an important means to understand the interconnections between culture and structure. Above all, by studying discourse broadly and specifically of a specialized area like the social sciences we explore how shared cultural schemas are influenced by existing social practices ('society'). This is an important, basic question for the social

sciences in general, but I especially consider the areas of framing research,

poststructuralist discourse studies, the sociology of knowledge, critical theory, and status

construction theory.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

(URBAN) POVERTY KNOWLEDGE

Booth et al. (2008) observe that academic research is, in essence, a conversation between the researcher and audience. If that is the case, then for the purpose of this project, the social science literature on poverty serves as the backdrop to our conversation. Without an understanding of our setting ('the literature'), we cannot have an adequate conversation. Hence, in this chapter, I broadly describe the contours and content of poverty research.

Considering the complexity and variety of poverty discourse, how can one succinctly and yet accurately describe the basic shape and nature of poverty research? To meet this task, I employ Entman's (1993) definition of a **frame**. He describes a frame in the following matter: "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication context, in such a way as to promote *a particular problem definition*, c*ausal interpretation*, *moral evaluation*, and/or *treatment recommendation* for the item described" (p. 52, emphasis added). Accordingly, the literature review is organized around two broad areas: (1) problem definition (how is the condition of poverty and urban poverty conceptualized?); and (2) attribution of causality (paying particular attention to urban poverty, what factors are believed to cause urban

poverty[3]). Overall, Entman's frame definition provides a comprehensive and succinct conceptual framework for reviewing poverty knowledge.

Below, the literature review is presented as follows. First, I begin by describing the subject of my research: social science discourse on poverty, or what I also call, poverty knowledge. After describing poverty research, I discuss poverty knowledge's conceptualization of poverty. That is, how has poverty research defined the condition of poverty? I close this section by providing this paper's own definition of poverty. Similarly, the third section describes how the phenomenon of urban poverty is understood in poverty knowledge. Notably, I underscore that the phenomenon of urban poverty is closely connected to and shaped by race and urban space. Fourth, I consider poverty knowledge's causal attribution of urban poverty. That is, what factors are attributed to have causal force on urban poverty? The fifth section considers the seeming consensus in poverty research. Finally, I close with some evaluative comments on poverty knowledge.

WHAT IS POVERTY KNOWLEDGE?

I borrow the term poverty knowledge from Alice O'Connor (2000). In *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History,* O'Connor lists four defining characteristics of poverty knowledge: (1) it is social scientific; (2) predominantly based on national, quantitative data; (3) produced by

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[3] Because of space limitations, I will not review poverty knowledge's moral evaluation and solutions to urban poverty. But suffice to say, there is no full separation of the issues of problem definition, causality, moral evaluations, and solutions in poverty discourse. The discussion below implicitly illustrates the conceptual interconnections, indeed interdependence among these frame elements.

a interconnected set of government agencies, think-thanks, universities, and private research institutes; (4) possesses an explicit 'ethos' of political neutrality (O'Connor 2000: 4). Subsequently, I understand poverty knowledge in three ways: (1) a social artifact; (2) social science research on poverty; (3) body of knowledge produced in study of poverty

As a social artifact, poverty knowledge is a result of the societal context in which it was originated and developed. That is, its chosen topic of concentration (i.e. poverty), structural organization (i.e. modern social research), and body of knowledge are all rooted in societal conventions. Thus, poverty knowledge is thoroughly a social product (O'Connor 2000: 8). More specifically, poverty knowledge has two related meanings. In its first, narrow meaning, I will use the term to designate United States social science research explicitly concerned with the condition of poverty. The second, broader use of poverty knowledge refers to the actual body of information on the phenomenon of poverty; the discourse and data which are produced by the social science study of poverty. These two meanings of poverty knowledge are interchangeable, and in the end, both relate to a modern development: the creation of technical knowledge by professional researchers.

PROBLEM DEFINTION: POVERTY

Poverty is old news, remarked Douglas Massey (1996). But despite its long history, the idea of poverty is still, at present, difficult to define. Some academics argue that poverty is a necessarily *subjective* concept. Consequently, definitions of poverty can

change from person to person and from context to context (Wratten 1995, p.33).

Similarly, other researchers observe that it is impossible to develop a universal definition

of poverty applicable across all cultures, societies and historical periods (Fischer 2001,

p.11,097). The preceding points underscore a vital quality of poverty: poverty is not an

'objective' condition. That is, there is no natural, neutral definition of poverty waiting to

be found 'out there' in the world. Rather, defining poverty necessarily involves the

inclusion of value-laden decisions.

That said, definitions of poverty are divisible into two general types (Grusky and

Kanbur 2005): (1) absolute and relative definitions of poverty based on income,

consumption, and capabilities (see Glennerster 2002; Brady 2003); (2) class-based

definitions of poverty (see Grusky and Kanbur 2005, pp.13-26). These two general

conceptions of poverty (income-based and class-based) are complimentary, or at least,

parallel understandings of poverty. Indeed, while the income-based approach is

generally associated with economics and the class-based approach is linked to sociology,

social science studies of poverty oftentimes combine both methods.

What is the basic distinction between an absolute and relative view of poverty?

As their names imply, the essential distinction between relative and absolute definitions

rest on, contrasting, beliefs about whether poverty, measured via income and

consumption, is fixed or relative. Specifically, absolute poverty refers to instances when

individuals fall below a baseline (in income and consumption) requirement of essential

human need. (Brady 2003, p. 721; Smeeding 2001, p.11,930). The U.S. government's

poverty line prominently illustrates an absolute understanding of poverty. In this case,

the government calculates the "cost of a minimum basket of goods necessary for decent human survival" (Glennerster 2002, p.85). The poor are then, those individuals who do not posses enough resources to attain an essential 'basket of goods.' Importantly, the absolute approach to poverty assumes that poverty is a historically fixed threshold (minimum basket or poverty line) which is comparable across nations and places (Brady 2003, p.721). In contrast, the relative perspective understands poverty as a time and context specific phenomenon. In particular, while absolute poverty is based on calculating minimum needs for human life, relative poverty is measured in relation to the usual income or consumption level in a particular society (Brady 2003, p. 722; Smeeding 2001, p.11,930). Accordingly, in this context, one is poor if one is unable to "…attain the conditions of life—that is the diets, amenities, standards and services—which allow them to play the roles, participate in the relationships and follow the *customary* behavior which is expected of them by virtue of their membership of society (Townsend 1993, quoted in Wratten 1995, p. 14, italics added). Overall, the absolute approach understands poverty as a fixed threshold of basic human necessities while the relative perspective views poverty as a contextual condition dependent on societal expectations.

Class-Based Approach: Poverty and Social Exclusion

Before discussing poverty in the class-based approach, it is helpful to define the concept of a class. Grusky and Kanbur describe classes as "prepackaged 'bundles' of structural conditions (e.g. levels of education, income, health) that tend to cohere" (2005, p.16). In

particular, classes cohere in terms of the 'bundle' of endowments (i.e. class educational levels) and outcomes (i.e. 'life chances) class-members are likely to demonstrate.

In view of the above, how is poverty viewed in the class-based perspective? Simply put, poverty is understood as a multidimensional phenomenon that includes material deprivation such as absolute and relative poverty as well as exclusion from the central institutions of society (Grusky and Kanbur 2005). What does it mean to experience social exclusion? Social exclusion entails not participating in the essential institutions of one's society (Brady 2003, p.724). Comparing the above conceptualizations of poverty and social exclusion reveals that (absolute or relative) poverty does not necessarily equate social exclusion. For example, the working-class can be classified as not being socially excluded while an economically successful drug dealer is socially excluded (e.g. Wilson 1987). The class-based perspective then strives to understand both material poverty and social exclusion. Indeed, hierarchically, an examination of poverty is nested under the larger study of social exclusion. Overall, the class-based approach identifies the poor as those individuals who do not posses essential material goods, but moreover, are also socially excluded as a result of their material poverty and/or due to their "weak attachment" to important societal institutions such as the economy (Brady 2003; Grusky and Kanbur 2005).

Conceptualizing Poverty: The Role of Culture

Although this review has discussed the two approaches to poverty as separate for organizational reasons, the income-based and class-based approaches to poverty are

interrelated and overlap in poverty knowledge (see Glennerster 2002; Brady 2003; Grusky and Kanbur 2005). In fact, as I found out during article coding, many social science studies of poverty utilize both understandings of poverty: poverty as resource deprivation and social exclusion. Hence, in this paper the income and class views of poverty are understood as complimentary approaches.

Accordingly, the remarks in this section generally apply to poverty knowledge; even though my specific illustrations may refer to either the income or class perspective on poverty. Specifically, in this section I focus on a seemingly strong tendency in poverty knowledge to define poverty *as culture*. Notably, poverty knowledge assumes that poverty, by definition, necessarily involves not only material deprivation but also cultural elements. In particular, conceptual debates on poverty have centered on: (1) do the poor demonstrate a distinctive group (class) culture?; (2) and moreover, notwithstanding whether the poor are or are not culturally different, are the cultural and behavioral practices of the poor 'maladapted,' or harmful?

In order to avoid vagueness or confusion in the discussion below, the important and oft used idea of *culture* must be defined. To do so, let us consider the history of how the term culture has been understood in poverty knowledge. In the social science study of poverty, culture has been primarily understood in two contrasting ways, as value-system or symbolic and cognitive schemata, with the former view dominant from the 1900s to 1970s and with the latter gaining gradual, if still not complete, ascendancy afterwards (Vaisey 2010; see also Lamont and Small 2008; Small, Harding, and Lamont 2010). Values are binary, evaluative estimations, beliefs, or interpretations of what is

desirable, and conversely, undesirable (Vaisey 2010, p.81). Historically, poverty researchers notably, but social science research in general has equated culture with values (Swidler 1986; DiMaggio 1997, pp. 264-265; Lamont and Small 2008, pp.78-79). Specifically, culture has been traditionally understood as a coherent embodiment of the values held by a group. In its most basic sense, and paraphrasing Vaisey (2010), culture tells people what they should want. Recently the equation of culture with values has come under critique. This 'new culture' perspective (Vaisey 2010) argues that culture, rather than being a collective value system, is a symbolic-cognitive 'repetoire' held by individuals and groups (Swidler 1986; Lamont and Small 2008; Small, Harding, and Lamont 2010). In this formulation, culture is a complex, even contradictory, structure of symbols and cognitive elements that inform how individuals interpret and act in their everyday lives. Culture then becomes not a passive reception of values but an active, symbolic and cognitive process: As Small and Lamont explain, "culture refers to the meanings that humans beings produce and mobilize to act on in their environment" (2008, p.79).

For the sake of including both views of culture, I broadly define **culture** as comprising at least two elements. First, culture is a shared value system which tells group members what is good and desirable in life. Thus, culture embodies the collective values a group holds. Second, culture is a shared meaning system which provides group members—via cognitive tools such as symbols and frames—means by which to interpret and make sense of their everyday experience.

The discussion on culture directly leads to my next question: to what extent has poverty been understood, by definition, as including cultural elements? Though hard to quantify, poverty research shows a consistent tendency of including culture, defacto, into its definitions of poverty.

Generally, O'Connor (2000) shows that before the publication of the Negro Family (Moynihan 1965), social science research on poverty had demonstrated remarkable agreement in its conceptualizations of poverty: though largely structural, poverty was also an issue about the cultural distinctiveness (read: limitations) of the poor (see also Ward 1989; Wacquant 1997; Sanchez-Jankowski 2008). As O'Connor summarizes the state of poverty knowledge in the Depression era and up to the 1960s: "'poverty' and 'lower-class' were as much cultural as economic categories" (2000, p.72). And while the 'culture wars' racked poverty research after the publication of the Moynihan Report (see O'Connor 2000; Cohen 2010), it seems that even amidst all this discord and tumult, poverty is still understood and defined as a cultural condition, at least in part. The class-based approach towards poverty illustrates this point.

Are there class specific cultures? And moreover, are some (under)class cultures maladaptive? These two questions have taken a prominent role in the class-based perspective (Grusky and Kanbur 2005, pp.19-26). Specifically, beginning in the 1980s prominent sociologists (e.g. Wilson 1987) argued that class-specific cultures emerge as result of the closed-nature of classes. As Grusky and Kanbur explain: "[classes are] socially closed groupings in which distinctive cultures [may] emerge and come to influence attitudes, behaviors, and even preferences of class members" (2005, p.19). In

short, cultures may be class-specific (i.e. a lower-class culture, a middle-class culture,

etc.). Additionally, the class-based poverty research has also asked another, more

polemic question: "are there cultures that...are quite fundamentally maladaptive, that do

not serve the ends of class members?" (Grusky and Kanbur 2005, p.22).

While the idea of class-specific cultures, and maladaptation, could theoretically

apply to *all* classes, the class-based approach has focused on ascertaining whether the

'underclass' specifically develops a culture which is not only a distinctive but also

'maladaptive.' In fact, if the writings by Grusky and Kanbur are reflective of the social

science study of poverty, it seems that poverty knowledge diminishes, even outright

discounts, the possibility that the non-poor (everyone else in poverty research)

demonstrate class-specific cultures. Take the following passage for example:

> what types of closures generate such class-specific cultures?...As both Wilson
> and Massey emphasize, members of the *underclass* live in urban ghettos that are
> spatially isolated from mainstream culture, thus allowing a *distinctively
> oppositional culture* to emerge and reproduce itself. The effects of residential
> segregation operate, by contrast, in more attenuated form for *other social classes;*
> after all, residential communities map only imperfectly onto class
> categories…and social interaction within contemporary residential communities
> is in any event quite superficial and *cannot* be counted on to generate much in the
> way of meaningful culture. (Grusky and Kanbur 2005, p.19, emphasis added)

While the authors later state that some occupational groups may develop specific work

cultures, the above quote clearly shows that the study of distinctive, maladaptive class-

cultures is *limited only* to the poor and the so-called underclass. In effect, like a police

line, the issues of class-culture and maladaptation has been cordoned off to only include

and consider the poor and socially excluded.

The question thus becomes, why has this conceptual fence been erected? In particular, why is the existence of class-cultures and cultural maladaptations—without presenting of much support—limited to those individuals at the proverbial bottom of society? The concept of class-cultures and cultural maladaptations are limited to the poor, I argue, for one main reason: poverty knowledge is centrally interested in understanding the analytical distinction between the poor and non-poor (the excluded/non-excluded, underclass/mainstream).

Understanding the distinction between the economically 'attached' and the economically unattached is of utmost theoretical importance for the class-based approach. In the class-based approach, individuals who are unemployed or unreliably employed are considered to have a "weak-attachment" to the economy while those individuals who are employed are considered to be "strongly committed" to the economy (Grusky and Kanbur 2005, pp.14-18). Grusky and Kanbur highlight in detail the foundational importance of understanding the distinction between the economically marginal and everybody else in poverty research:

> the multidimensional [inequality] space in which sociologist are interested includes, of course, the crucial dimension of social standing or prestige….in a market economy, a main determinant of social standing is participation in the labor market and the associated willingness to 'self-commodify'…the latter term nicely emphasizing how market economies render all forms of worth, even self-worth, a function of market valuation. When individuals fail to self-commodify, they fall outside the most fundamental institutions of the society, thereby reducing them to *non-entities* and *social ciphers*...[therefore,] the social divide between the underclass and all other classes looms especially large because it captures this *fundamental insider-outsider* distinction. (2005, pp.18-19, italics added)

As the above quote illustrates, the contentious sociological concept of an "underclass" directly results from the conceptual model of the class-based method. Namely, since class (one's relation to the economy) is the central means by which to understand poverty and inequality, to *not* participate in the economy is to become a member of a group of people who are literally, below a class; a subclass *outside* the signifying realm of the economic market. Hence, from poverty research on 'slum' neighborhoods in Chicago to post-industrial work on the underclass or the ghetto poor, poverty knowledge has sought to understand the 'fundamental insider-outsider' distinction between the economically and socially marginalized, usually called urban poor, and everybody else.

Due to the basic insider/outsider distinction, the cultural practices, and their potential unpleasantness, have gained central importance in understanding and defining poverty. In particular, it seems that poverty is understood as necessarily entailing culture. In particular, it is believed that poverty as a condition leads those who experience it (the poor) to develop cultural practices that are particular to their needs and experiences (see Ward 1989; Wacquant 1997; Pols 2003; O'Connor 2000). Hence, at the conceptual level, poverty is seemingly understood as necessary entailing cultural differences and even maladaptations. A question arises from this: are the ostensible cultural differences found among the poor a result of group differences between the poor and non-poor or could these findings, in part, result from the prevailing definitions of poverty? There probably is no either/or answer to this question but in the study of social science discourse it is imperative to keep in mind how the conceptualization of poverty has shaped its body of knowledge, theories, and empirical findings.

Considering all of the above, I employ a minimalist understanding of poverty. I define **poverty** as the condition in which individuals do not posses, absolutely speaking, the material necessary to subsist, and relatively speaking, the materials expected by custom in a society. Hence, my definition focuses on poverty as a material condition; one which may or may not involve culture. Similarly, it behooves one to consider how urban poverty, the primary focus of this project, has been understood by poverty research.

ON URBAN POVERTY: THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF PLACE & RACE

As discussed above, poverty has been described as consisting of three basic elements: (1) absolute material deprivation; (2) relative resource deprivation; and (3) social exclusion. Accordingly, one would expect that poverty knowledge would therefore understand *urban* poverty as nothing more than the occurrence of these three qualities in an urban setting. But a review of the poverty literature reveals that this is not the case. Instead, urban poverty's meaning is inextricably connected with the ideas of place and race (ethnicity). Below, I describe how place and race influence poverty research's understanding of urban poverty.

Centrally concerned with *urban* poverty as an idea and a topic of social science discourse, this project frequently uses the word "urban." This begs the question, what does this term mean? Employing a demographic perspective, I define **urban** as a physical environment which: (1) people inhabit; and (2) demonstrates a relatively high population size vis-à-vis other residential spaces (for the three popular definitions,

including demographic, of urban see Fischer 1976, p. 26). The preceding definition

raises two important points. First, urbanity necessarily requires "place"; people are not

by themselves urban. Rather, urbanity occurs when a distinguishable residential *area*

(e.g. 'environment' or 'community') exhibits a relatively dense population of

individuals. Second, a demographic understanding of urban centrally concerns itself with

the effect of place on people, rather than the other way around. As Claude Fischer (1976)

explains, "[a demographic definition] turns a study of the urban experience into an

inquiry as to whether and how the size of the community in which people live affects

their ways of life and personality" (pp.7-8). Urban, in short, entails a place that a large

collection of people call home. Finally, this paper understands **urban poverty** as the

occurrence of resource (relative and/or absolute) deprivation in urban settings.

How has poverty knowledge understood the relationship between poverty and

densely populated residential places? From the Gilded Age of the 19th century to the

present, social science poverty research generally associates urbanity with poverty

(Ward 1989; Wratten 1995; Sanchez-Jankowski 2008). Hence, in poverty knowledge

discourse, to speak of urban spaces means to invariably also address issues of poverty;

and conversely, to speak of poverty usually involves urbanity. Pols' (2003) quote on

how poverty reformers viewed the urban city reflects the general association of

economic deprivation with the urban environment: "[19th century] reformers viewed the

city not only as a place of poverty and disease but also as a breeding ground for vice,

crime, alcoholism, seduction, and immorality"(p.195). The image of the slum also

vividly illustrates the connection of poverty to urbanity. Urban slums are essentially

residential areas characterized by environmental congestion, pollution, and the

segregation of the poor (Ward 1989). Since slums most vividly occurred in urban places

(recall the London of Dickens or early 1900s 'immigrant' New York), poverty and

urbanity became intertwined in the popular imagination as well as social science

discourse. Wratten (1995) illustrates this point by observing that: "in industrial Europe

and North America, the majority of the population (and also most of the poor) have lived

in towns and cities since the early twentieth century...perhaps because urban images

have been influential in shaping perceptions of poverty, 'urban poverty' is seldom

regarded by Northern researchers [i.e. researchers from industrial nations] to be

conceptually distinct from poverty in general" (p.19). Due to the historical (and present)

importance of poverty in urban cities, poverty has largely been equated with urbanity.

By and large then, in the United States the social science discourse on poverty is

discourse on urban poverty.

Similarly, poverty also demonstrates a consistent association with race in the

United States (Ward 1989; Wacquant 1997).[4] In fact, a discussion of the ghetto

illustrates not only the interconnection of race and poverty but also race and urbanism.

Urban poverty then becomes, in many ways, the intersections of three factors: urban

place, poverty, and race. David Wards' description of a ghetto clearly shows the strong

linking of these three vital social forces: "the term ghetto gradually acquired a more

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[4] In this paragraph, the term race also stands-in for ethnicity. Specifically, the term race refers to those groups deemed non-white (i.e. Asians, Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans) or not-quite white (i.e. 19th century European immigrant groups such the Irish, Italians, or Polish). This is not to say that whites are not racialized; indeed whiteness is a racialized racial idenity. But for stylistic reason, I prefer to use term race rather than 'non-whites' or the like.

general meaning [in the United States] to describe the residential segregation of any *minority group* in the *slums* of the *inner-city*" (1989, p.2, italics added). As this quote illustrates, the ghetto is the trifecta of economic deprivation, urban spaces, and race. In terms of poverty, ghettos occur in slums, or primarily impoverished areas. Furthermore, the ghetto usually happens in the inner-city which is a derivative of urban. And finally, those people who are segregated are minority groups. It seems appropriate that the ghetto, that archetype of American inequality, should demonstrate the multifaceted relationship between three phenomena which both independently and in combination have deeply shaped the U.S. inequality system: poverty, race, and the city.

The multifaceted intersection of place, poverty, and race makes urban poverty a dynamic research topic. While this project will focus on the general discourse on the urban poor, paying particular attention to the distinction made between the poor and the non-poor, it is aware of how conceptions of place and race shape the nature and content of urban poverty discourse.

URBAN POVERTY: THE QUESTION OF CAUSALITY

Notwithstanding the difficulties (conceptual and methodological) in measuring the causal relationship between two or more social phenomenon (e.g. McLanahan and Percheski 2008, pp.260-267), attempting to establish causality is a past time and central concern of the social sciences. Not surprisingly then, efforts to determine the factors that cause urban poverty are of the utmost importance in poverty knowledge (see Small and Newman 2001, p.27). This literature review section considers the 'question of causality'

in urban poverty research. In particular, I focus on summarizing the prominent causal explanations of urban poverty generally, but especially for urban poverty since the publication of Daniel Patrick Moyhnihan's (1965) iconic work, *The Negro Family*.

What are the causes of the post-1960s urban poverty? Despite the general importance attributed to causality, social science research on urban poverty has not provided a clear answer to this question. Instead, poverty knowledge's deliberations on the causes of urban poverty underscore the persistence, importance, and diversity of competing explanations of poverty. A more colloquial answer then is that lots of factors are believed to cause urban poverty; they range from large-scale economic structures to individual attitudes. The following is a sampling of factors causally associated with urban poverty: (1) structural shifts in the economy; (2) welfare incentives; (3) racial segregation; (4) human capital deficits of the urban poor; (5) changes in the family structure(s) of the urban poor; (6) the out-migration of the Black middle-class from urban neighborhoods; (7) the social isolation of the urban poor; (8) cultural maladaptations of the urban poor; (9) spatial-mismatch between where the urban poor live and location of available jobs; and (10) the boom in prisoner incarceration (see Teitz and Chapple 1998; Marks 1991; Small and Newman 2001; Glennerster 2002; McLanahan and Percheski 2008).

As the above list emphasizes, it is difficult to make sense of poverty knowledge's varying, occasionally complimentary and sometimes competing, explanations of urban poverty. Following Teitz and Chapple (1998) though, explanations of urban poverty are broadly divisible into four general categories: (1) [change in the] economic structure; (2)

population characteristics [of the poor]; (3) societal institutions or phenomena, such as welfare, segregation, etc.,; and (4) location (i.e. neighborhood effects of social isolation) (p. 36). These heuristic categories are not mutually exclusive or opposing. Instead, most explanations of urban poverty combine some or all four categories. Below, I use this organizational template to explore the general agreement ('convergence') and debate in poverty research's study of urban poverty causality.

Where Two Roads Meet: (Structural) Convergence in Urban Poverty Causality

Based on my review of social science poverty discourse, I propose that *despite many poverty studies stating otherwise all explanations of post-1960s urban poverty include some element of a 'structural' argument.* I call this agreement the structural convergence: In terms of the causes of urban poverty, everyone in poverty knowledge is, to some extent, a structuralist. Comparing the two prominent explanations of urban poverty—that of famed sociologist William Julius Wilson and influential economist Charles Murray—exemplifies the structural convergence in social science poverty research.

The post-industrial era, generally agreed to have started in the 1970s, was marked by great social change and upheaval. Accordingly, inequality discourse endeavored to document and analyze the seeming transformations reverberating throughout the nation. In the efforts to document changes of the post-industrial period, one particular social space, long-forgotten in the American consciousness, received the most attention, notoriety, and 'moral panic': urban poverty areas, more popularly known

as the inner-city or urban ghetto. In academic as well as popular circles, the causal

explanations of "underclass" urban poverty provided by Murray (1984) and Wilson

(1987, 1991) attained ascendancy (Marks 1991; Small and Newman 2001; Glennerster

2002).

In his book *Losing Ground*, Murray (1984) basically argued that the increase and

seeming intractability of post-industrial urban poverty results from the very efforts by

the government to alleviate poverty. His basic thesis harkens to the proverb on

intentions; for Murray good (governmental) intentions did pave a road to anguish. In

particular, he maintained that governmental assistance programs ('welfare') gave poor

urban residents the 'perverse' but 'rational' incentives to shun employment and marriage

in order to keep their welfare benefits. As he succinctly puts it, the harmful culture and

behaviors of the urban poor "were results that could have been predicted from the

changes that social policy made in the rewards and penalties, carrots and sticks, that

govern human behavior" (Murray 1986, quoted in Marks 1991, p.450). Consequently,

welfare incentives spurred the urban poor to develop lifestyles and behaviors which

seemingly compound and independently cause urban poverty.

Wilson, on the other hand, argued that post-industrial urban poverty primarily

resulted from two key factors: (1) deindustrialization of the economy which most

affected male urban men; and (2) the out-migration of the Black middleclass from urban

neighborhoods to the suburbs (Wilson 1987, 1991). Specifically, Wilson laid out a multi-

procedural explanation on urban poverty in which economic changes and out-migration

of the Black middleclass resulted in the simultaneous economic marginalization and

social desolation of the urban (Black) poor. Subsequently, the very *consequences* (the economic and social deprivation of poor urban residents) of Wilson's two prime factors themselves facilitated the creation of a distinctive "social milieu" for the urban poor; one in which the urban poor developed "ghetto-specific", oftentimes oppositional, cultural and behavioral adaptations which exacerbated and reproduced post-industrial urban poverty (Wilson 1987,1991).

Conventionally in poverty knowledge, the frameworks of Murray and Wilson are represented as contrasting, even somewhat competing social science accounts of post-industrial urban poverty. The usual distinction made between the two scholars is that Murray attributes the cause of urban poverty to primarily individual factors while Wilson understands urban poverty as principally a structural outcome. Hence, as poverty knowledge sees it, Murray is an individualist (in terms of causality) and Wilson is a structuralist (for illustrations of this trend see Marks 1991, pp.449-462; Glennerster 2002, pp.92-96; Rodgers 2006, pp.63-70; Massey and Sampson 2009, p.13, pp.18-19).

But from my reading of the two authors, an individual/structural dichotomization of Wilson and Murray ignores a seemingly crucial but often ignored point: *both* authors attribute the cause of urban poverty to 'structural' dynamics. Specifically, employing the schema of Teitz and Chapple (1998), reveals that Murray's framework gives causal importance to two types of factors: institutional (e.g. welfare) and population characteristics (e.g. the culture(s) and behaviors of urban poor). In fact, while Murray (1984) may exceedingly concentrate on how the behavioral and cultural characteristics of the urban poor exacerbate urban poverty, his *initial* causal variable—

the "sticks and carrots" which themselves produced the group adaptations by the urban poor—is basically structural: the American welfare state. Without the incentives of government assistance programs, the urban poor would not have developed their group 'maladaptations' and thereby the problem of "underclass" urban poverty would not have arisen.

Therefore, the theories of urban poverty expounded upon by Murray and Wilson are not as distinct as they are usually presented in poverty knowledge. Indeed, consider the convergence between the two: both approaches attribute causal significance to the population's characteristics, specifically the urban poor's culture and behavior. Furthermore, both approaches causally connect the cultural and behavioral practices of the urban poor with a larger 'structural' variable. That is, 'structural' variables are superior to and supersede individual and group variables such as culture and behavior. In the case of Murray, the key structural variable is the welfare state and for Wilson the profound changes in the national economy take structural preeminence. The difference between the two— and more broadly among competing theories of urban poverty— is a matter of *degree* (in the causal significance of structure) not type.

As a result of the above, *I further suggest that poverty knowledge's discourse on the causes of urban poverty seem to rest not on dichotomies such as culture vs. structure or individual/structure, but rather only on the proper causal role of culture on poverty.* What I term the cultural causal question: does the culture and/or behavior of the urban poor independently cause or reproduce urban poverty? As I noted in the introduction, this debate boils down to an issue of culpability. Specifically, to what extent are the

urban poor responsible for their economic and social marginalization? The closing

section explores the importance of what is popularly known as the structure vs. culture

debate. And while the this debate is (in)famous for contentiousness, I underscore an

often ignored quality of the cultural question debate: its seeming consensus: the poor are

different.

Debate and Consensus in the Cultural Question

Recently the debate on how to best understand the cause of poverty gained national

media attention. In a front-page *New York Times* article entitled "'Culture of Poverty'

Makes a Comeback," Patricia Cohen (2010) observes that:

> for more than 40 years, social scientists investigating the causes of poverty have
> tended to treat cultural explanations like Lord Voldemort: That Which Must Not
> Be Named. The reticence was a legacy of the ugly battles that erupted after
> Daniel Patrick Moynihan…introduced the idea of a 'culture of poverty' to the
> public…Although Moynihan didn't coin the phrase…his description of the urban
> black family as caught in an inescapable 'tangle of pathology'…was seen as
> attributing self perpetuating moral deficiencies to black people, as if blaming
> them for their own misfortune….Now, after decades of silence, [poverty]
> scholars are speaking openly about you-know-what, conceding that culture and
> poverty are enmeshed

The above quote is a cogent summary of the main themes surrounding the structure vs.

culture debate. First, Cohen illustrates its origins in the furor following the publication of

the Moynihan report (also see Rainwater and Yancey 1967; Marks 1991; Scott 1997;

Massey and Sampson 2009). Second, the reporter underscores the fundamental

disagreement on whether the culture of the poor contributes to the persistence of

poverty. Those answering in the affirmative, then as in now, argue that the perpetuation,

even cause of poverty, is inextricably 'enmeshed' with culture. That is, culture is a cause of poverty. In contrast, those answering in the negative contend that, as Cohen observes, that describing the culture of the poor as a cause of poverty has the distinct feel of 'blaming the victim.'

Stephen Steinberg (2011), in a direct reply to the *New York Times* piece (Cohen 2010), provides an elaboration of the structuralist position: "the imbroglio over the Moynihan Report was never about whether culture matters, but whether culture is or ever could be an independent and self-sustaining factor in the production and reproduction of poverty." A few passages later, he expands on this central axis of contention: "culturalists *confuse cause and effect*, arguing that lack of social mobility among black youth is a product of their culture rather than the other way around" (Steinberg 2011, italics added). The media 'conversation' between Cohen (2010) and Steinberg (2011) illustrates that disputes on the very nature and causes of poverty are relevant to and endemic in contemporary poverty research.

Further proof of the debate is evident in a recent *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* issue entitled "Reconsidering Culture and Poverty." This special issue brought attention to the relationship between culture and poverty. As the editors of the *Annals* issue stated, "culture is back on the poverty research agenda. Over the past decade, sociologists, demographers, and even economists have begun asking questions about the role of culture in many aspects of poverty and even explicitly explaining the behavior of the low-income population in reference to cultural factors" (Small, Harding, and Lamont 2010:8). As this quote illustrates,

questions about the relationship of culture to poverty, and indeed what dimensions

constitute poverty, continue in poverty research. Undoubtedly, the structure vs. culture

debate will continue with both structuralists and culturalists (compare Small, Harding,

and Lamont 2010 to Steinberg 2011) defending their positions. In an ongoing academic

conversation without resolution in sight a striking feature of the debate is its seeming

consensus: the (urban) poor as 'other.'

In the debate on the causes of poverty, culturalists and structuralists seem to

agree that the urban poor are different. Steinberg (2011) provides a telling passage that is

as applicable today as it was during the Moynihan political maelstrom: "yet even

Moynihan's harshest critic did not deny the manifest troubles in Black families. Nor did

they deny that the culture of poor people is often at *variance* with the cultural norms and

practices in more privileged sectors of society" (italics added). Earlier, from a

structuralist perspective, he specifies the issue up for contention: "the problem from the

beginning was not Moynihan's publication of what were actually well-established facts,

but his distorted interpretations of these facts" (Steinberg 2011). In short then, the 'fact'

that the poor are at 'variance' from everyone else is not in question.

The following statement by William Julius Wilson—the modern day Moynihan

who is credited for bringing poverty and its relationship to culture 'back to the research

agenda' (see Cohen 2010 for this view; also see Steinberg 2011 for challenge to this

'myth')— makes the parallel between the culturalist and structuralist positions clear:

"one of the effects of living in racially segregated neighborhoods is exposure to group-

specific cultural traits… that emerged from patterns of racial exclusion and that may not

be conducive to factors that facilitate social mobility" (2009:17). Hence, both Wilson and Steinberg agree that culture stems from a response to structural marginalization; a culture which is 'group-specific' (read different). The question then is whether this culture functions as a causal factor in inhibiting social mobility. The lines of debate and agreement are therefore rather evident: the poor are different, and structure is central in causing this difference and the poor's poverty. However, the question of whether the culture of the poor causes or reproduces poverty remains.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In terms of defining and attributing causality to urban poverty, poverty knowledge has seemingly demonstrated a tremendous focus on two questions: (1) are the urban poor culturally, and thereby behaviorally, different? (2) to what extent does the culture of the urban poor cause urban poverty?

Similarly, in terms of the issue of what causes poverty, pre-Moynihan poverty research agreed that poverty was a result of structural factors and 'cultural pathology' (O'Connor 2000). Poverty knowledge's conviction in the inter-causal relationship of structure and culture is encapsulated in the social scientific imagery of a "vicious circle" of poverty. This representation portrays poverty as a condition in which individuals are 'trapped' in poverty because of the combination and interplay of structural and cultural forces. As the imagery goes: although poverty may be initially caused by structure, the result of structural marginalization is that the poor develop 'pathological' cultural adaptations, which in turn, reinforce, and indeed, causes poverty (see O'Connor 2000:

94-98). The powerful imagery of poverty being an intractable 'circle' propelled both by structure and culture remains with us today (see Cohen 2010).

Alice O'Connor (2000) observes that, "the lines of the [poverty research] debate, then, were not drawn based on *whether* but rather on *why* the poor were culturally different" (p.197, italics in original). Thus, in poverty knowledge the poor are apparently widely accepted as being dissimilar from general society. In the *Undeserving Poor*, Michael Katz (1990) makes a similar observation: "most of the writing about poor people, even by sympathetic observers, tell us that they [the poor] are *different*, truly strangers in our midst: Poor people think, feel, and act in ways unlike *middle-class* Americans" (pp. 6-7, italics added). Besides echoing O'Connor's contention that the poor are assumed as different, Katz's quote highlights a vital, related issue: the poor are defined in contradistinction to the 'middle-class.'[5] Phrased more relationally, the poor and mainstream are seemingly discussed within a binary: the poor are not the middle-class and the middle-class are unlike the poor.

The dualistic framework of poverty knowledge brings me to a related, but usually ignored point: an understanding of poverty requires not only a consideration of the poor, but also of their counterpart—the mainstream. Studies of poverty are too often exclusive studies of 'isolated' poor individuals and communities. What is needed to augment the study of poverty then is an *explicit* examination of the role that the non-poor has played in poverty research. Here explicitness is key. I believe that in poverty studies the

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[5] In this paper synonyms for this term are 'mainstream' and 'general' society. From my review of the literature it seems that middle-class, mainstream, and general society are interchangeable terms used by researchers to identify the 'everyone else' from which the poor are different.

mainstream is habitually a taken-for-granted group. That is, questions about the middle-class are not discussed because it is assumed that we all know who this group is. As such, the 'everyone else' in poverty research is implicitly present and yet invisible. Thus there is a group who, notwithstanding its 'invisibility,' is given a central role in the examination of the poor, in contextualizing the behavior of the poor, and in the very conceptualization of who constitutes the poor. As a result, a key concern of the project is understanding how poverty knowledge has discussed the 'mainstream' (non-poor) vis-à-vis the poor.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY, DATA, & LIMITATIONS

This chapter will detail the project's analytical framework, research methodology, and data source. In particular, below, I describe how I plan on exploring and ultimately trying to answer the project's main research questions; provide details on my sampling approach, data source and sample; describe the coding protocol the project used while analyzing a sample of 50 social science journal articles attained from an urban poverty discourse 'universe'; and conclude by stating the thesis's methodological strengths and limitations.

ANALYZING A POVERTY FRAME

This projects principal research questions are admittedly broad questions which pose research difficulties. Especially pressing are challenges surrounding the identification and measurement of a frame; which in conventional quantitative terms is my main 'outcome' variable. Matthes and Kohring underscore the challenges researchers face when their main analytical focus is a frame, "…a frame is a quite abstract variable that is hard to identity and hard to code" (2008, p.258; see also Gamson et. al 1992, pp.384-386). The difficulty of identifying a frame leads to another troubling research challenge, the independence of research findings. As Van Gorp (2005) explains this second issue, "it is extremely difficult to neutralize the impact of the researcher in framing research" (p. 258, quoted in Matthes and Kohring 2008).

Again this begs the questions, what analytical and methodological approach does this project employ in order to: first, identify the occurrence of a poverty discourse frame (is there a poverty frame 'out there'?); and subsequently, if a frame is seemingly evident, how to explore the components and outline of an urban poverty frame? (what is the character and constitution of the frame in question?); finally, how does this project ensure that the results are not just the makings of the researcher? Or, in the jargon of conventional social science research, what is the reliability and validity of the project's results?

By conceptualizing a frame as a "pattern of frames" (Matthes and Kohring 2008), the thesis seeks to provide reliable research findings on the occurrence and content of a frame in poverty knowledge discourse particularly, and more broadly a frame which may be also present in what I term inequality talk. Frame research is frequently criticized for neglecting to specify ('operationalize') its main object of study: a frame (Matthes and Kohring 2008; Matthes 2009). In fact, in a systematic review of the framing literature Johring Matthes found that the overwhelming majority (75%) of framing articles do not describe the specific approach used to classify a frame (2009, p.354; for another review of framing literature see Borah 2011). In both a response to this tendency, and moreover in an effort to improve the field's understandings of framing dynamics, Matthes and Kohring (2008) propose that a frame be understood as a:

> certain pattern in a given text that is composed of *several elements*. These elements are not words but *previously defined components* or devices of frames, *rather than directly coding the whole frame,* we suggest splitting up the frame into its separate elements, which can quite easily be coded in content analysis…we call these *pattern frames* (p.263, italics added)

Hence, by understanding a frame as comprised of numerous elements, the task of a researcher is clear: one must identify the components of a frame, and through an examination of these pattern frames or frame elements, a researcher determines the existence and components of the frame in question.

Consistent with the above understanding of a frame, Matthes and Kohring (2008) suggest that a **frame** be defined as: [the process of selecting] some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication context, in such a way as to promote *a particular problem definition*, c*ausal interpretation*, *moral evaluation*, and/or *treatment recommendation* for the item described" (p. 52, emphasis added). The authors recommend this popular definition because it clearly outlines the four basic elements of a frame: (1) problem definition; (2) causal interpretation; (3) moral evaluation; and, (3) recommended or perceived solutions to issue (Matthes and Kohring 2008, p.264).

Understanding a frame as comprised of numerous previously defined elements provides two main advantages. First, this approach provides a detailed, more grounded explanation of a frame. Usually, a frame is understood as a broad, multifaceted organizational principle that gives coherence to everyday symbols and messages (Gamson et. al 1992). While this view is compelling, it is also—especially in the midst of coding—ambiguous Indeed, it does seem that the frame concept is "both indispensable and elusive" (Gamson et. al 1992, p.384). But by viewing a frame as composed of four essential components, this concept becomes a patterned set of variables or elements rather than an abstract idea. Second, this approach provides a

guideline for empirically determining and describing frames. In the language of quantitative analysis, a frame's four principle elements (problem definition, causality, moral evaluation, and solution) *are the means through* which we test for our principal latent outcome variable: a frame, as a general organizing principle. As a result of this 'variable driven' approach, one avoids the ontological issues about whether a frame 'truly exists,' and furthermore, the study avoids (in its intentions at least) reifying a frame as an actual, deterministic social structure (on this point see Denzin and Keller 1981). Instead, a frame is nothing but a collection of its frame elements; we explore frame elements and thereby derive whether a particular discourse demonstrates a coherent organization, a frame in the abstract sense (Matthes and Kohring 2008, p.274). Overall, the pattern frames perspective is a powerful way to conduct frame analysis.

Applying the discussion above, the project studies its principal research question— does social science discourse demonstrate a coherent frame in the study of poverty?—by focusing on the existence and prevalence of two frame elements in poverty knowledge: problem definition and normative evaluation. In particular, I explore whether, and if applicable, how urban poverty is defined vis-à-vis culture and behavior. In other words, is urban poverty understood, at least in part, as a behavioral and/or cultural issue?

In addition to exploring the important definitional issue, I also explore the prevalence of the following two questions in social science poverty discourse. (1) are binary groups understood as different from each other? In particular, is the marginalized group (i.e. non-whites; the poor) viewed as *different* from the privileged group (i.e.

whites, the non-poor); (2) to what extent , if at all, is the marginalized/low group understood as *responsible* for the social marginalization they experience?

I explore the occurrence of these two seemingly prominent research issues *as element frames*. Specifically, I interpret the second question as falling under the category of moral evaluations since such assessments make declarative statements about whether something is good, bad, or neutral (Matthes and Kohring 2008, p.264). In this particular case, I study poverty knowledge's moral evaluation of the behavior and culture of the poor. Furthermore, I understand the question of difference as primarily a definitional issue in poverty knowledge. I do so because the assessment of difference, similarity, and the like are necessarily embedded into conceptualizations of any issue, especially in a topic such as urban poverty. Finally, the question of difference also highlights that frame elements are not wholly distinct and independent as is implied by Matthes and Kohring (2008, p.264). For instance, assessing group differences also involves considerations of causality (what, if anything, caused the divergences between groups); moral judgments (are the differences of the poor good, bad, etc); and solutions, (how can we solve group differences if deemed problematic?). For clarity's sake, I classify the particular question of whether binary groups are different under the definitional frame dimension. But, overall, one should keep in mind the interconnected and even interdependent nature of frame elements.

In the end, a vital concern with theory construction compels my adaption of a frame element approach. Numerous scholars have noted that framing research especially and discourse research in general must do more to understand: (1) the content of

'generic' frames which apply beyond particular news stories, events, or topics; (2) and furthermore, explore how and why certain frames are produced and seem to predominate (Chong and Druckman 2007; Matthes 2009; Borah 2011). This thesis strives to contribute to ongoing academic research—in framing research, the sociology of knowledge, critical discourse analysis, critical theory, and status theory, to name a few— on the nature and dynamics of frame(s) in poverty knowledge specifically, and discourse on inequality generally.

DATA SOURCE & SAMPLE: SURVEYING POVERTY KNOWLEDGE

 In order to explore the project's main research questions, I randomly sampled social science publications on poverty.[6] Specifically, I first constructed a universe of social science discourse on urban poverty; afterwards, I randomly sampled 50 social science journal publications; and finally, I coded the articles. This section describes the specific steps taken to attain the project's sample.

Publication takes two main forms in social science research: peer-reviewed journal articles and books. Though initially intending to sample both types of publication, I ultimately focused only on journal articles. There are three reasons for this change. First, while in the early stages of organizing my sampling universe and sample, I realized that collecting a universe for books is very difficult and time consuming. The main reason for this being that, unlike journal articles which can be collected and managed via an academic database such as JSTOR, there is no equivalent management

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[6] The development of my research protocol is informed by the work of Margaret Usdansky (2009). Her research on the representation of single-parent families is an exemplar for my study.

tool for books. Indeed, sampling books would have required that I first identify all relevant Library of Congress Subject Headings and then manually compile a list of all eligible books (some headings have hundreds of books under them; and oftentimes there is redundancy since books are categorized under numerous subject headings). This approach required more time than was available for the project. Alternatively, I thought of complementing my random sample of journal articles, by conducting a strategic sample of the most highly cited books on urban poverty. But alas, there is as of yet no reliable source that provides data on the impact (via citation) of books. Specifically, traditional citation assessments tools such as Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) citation indexes do not adequately catalogue books nor provide reliable information on the impact of books (Levine-Clark and Gil 2009). Finally, and perhaps most important, it became clear during the development of my coding protocol that manuscript length books posed coding challenges. Namely, due to the length and diverse organizational style of books, I was unable to develop a coding protocol which allowed for the coding of a book within my ideal coding timeline (1 hour per academic work). For these reasons, I decided to concentrate only on academic articles.

My sample is comprised of one main data source, the Web of Science's Social Science Citation Index (SSCI). Generally considered to be the definitive database on academic publications, I chose this database because of its historical breadth (it catalogued information up to and even past the 1960s), wide sampling of various social science disciplines, and above all, the database's purposeful effort to catalogue the 'top'

journals in the social sciences (Moed 2005; Levine-Clark and Gil 2009). Therefore, the SSCI provides a rich, reliable, and comprehensive data source.

Conceptualizing urban poverty discourse within a sampling perspective (see Usdansky 2009), I set out to establish a universe of urban poverty discourse. I established the project's universe by using pertinent keywords (e.g. poverty, culture, behavior, etc.) to establish my universe for journal articles. Specifically, I used the following combination of key words:

TABLE 1
Universe Key Words

Key Words-Place/Condition	Key Words-Population
"city OR cities" AND "poverty"	
	"city OR cities" AND "poor"
"inner-city OR inner-cities" AND "poverty"	"inner-city OR inner-cities" AND "poor"
"ghetto OR ghettos" AND "poverty"	"ghetto OR ghettos" AND "poor"
"urban" AND "poverty"	"urban" AND "poor"

As Table 1 shows, I used search terms that understood urban poverty discourse as divisible into two primary areas: urban poverty as a condition/place and urban poverty as a population (the urban poor). Consequently, I used a comprehensive, though not exhaustive, combination of terms that captured these two crucial elements of urban poverty discourse.

Utilizing the above list of key words, I conducted a title search in the Social Science Citation Index database. Since the title search function has a strict threshold, this search function minimized the inclusion of irrelevant articles. Therefore, all the journal articles that were retrieved via SSCI using this approach are considered within 'universe.' While establishing the sampling universe, eligibility was limited to: (1) peer-reviewed articles; and (2) written in English. Due to my focus on American poverty knowledge, I had intended on limiting the sampling universe to articles only published by United States based scholars. This turned out to be unfeasible because while SSCI does provide a "country" limit function, SSCI did not index this field until 1965 (personal electronic communication with SSCI staff). Consequently, eligible articles published before 1965 are automatically excluded. Furthermore, during preliminary efforts to establish my universe I noticed that many articles published before the 1990s did not contain country of author information. Hence, in order to not unduly exclude relevant articles I decided to include international (non-U.S.) articles as well. Additionally, I did not limit my search to any particular subfield of the social sciences as in prior work (see Usdansky 2009) and rather searched across the whole database. Since I am interested in the nature and content of urban poverty discourse across the multifaceted and interdisciplinary field of the social sciences, limiting my work to particular disciplines seemed unnecessarily restrictive.

Finally, the timeline for my universe is from 1960 to 2010. The rationale for this timeline is related to the structure vs. culture debate. As has been noted earlier, poverty knowledge exhibited remarkable agreement on the causes of poverty up until the

publication of the Moynihan Report, which was published in 1965. Hence, in order to capture the development of the structure vs. culture debate, I begin sampling five years before the publication of *The Negro Family* and up until 2010 when there is still evidence of the debate's persistence. The proposed 50 year timeline provides an ample window to observe the historical changes and continuity of poverty knowledge.

Overall the above sampling approach resulted in a total universe of 781 social science journal articles on urban poverty. After establishing my sampling universe, I stratified the sample by decade in order to be able to draw a stratified (by decade) random sample of journal articles. The rationale for this approach is to account for the increase in publication throughout the sampling period (Usdansky 2009: p.213). Indeed, as the Table 2 shows, the article distribution demonstrates the expected increase by decade in published articles. Using a random number table, I ultimately sampled 50 articles (10 for each decade) from the project's universe.

TABLE 2
Universe Distribution by Decade

Decade (strata)	# of articles
1960s	33
1970s	92
1980s	91
1990s	226
2000s	339
Total	781

CODING APPROACH

Combining insights from content analysis and framing research, I developed a coding

protocol for analyzing ('coding') the articles. Specifically, I created a codebook and

coding form (see appendix). The codebook provides general instructions for coding

articles as well as a glossary for key research terms. The coding form is the document

used both by independent coders and myself to code the sampled articles.

Content analysis and framing studies follow two comparable but not exact

procedures for conducting research on written discourse material. Robert Weber (1990)

summarizes the coding process in content analysis as follows: a coder must (1) define

recording unit (i.e. sentence, paragraph, whole article, etc.); (2) develop, either

inductively or deductively, relevant coding categories and a codebook; (3) pre-test

coding categories and codebook; (4) test reliability of coding material; (5) revise

codebook; (6) re-test coding material in sample of text; (7) code all text or sample

material; (8) determine reliability of sample. Similarly, Chong and Druckman explain

that framing research essentially involves five steps: (A) identify the issue or topic of

interest; (B) inductively identity key "set of frames for an issue" in order to create a

coding scheme; (C) identify data source and data type; (D) develop explicit codebook

outlining the rules for indentifying and classifying frames; (E) choose between merits

and costs of manual (human) coding and automated (computer) coding (2007, pp.106-

109).

Combining elements from both methodologies, this project developed in the

following manner. Because I am centrally interested in exploring the framing process in

poverty knowledge, I first conducted step A from framing research and identified my frame of interests. Afterwards, as step 1 in content analysis directs, I defined my unit of analysis a whole academic article, which is the traditional unit of analysis in framing research (Matthes and Kohring 2008, p.266). Third, as in step C, I chose the Social Science Citation Index as my data source and furthermore organized my sampling universe. Fourth, I deductively developed a coding categories and codebook based on my theoretical interests in status construction theory, critical whiteness theory, and others (for elaboration see conclusion chapter). Fifth, I pre-tested the coding material on a set of articles. Using feedback from this pre-test effort I edited my codebook, coding schemes, and the coding form. Sixth, I coded all of the articles in my sample universe. To verify my coding, I had independent coders analyze a subsample of articles. Finally, I determined the amount of agreement between how independent coders and I coded the articles. Overall, I view this coding process as an extended pre-test of the thesis' coding material as well as the project's analytical interest in a frame and hypotheses.

METHODOLOGICAL STRENGTHS & LIMITATIONS

On the whole, there are three principal advantages associated with my methodology. First, the utilization of random sampling can provide, a 'representative' exploration of social science urban poverty discourse. More strictly, my universe and sample capture social science articles—published between 1960 and 2010— with a focus on urban poverty (measured via the exhibition in their titles of a set of urban poverty terms) that are indexed in the Social Science Citation Index. Considering the importance given to

'representativeness' in social science research, the utilization of a survey approach and random sampling are notable strengths of my methodology. Second, by randomly sampling social science articles from a created discourse universe this thesis goes to the heart of its research interests: does poverty knowledge discourse demonstrate a frame? Numerous researchers in a diverse range of disciplines have argued, implicitly or explicitly, that poverty knowledge indeed does demonstrate what can be categorized as a frame (Ryan 1976; Katz 1990, 1997; Wacquant 1997; O'Connor 2000; Schram and Soss 2001; Graebner 2002). But considering the prominent research convention in the social science of focusing on the prominent authors or debates in their respective fields, the possibility of 'sampling bias' arises: does poverty research demonstrate a coherence, a frame, or could the compelling, detailed findings of numerous research result from a focus on the Chicago Schools and Moynihan's of poverty research? In fact, poverty knowledge is diverse (in disciplines, methodologies, epistemologies, etc.) and may be more fractured than implied by prior work. Thus, through random sampling one can begin to study the range of poverty knowledge discourse, from the luminary to the yeoman publications, and thereby determine the existence of a frame(s).

Finally, the project's proposed timeline allows for a historical exploration of my research questions. In particular, I will focus on what have been the novel developments and constants in how the idea of poverty, the behavior and culture of the poor, and the mainstream have been discussed over that last fifty years. Historical research will also facilitate the exploration of how the structure vs. culture debate has changed over time. Specifically, I will consider the general trajectory of the debate, try to ascertain

important research periods in which change occurred (i.e. development of important research model or theories), and finally, consider what characteristics of the structure vs. culture debate have possibly remained stable (i.e. the poor as behaviorally and culturally different) across the last fifty years of poverty research.

My research methodology and data source also have their limitations. I see two main challenges posed by methodology and data. The first challenge relates to the application of a random sampling, survey logic to academic publications. The survey approach rests on the assumption that everyone in the population of interests has an equal probability of being sampled. But in academic research, not all works have the same chance of being cited. In short, not all works are equal in academic research; some publications are very influential and have disparate effect in the research area. Hence, there is some conflict in my application of a surveying logic to academic publications. Does the unequal citation and influence of academic publications violate the assumptions of sampling? I think this is a fair question and one that I must grapple with. Nevertheless, since the goal of the study is to see how poverty research as a whole— from the great works to the obscure—has understood poverty and portrayed the poor and mainstream, a random sampling approach is appropriate and its benefits outweigh its limitations. The second challenge of my methodology is developing a reliable and valid coding protocol for the sampled articles and books. In particular, I am worried that there could be disagreement and inconsistency in how I code an article (for example, in terms of whether an article understand the poor as different,) compared to other colleagues. The question of attaining reliable results lead to the next section of the thesis: what are

the project's findings and what can be made of those findings both conceptually and in

terms of reliability?

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH RESULTS

Lee Epstein and Andrew Martin nicely define research as: [that which seeks] to make claims or inferences based on observations of the real world…" (2005, p.321). While the authors specifically describe empirical research, it seems to me that all investigations of worldly phenomenon, not just those efforts using standardized surveys or logistic regression equations, must face the varied, oftentimes contradictory manifestations of the real world. In this chapter, I begin this task: of grappling with the research data.

Combining insights from the methods of content analysis and frame research, I developed a coding form and codebook tailored to answer the main research interests of this thesis. Accordingly, the chapter's primary purpose is to present the research findings most pertinent for answering the project's research questions and hypotheses. In the discussion of the main research findings, I make special note of coding themes that exemplify the dynamic, consistent intersection of race with urban poverty. After discussing the main results, I consider an ever present issue in communications research: reliability. Specifically, I present information on the level of coding agreement—in a subsample of 9 articles— between independent coders and myself.

On the whole, I found support for two of my six hypotheses. The coding data suggests that social science discourse demonstrates definitional and moral frame elements. In particular, the sampled articles showed a consistent tendency of exploring urban poverty as a behavioral and cultural issue. While interesting, the coding data

presented should be viewed tentatively due to the inconsistent coding agreement

achieved. As I see it, the efforts collected in this thesis reflect an extended pre-test of

ideas about the nature and content of poverty knowledge discourse in particular and

inequality talk generally.

EXPLORING RESEARCH QUESTIONS & TESTING HYPOTHESES

Result for Empirical Hypothesis 1(EH-1)

TABLE 3
Behavioral and/or Cultural Focus

Decade	Eligible Articles	Yes	No
1960s	10	4	6
1970s	10	5	5
1980s	10	9	1
1990s	10	8	2
2000s	10	7	3
Total	50	33	17

In terms of Table 3, the coding data supports EH-1 as the majority (66%) of the

sample studied at least one behavioral or cultural characteristic (often, more) of the

urban poor[7]. Question #1 of the Coding Form directly explored EQ-1 by asking: "Does

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[7] The urban poor were not the target population for all the articles. Many articles, were more generally interested in the poor and focused on people living in cities, while others were interested in a subset of the urban poor like children at poor urban schools. Nevertheless, outside of on exemption, all the sampled

the article demonstrate a behavioral and/or cultural focus?" I defined the idea of focus as follows:

> an article has a cultural or behavioral 'focus' if the article aims to do at least one of the following: (1) concentrates on describing the behavior and/or cultural characteristics of a particular group; (2) study the extent to which one group demonstrates behavior and/or a culture which is distinctive or not (similar) to a comparison group; (3) explores the consequences (negative, positive, or neutral) of the behavior and/or culture of a particular group; (4) discusses factors that are believed to cause the behavior and/or culture of a particular group

As may be evident, my description of 'focus' parallels Entman's (1993) definition of a frame. This definition provides two advantages. First, the description of focus maintains consistency with the project's central variable (a frame), and moreover, the above definition is comprehensive enough to cover the various ways an article can study the behavior or culture of the urban poor.

The idea of an article focus, as defined here, also has its limitations. First, the broad conceptualization of focus may lead to unreliable agreement between coders. For instance, in the early stages of coding I found it difficult to categorize articles studying the demographic characteristics of the urban poor. In particular, do aggregate socio-demographic characteristics such as "economic status," "family structure," or "HIV status" equate to the everyday actions of individuals (behavior)? Are such demographic studies demonstrating a behavioral focus? In order to not exclude any potentially relevant studies, I decided to code demographic studies as having a behavioral focus[8].

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articles expressed interest in studying an economically or socially disadvantaged group. For simplicity, I use the term urban poor to refer to all these groups.

[8] Since I made this decision during data processing, I decided not to change the instructions in my coding form or codebook. Specifically, I did not want to retrospectively go back and change data I had coded before. And moreover, I wanted to see how independent coders coded articles using demographic

The second challenge is more concerned with a conceptual issue than coding reliability. Question#1 is utilized to explore a definitional element frame in poverty discourse (does poverty knowledge understand poverty as behavioral or cultural issue?). Because my definition of focus includes all four frame elements, coding results may include potential frame elements (i.e. causality, solutions) that are not necessarily definitional. Hence, the project's conceptualization of focus may exaggerate the extent to which poverty is defined in cultural or behavioral terms. Nevertheless, as noted in the methodology chapter and as I will elaborate upon in the conclusion, frame elements are not wholly distinct. For instance, the social disorganization perspective in poverty research seems to define poor urban neighborhoods *as socially disorganized* areas (Wacquant 1997, p.345-347; O'Connor 2000, pp.46-54), and moreover, the concept of social disorganization is also understood as *causing* urban poverty (Ward 1989). Therefore, a broad conceptualization of 'article focus' carries the risk of overstating the extent to which poverty is defined as a behavioral or cultural condition, but on the other hand, a broad perspective can capture the extent to which urban poverty is associated with culture or behavior *across the four main components* of a frame.

The sample's predominant focus on the behavior and/or culture of the urban poor suggests that social science articles on urban poverty primarily examine poverty via behavioral and cultural characteristics. Hence, a random sample approach independently corroborates a principle observation on poverty knowledge in particular, and inequality discourse generally: mainly, that the dominant "unit of analysis" for conceptualizing and

variables. Comparison between independent and personal coding results will serve as basis for correction and specification of coding protocol.

studying group inequalities such as poverty is the individual and individual level

attributes (Katz 1990, 1995; O'Connor 2000). Besides supporting prior research finding,

the project quantifies what before were general observations. For instance, among the

project's sample, almost two out of every three social science article (66%-33 articles)

demonstrates a behavioral and/or cultural focus. Due to the project's random sample

methodology, the results for EQ-1provided a robust approximation of the extent to

which the universe of social science poverty discourse focuses on the behavior or culture

of the urban poor

Similarly, the coding data illustrates the tremendous depth and breadth of poverty

knowledge's behavioral and cultural focus. In addition to the family, neighborhood, and

employment status—the usual individual factors associated with poverty (see Katz 1995,

pp.83-86; Small and Newman 2001)— the sample also studied, to name some interesting

examples: (1) the breastfeeding habits of women in the Philippines (Guthrie 1983); (2)

the feasibility of HIV testing in poor urban emergency hospitals (Glick et al. 2004); (3)

the commodifcation of AIDS among the urban poor (Crane et. al 2002); (4) the

prevalence of low-birth weight among the urban poor (Collins and Shay 1994); (5)

"baby farming," that is childcare practices among the urban poor of late 19th century

Philadelphia (Broder 1988); (6) the communication habits of the urban poor (Block

1970). The sample's diverse behavioral and cultural topics underscore the importance,

and range, to which poverty knowledge understands urban poverty as an issue of

behavior or culture.

Result for Empirical Hypothesis 2 (EH-2)

TABLE 4
Types of Comparisons

Decade	Eligible Articles	Intragroup	Intergroup	Both
1960s	4	2	0	2
1970s	4	0	1	3
1980s	9	7	2	0
1990s	8	5	2	1
2000s	7	3	1	3
Total	32*	17	6	9

*Dropped one article because target population was medical students. Interestingly, this is the only instance of a non-poor group being an article's only object of study in the sample.

I hypothesized that direct comparisons between the urban poor and non-poor (intergroup) is the most frequent type of comparison in poverty research. But, as Table 4 show, it turns out that the majority (17 out of 32) of comparisons occurred *within* the urban poor group itself (intragroup).

The comparison data provide a valuable lesson: notoriety does not automatically equate more empirical research; or at least not always in the expected ways. Since the 1960s, academic reviews of social science poverty research agree that debates surrounding the Moynihan Report and the culture of poverty theory indelibly shaped the development of the field (see Marks 1991; Small and Newman 2001; Massey and Sampson 2008). Because much of the 'culture wars' (O'Connor 2000) in poverty research revolved around one basic question—are the urban poor different or similar to

everyone else in society— I thought that most research in poverty knowledge would seek to resolve this issue by conducting intergroup comparisons between the urban poor and non-poor. The coding data attained from my sample suggest that while intergroup comparisons are important, most comparisons occur either within the urban poor or compare both within and across urban poor and non-poor groups.

Subsequently, in order to better understand comparison dynamics between unequal groups, we must explore the connections and distinctions between the three forms of comparisons. A developing theme among the sample implies that oftentimes authors attempt to challenge the persistent belief that the poor are different, not by comparing the urban poor to the *non-poor*, but by studying the distinctions within the urban poor themselves. Specifically, such efforts try to challenge the continual belief that the poor are homogenous by exploring the internal diversity of the urban poor. The following sampled article illustrates this strategy:

> existing studies have focused on the relationship between the urban poor and the whole of society. As a result, they emphasize only their *homogeneity* against external environments and *underestimate internal heterogeneity* and *differentiation* within the urban poor. We need to consider the process of differentiation within the urban poor and [its] internal composition (Kim 1995, p. 184 italics added)

Academic responses to prevailing conversations do not then have to take a preordained or the most expected approach. Indeed, discourse generally and academic research particularly is characterized by individuals striving to provide novel, informative approaches to old problems.

At the same time, innovative responses such as the one above also underscores the continuing influence of important research questions and issues on the content, development, and trajectory of discourse in a research field. Hence, a key task in understanding the nature of inequality discourse, as studied via poverty knowledge, is how the responses by individuals and whole fields are both *animated and limited* by the prevailing conceptualization of an issue (on this point see Said 1979). The following discussion leads directly into whether the poor are viewed as being different in poverty knowledge and the field's moral assessment of the urban poor's behavior and culture

Results for Empirical Hypotheses 3A (EH-3A) and 3B (EH-3B)

TABLE 5
Behavior and Difference

Decade	Eligible Articles	Behaviorally Similar	Behaviorally Different	Both	Other
1960s	2	0	0	2	0
1970s	3	1	0	2	0
1980s	2	0	1	1	0
1990s	3	0	1	2	0
2000s	2	0	2	0	2
Total	14	1	4	7	2

TABLE 6
Culture and Difference

Decade	Eligible Articles	Culturally Similar	Culturally Different	Both	Other
1960s	0	0	0	0	0
1970s	3	1	0	1	1
1980s	1	1	0	0	0
1990s	1	0	0	1	0
2000s	2	0	2	0	0
Total	7	2	2	2	1

In terms of behavioral difference, half of the eligible articles in Table 5 understood the urban poor as being both behaviorally different and similar to an intergroup comparison—meaning that hypothesis EH-3A is not supported. The data in Table 6 on cultural difference is even less definitive. The urban poor are seen as being equally culturally different, culturally similar, and both different and similar. The fourth empirical hypothesis also does not receive support from the data.

The coded data does not provide enough information to definitively answer the initial question that sparked this thesis: are the urban poor generally understood as being different from the non-poor? The Tables 5 and 6 show that social science poverty discourse demonstrates numerous competing (different/similar) or conflicting views (both different and similar) about the urban poor. Without more consistency or agreement among the relevant sample of articles, the third empirical questions remains unanswered. But let us consider some clues provided by the coded data.

First, the above data tables reveal that the number of "eligible articles" progressively declined from an initial sample size of 50, then to 32 relevant articles on the comparison dynamics, and now down respectively to fourteen and seven eligible articles. This declining trend in the sample indicates that while the question of difference (are the urban poor, especially due to their culture and behavior, different?) receives prominent *attention*—both in social science poverty discourse and the media[9]—the direct study of this question receives much *less exploration*. By direct exploration I mean explicit behavioral and/or cultural comparisons (only intergroup or both intergroup and intragroup) between the urban poor and the non-poor. The findings for the third empirical question are consistent with those found in EQ-2: direct intergroup comparisons are significant but not the majority in poverty knowledge.

The coding data further reveals that during intergroup comparisons, academic articles focus more on comparing behavior rather than culture. Of the fifteen eligible articles[10], fourteen studied the behavioral characteristics of the urban poor and compared them to the non-poor; but only seven articles compared cultural elements of the urban poor to the non-poor. Hence, it seems that a behavioral focus is more prevalent than a cultural focus in poverty research, at least during intergroup comparisons between the urban poor and non-poor.

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[9] See Massey and Sampson 2008; Small, Harding, and Lamont 2010 for illustration in poverty research; and for media examples see Cohen 2010; Schmidt 2012.

[10] Articles were hypothetically eligible for empirical question-3 if the article conducted only an intergroup comparison or a combined intra and intergroup comparison. Table 4 shows that fifteen total articles fit this criterion. Since articles either had only a behavioral focus, or only a behavioral focus, or both a behavioral and cultural focus not all 15 articles were included.

Finally, coding themes indicate that resolving EQ-3 requires a deeper consideration of comparison dynamics, both intergroup and intragroup. Due to my interests in understanding the role of the non-poor in poverty research, this thesis focused on understanding intergroup comparisons. As my coding form shows, I did not collect information on the intragroup comparison dynamics because I expressly wanted to concentrate on understanding how the poor are compared to the non-group. But in trying to understand intergroup comparisons I realized the importance of intragroup evaluations in poverty knowledge. Notably and unexpectedly, the seeming consensus that the poor are different is challenged via intragroup, not intergroup, studies which explore the internal variety ('heterogeneity') of the urban poor. A form of intragroup evaluations also seems to occur in the *intergroup* coding data. Specifically, I observed that during intergroup comparison between the urban poor and non-poor the authors notably used race to distinguish among the urban poor. For instance, one article compared employment rates in poverty and non-poverty areas. I coded this study as portraying the urban poor group as both behaviorally different and similar. But there are important within group distinction in this classification. The article showed that the urban poor generally had lower employment rates than the non-poor. But decomposing by race, the author shows that *whites* living in '*poverty areas'* had *higher* employment rates than *African Americans* living in *non-poverty areas*. Accordingly, I coded this article as understanding the urban poor as both different and similar since while urban poor Blacks showed the lowest employment rates, poor urban whites showed employment rates better than non-poor African Americans. Hence, even in intergroup

comparisons between the urban poor and non-poor, intragroup distinctions play a vital

role in the assigning of difference in poverty research. To understand the poverty

knowledge's view of urban poor a better accounting of intragroup dynamics, especially

distinctions by race, must occur.

Results for Empirical Hypotheses 4A (EH-4A) and 4B (EH-4B)

TABLE 7
Normative Evaluations of Behavior

Decade	Eligible Articles	Positive	Negative	Ambivalent	Neutral	Other
1960s	2	0	1	0	1	0
1970s	3	2	0	1	0	0
1980s	2	0	0	1	1	0
1990s	3	0	1	2	0	0
2000s	4	0	2	1	1	0
Total	14	2	4	5	3	0

TABLE 8
Normative Evaluations of Culture

Decade	Eligible Articles	Positive	Negative	Ambivalent	Neutral	Other
1960s	0	0	0	0	0	0
1970s	3	0	0	3	0	0
1980s	1	0	0	0	0	0
1990s	2	0	0	2	0	0
2000s	2	0	1	1	0	0
Total	8	0	1	6	1	0

The data presented in Tables 7 and 8 illustrate that the distribution of normative evaluations sharply depends upon whether an article is assessing behavior or culture. Specifically, no normative evaluation of the urban poor's behavior attained a majority. Consequently, EH-4A did not receive support. In contrast, since all but two articles articulated an ambivalent judgment of the urban poor's culture, EH-4B did receive support from the coding results. By and large the two tables reveal that urban poor's behavior illicit wide, diverse moral judgments by social science research. In particular, normative evaluations of behavior demonstrate more negative evaluations *and* positive evaluations than its cultural counterpart. In contrast, the culture of the urban poor evaluation of the urban poor's culture, there was nobody that saw the culture as positive as behavior could be seen. It seems the urban poverty research, at least the eligible sampled articles, demonstrate a consensus of sorts in its moral assessment of culture while, at the same time, the behavior of the urban poor is evaluated is split and shows no uniformity. In future research, I would like to, first, verify whether this trend hold along a large sample, and additional consider potential reasons that explain the sharp contrast in the normative evaluations of the urban poor's behavior and culture.

An additional important issue to explore in future research is the relationship between normative evaluations and difference. Specifically, are poverty studies more likely to evaluate the behavior of the urban poor negatively when the urban poor are understood as behaviorally or culturally different; and conversely, are positive evaluations more likely when the urban poor are deemed to be similar to the non-poor? In short, is difference (by the urban poor) negatively associated with moral evaluations?

This proposed association results from the general positive evaluation of the 'mainstream' in poverty research. Accordingly, does it follow that negative evaluations occur when the urban poor diverge from the non-poor? Preliminary research shows that out of eleven eligible articles, eight demonstrated an association between urban poor difference and negative or ambivalent normative evaluations. At the same time, three articles did not follow this trend. For example, an article from the 1970s viewed the poor as behaviorally and culturally similar to the non-poor but interestingly articulated positive evaluations of the urban poor's behavior as well as an ambivalent evaluation of the urban poor's culture (Davidson and Gaitz 1974). Additionally, another article understood the urban poor as behaviorally different, and unlike the eleven articles, normatively deemed this different as positive (Boone and Bonno 1971). Because there are a small number of applicable articles, the potential relationship between (urban poor) difference and normative evaluations is circumstantial. But, in the theoretical framework proposed in the concluding chapter, determining the association between difference and normative evaluations is crucial for understanding poverty knowledge discourse.

CODING AGREEMENT

Research on human communication requires that two or more independent researchers demonstrate consistent agreement in their coding of articles (Lombard et al. 2002). Due to the preliminary stages of this project, it is important to assess the extent to which independent coders agree with how I coded the sample of articles. In particular, determining the level of coding agreement provides rich feedback on the strengths and

weaknesses of my coding protocol; this information is useful for editing and improving coding material specifically and the research concepts more broadly. For this reason, I sent out participation request to friends in which I explained the purpose of independent coding and also the general time commitment for participation in the project. After waiting a week for responses, I compiled a list of all interested research participants. Using this list, I randomly assigned a decade to each independent coder. Afterwards, I assigned each independent coder an article from their assigned decade. Out of the eleven people who responded to my request, nine returned coding material.

The coding agreement results are presented in Appendix C. The table provides information comparing how an independent coder and I coded the same articles. Coding agreement is denoted with blue highlighting. At the end of the table I present the overall percentage agreement for each article. The percentage agreement ranged from a low of 33% to a high of 100%. Conventionally, percentage agreement is viewed as a lenient measure for evaluating the reliability of coding results (Weber 1990; Lombard et al. 2002). But I decided not to present the traditional measures of "intercoder reliability" because of the construction of my coding material. The format and questions of my coding form reflect the central purpose of coding for the purposes of this thesis: mainly, to attain as much information as possible on the sampled articles, especially in terms of the four broad questions of (1) behavioral or cultural focus; (2) target population; (3) forms of comparisons; and (4) the assessment of difference. I also tried to attain, where possible, information on race and location because of their interconnections to urban poverty. In short, I constructed an exploratory coding form.

Due to the wide data interests of this project, the coding form has many questions with qualitative components that ask independent coders to write-in answers. Similarly, some questions ask coders to choose only one answer and other to choose all that apply. But a methodological consequence of the varied nature of my coding form is that many questions are not amenable to intercoder reliability measures since many of these formulas assume nominal variables. Suffice to say, percentage agreement is the most appropriate evaluation technique presently. And with the information attained in this thesis, I will construct a coding form more amenable for attaining an intercoder reliability score in later work.

Below in Table 9, I present the incidence of agreement and disagreement on the important question of whether an article demonstrated a behavioral focus:

TABLE 9
Coding Agreement on Behavioral and/or Cultural Focus

Answer	Personal Coding	Independent Agreement	Independent Disagreement
Yes	6	5	1
No	3	0	3
Total	9	5	4

As we can see, three out of the four coding disagreements occurred when I coded an article as not demonstrating a behavioral or cultural focus while three independent coders understood the relevant article as having a behavioral or cultural focus. I interpret the coding agreement results from question #1 as indicating that independent coders

demonstrated a broader understanding of "focus" than me. Other major areas of

disagreement occurred in question #2 (the kind of behavior studied) and question #6

(article comparison).

The coding agreement data underscores a basic point: the coding form needs to

provide more concrete instructions and rules for coding. The broad definition of "focus"

might lead to undesirable levels of coding disagreement. The task ahead is to develop

explicit "coding rules" that are detailed enough to provide clarity to coders and yet also

are not overly deterministic. The best approach for doing so is to develop coding forms

with a specific empirical or theoretical question. In short like the study of a frame, I must

break up my coding efforts into their particular, specified elements. For instance, rather

than attaining information on range of dynamics, I would develop a coding form that

centrally focuses on the comparison dynamics in poverty studies. As such, all the

instructions and coding efforts will concentrate on the central question. I believe that the

diverse, rich coding data this project attained was worth the cost of unreliable agreement

since future endeavors will use these data 'investments' to develop specific, data

informed communications research studies and coding material.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This study concentrated on exploring one basic question: does social science discourse on urban poverty demonstrate a frame? I explored this central question by considering two additional questions. Specifically, research in numerous academic fields suggests that social science research on inequality is driven by two questions: (1) are binary groups different from each other?; (2) is the marginalized group, in some way, responsible for exacerbating or causing the marginalization it experiences? I call these two respective issues the question of difference and culpability. Schematically then, I explored my general interest on a frame *via* two more specific questions. This concluding chapter discusses, in light of the research findings, whether social science discourse on urban poverty indeed is characterized by a frame. I find that poverty knowledge shows some elements of a frame. Subsequently, I discuss the implication of my research finding by putting the idea of a frame and inequality talk into a 'dialogue' with three fields: critical theory, discourse research, and status construction theory. In particular, I focus on the "big questions" with which this project engaged. Finally, I combine the main elements from the prior discussion in order to provide a 'formalized' explanation of concepts I believe are key to understanding the nature, content, and persistence of inequality discourse.

AN URBAN POVERTY FRAME?

The coding data attained in this project supports the conclusion that the social science discourse on urban poverty demonstrates definitional and moral elements of a frame. In terms of definition, it seems that urban poverty is conceptualized as being, at least in part, an issue of behavior and/or culture. Data from a random sample of social science journal articles showed that two out of every three poverty research articles possessed a behavioral or cultural focus. Moreover, poverty knowledge discourse demonstrates a generally ambivalent moral evaluation understanding of the urban poor's culture; and moreover, a conflicting assessment of the urban poor's behavior. The most ambiguous results of this project rest on the question about whether poverty research comprehends the urban poor as being different from the non-poor. Data showed that the majority of comparisons in poverty research were intragroup (within the urban poor) and when the urban poor were compared to the non-poor, the results were unclear. Some articles saw the poor as different; others as similar; and many as both similar and different from the urban poor. The trend, among some articles conducting intragroup comparisons, of challenging the homogeneity of the urban poor by studying the in group variety highlights a key point: the question of difference does seem to influence the development and content of poverty knowledge discourse via both across-group and within-group comparisons.

Therefore, I argue that my project wrongly understood and explored the question of difference. Specifically, I tried to determine whether difference was an element in a potential poverty frame by trying to ascertain the extent to which there was "consensus"

in poverty research: are the poor accepted as different. As noted, and as the coding data

signifies, there was *ambivalence and equivocation*, not consensus among poverty

research. But considering the nature of the idea of difference, especially when dealing

with a socially salient group, it was empirically untenable to expect that two groups will

be found to be wholly contrasting—that groups share no similarities. Indeed, research on

the human genome shows that most generic variation occurs within ostensibly different

racial groups rather than across them. Accordingly, expecting poverty research to

demonstrate a broad consensus that the poor are different is a high threshold: one that

would not be met under the observable variations in the behavior and culture of the

urban poor.

As a result I believe that a useful way to study the prevalence of the question of

difference in poverty research is to explore the ways in which the idea of group

difference influences various research projects: some of which find the poor as different,

other as similar, etc,. Hence, the research task is to measure the *effect* (influence) of the

question of difference on poverty research, rather than to predict the various, competing

interpretations on whether the urban poor are different or not.

INEQUALITY TALK IN DIALOGUE

An impressive breadth of research fields have engaged and utilized the concept of a

frame. In the social movements field researchers focus on how frames are utilized to

agitate people to collective action (Benford and Snow 2000); in political science,

specialist focus on how "framing effects" influence individual attitudes and public

opinion data (Chong and Druckman 2007); the discipline of communication studies how framing leads to contrasting representation of political issue in the media (Gamson et al. 1992). But despite the variety in academic disciplines and methodological approaches used in frame research, all these works seem to center on a fundamental belief: how an issue is framed—that is, how topics are defined, causality attributed , ascribed consequences, and moral evaluations—largely motivates and channels human conception, and thereby action as well, on any issue. In sum, framing processes—since frames are not 'things' in themselves but rather a conceptual tool capturing the products of interaction, meaning construction, and material resources (Gamson et al. 1992; Benford and Snow 2000)—is a significant concept in social science research, and more broadly, a vital social process.

Accordingly, numerous fields have used the concept of a frame to ask important questions about essential social dynamics. For example, status construction theory studies how cultural frames (i.e. widely held beliefs assumed to be known by everyone) such as gender stereotypes influence the behavior of individuals in various institutional settings (Ridgeway 2009). In general, the theory describes the social psychological process that can lead to the creation of widely held status beliefs and status inequality (Ridgeway 1991, 2006). In this line of research, the basic research interest then is the relationship between macro-structures of inequality and micro-interactions among individuals (Ridgeway 2006).

Similarly, research on discourse has also focused on understanding the link between social structures. In the particular case of critical discourse analysis (CDA), the

focus is the broad relationship between "language and society." CDA studies the ways in which discourse (human communication) is a means through which systems of domination are articulated, and also challenged. As Rogers et al. (2005) explains, "[CDA] focuses on how language *as a cultural tool mediates* relationships of power and privilege in social interactions, institutions, and bodies of knowledge?" (p.367, italics added).

CDA is considered to be part of the larger tradition known as critical theory. Numerous additional research areas and scholars fall under the banner of critical theory: critical race theory, feminism, post-colonial studies, post-structuralism, critical whiteness theory, and many more. In general, critical theory is a diverse academic tradition interested in understanding how systems of inequality persist and are reproduced across time (Agger 1991; Rogers et al. 2005). In particular, critical theory has scrutinized the role of positivism and the social science broadly in legitimating structures of social inequality (Agger 1991, pp.109-111).

All these wide-ranging academic disciplines employ the concept of a frame in their study of social phenomena. Specifically, the above academic approaches use the frame concept to explore the broad relationship between 'culture' (as societal belief and knowledge systems) and 'structure' (material institutions), Indeed, the frame concept serves as a measure of culture (see for example Lamont and Small 2008; Ridgeway 2009). Hence, studying frames (as representation of cultural beliefs, styles, and knowledge) allows numerous scholars with diverse interests to explore the basic relationship between culture and structure.

Of particular interest in research on framing is exploring the link between discourse, as a representation of culture, and social structure. As noted above, CDA explores how discourse is a cultural tool that mediates social structures. Edward Said explores similar concerns in his historical exploration of Orientalism which he describes as an academic tradition focusing on "the Orient" (i.e. non-western world) as a style of thought (and academic research) based on the premise of the valid existence of the concept Orient; and as a form of domination by the West over the Orient (1979, p.2-3).

The work of Said highlights a crucial point argued in the traditions of critical theory and discourse analysis: language is not a "neutral" condition, rather language especially as articulated via discourse is shaped and influenced by systems of inequality. Therefore, bodies of knowledge such as Orientalism— and moreover culture in its broadest sense—are also shaped by prevailing social inequality. As he explains, "…[Orientalism], is above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of *power*…indeed, my real argument is that Orientalism is—and does not simply represent—a considerable dimension of modern *political-intellectual culture*" (1979, p.12). I suggest that poverty knowledge be understood in the same vein as Orientalism. That is, a cultural product imbued with prevailing beliefs and connected to existing organizations of inequality.

But before I elaborate on this argument, a final point needs to be made. All the varied perspective and academic traditions discussed above seem to share the same interests and research question: <u>how is inequality understood in society? And moreover,</u>

how might our cultural understandings of inequality be connected to social inequality?
How does our knowledge system(s) both reflect and change inequality social systems?
As I see it, this question is asked not only in academic studies on framing, discourse, and
critical theory, but also whenever a researcher or field in the social sciences and
humanities attempts to explore the basic relationship between culture and structure.

This project attempts to join and contribute to this prevalent, transdisciplinary
research issue. In particular, I propose that inequality talk is a means to explore the link
between culture and systems of inequality. Specifically, discourse on inequality
(inequality talk) serves as the mediating variable between structure and culture. To study
inequality talk then is to explore the influence *of* social structure and cultural
conceptions *on* inequality discourse; and moreover, examine the interconnections
between structure and culture *via* inequality talk. Furthermore, I suggest that—as
exemplified by the works of Said (1979), Scott (1997), and McKee (1993)—a focus on
binary group inequality is especially amenable, and insightful, to studying discourse on
inequality because of the prevalence of nominal group inequalities (e.g. men/women,
non-white/white). Finally, academic research provides a valuable "field-site" for
exploring the manifestation of inequality talk. Due to the history of the modern
academy's connection to the rise of the West, capitalism, and the professionalization of
research, social science research on inequality is an important discourse space that, like
the field of Orientalism (Said 1976), illustrates the dynamic ways that social research is
both an independent research enterprise and enmeshed with prevailing social relations.

Therefore, this thesis engaged the above considerations through a focus on poverty knowledge. Indeed, the project's central purpose—to explore the occurrence of a frame in social science discourse on urban poverty—directly arose from a larger research issue: is the concept of a frame, as indicated by prior research, an applicable and appropriate term to use in the study of inequality talk? Without engaging this vital question, research on inequality discourse would continue to provide compelling, informative studies that have nevertheless have not explored the applicability of the frame concept to social science inequality discourse. Accordingly, this thesis took shape. The project was specifically designed to explore, or better yet, to *begin* to determine the applicability of a frame to inequality talk. Preliminary evidence reveals that elements of a frame are present in urban poverty discourse. With this vital information in hand, the next section provides a formalized presentation of some concepts and restrictions essential for understanding urban poverty discourse and thereby inequality talk.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The nature and content of a frame in poverty knowledge is the project's main theoretical puzzle. Understanding urban poverty discourse necessitates information on the comparison dynamics between the urban poor and the non-poor. More broadly, I am interested in exploring how the behavior and culture of marginalized groups are seemingly distinguished, and moreover problematized (that is, the difference of the marginalized group itself is seen as a problem) in comparison to the referent. As may be evident, in order to explore the comparison dynamics in inequality talk, certain key terms must be specified. The important terms defined below are group, binary groups,

and differentiation. A discussion of the rationale for defining the concepts of binary groups and differentiation is also given.

Definition of Theoretical Concepts

  (1) Group: <u>a collection of individuals with some degree of interdependence</u>.

  (2) Binary groups are:

I.   Two groups that are defined in contradistinction to each other

II.   The contradistinction has (at least) two hierarchical values associated with it

III.   This value carry a status meaning; that is, the binary groups hold a position of esteem and valuation (i.e. high/low) relative to the other group. The status of the groups is recognized and agreed upon by members of both groups.

IV.   Furthermore, the status of the binary groups is associated with the possession of social power and economic resources. Thus, the high group's status is associated with the group's possession of more power and economic resources than their low status group counterpart. Conversely then, the low group's status is in large part a result of a lack of social influence and material resources.[11]

I decided to define binary groups as described above because it is my belief that such groups are distinguished not only by oppositional definitions (i.e. us/them) but, moreover, and importantly, binary groups are fundamentally based on hierarchical

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[11] It is important to remember as Weber noted long ago: Although status is related to power and economic resources, status is distinct from power and money. Hence, a member of the low group may still have a low status though s/he may have attained some power and/or economic resources; and vice-versa for a high group member who lacks much power and money but still receives high status due to membership in the high status group.

relationships of status, power, and resources (i.e. high/low, superior/inferior). Thus, binary groups are guided by both a dualistic and hierarchical logic.

(3) Differentiation: <u>processes, actions, or events that create or reinforce distinction among at least two distinguishable groups.</u> (Tilly 1984)

During my review of the poverty literature it became clear that the concept of differentiation held tremendous import in the field; both for defining and explaining the conditions of poverty and urban poverty (for illustrations see Fischer 1976, pp.28-29; Massey 1996, pp.406-410; Wilson 1987, 1991; Harding 2007). Similarly, the study of race especially the assimilation paradigm also suggests a central dependence and deployment of the differentiation concept (on this point see McKee 1993; Jung 2009; Saenz and Morales, pp.182-183). Therefore, I argue that the differentiation concept is a foundational concept in the social science discourse on binary group inequality.

I initially came across this idea in Charles Tilly's *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons.* Differentiation is seen as important because, as Tilly argues, social thought has been greatly influenced by the belief that this process can lead to social problems (Tilly 1984). Hence, differentiation is widely understood as an important social process. In particular, I am interested in the analytical consequences of the belief that the production of difference leads to social unrest and instability. In short, it seems that, from this conceptual perspective, the perception or conceptualization of difference itself is a social problem. To be more specific though, it is not difference in and of itself that is problematic in inequality research; rather, the supposed difference of marginalized groups is understood as problematic and is deemed a social disorder.

Hence, I am concerned with the potential ramifications (conceptual, political, and social) of understanding the constructed difference of the other as a problem.

Backward-Forward Derivation

In the backward process, one starts by asking how one can show that the conclusion (i.e. the second part of the proposition) is correct (Solow1982: 9). Solow further observes that this question should be asked in an abstract way (1982: 9). In my case, I ask: *how can I show that the difference of a low status group is seen as inferior?* I answer this question using the following process below.

Assumption 2: The contradistinction(s) between binary groups is associated with hierarchical status.

Assumption 3: The hierarchical statuses of the binary groups are commonly recognized and accepted by both group members

Assumption 4: Difference(s) between binary groups are taken for granted and seen as obvious

Definition of Binary Groups:

I.   Two groups that are defined in contradistinction to each other

II.   The contradistinction has (at least) two *hierarchical values* associated with it

III.   This value carry a *status meaning*; that is, the binary groups hold a position of esteem and valuation (i.e. high/low) relative to the other group. The

status of the groups is recognized and agreed upon by members of both

groups.

Derivation- When difference is perceived between binary groups during instances of observation and categorization, then the low status group's perceived difference is understood as generally inferior vis-à-vis the high status group.

Thus the assumed, distinguishing (nominal) difference of the low status group is, by definition, inferior (in term of status) in comparison to the high status group. The basic meaning of inferiority is to be in a lesser or lower position relative to something or someone else. Since the low group has a lower social position in comparison to the high group, the nominal characteristic that distinguishes the low group takes on status value (see Ridgeway 1991, 2006). For instance, in terms of gender, womanhood (the distinguishing characteristic) has a lower status value than masculinity (Ridgeway 2009).

What else, if anything, about the low group is taken as inferior? I argue that characteristics associated with the low-group will be seen as inferior when the marginalized group ostensibly demonstrates individual or group qualities that diverge or contrast from the high-group. Specifically, I posit the difference of the low-group will be seen as *problematic*; the otherness of the low group-will itself be a problem—something that requires attention, is vexing and requires a solution.

Under what certain condition will the above process occur? I argue that a sufficient though not necessary condition for this process is: when a process of differentiation is believed to cause apparently *new types of differences* between the marginalized and privileged group, then a general evaluation will emerge that the low

group's differentiating characteristics are inferior and problematic. Why and how this occurs exactly are questions for future work. Nevertheless, the valuation of the low-group as inferior will surely play an important role.

Scope Conditions

The above theoretical derivation should be tested under specific theoretical conditions. These 'scope conditions' are:

SC1: The two comparison groups have hierarchical statuses.

SC2: The relevant society or context demonstrates social stratification in terms of status, power, and economic resources.

SC3: A process of documentation and categorization occurs, either within the particular context or general society.

Initial Conditions

This study is particularly interested in how the process of differentiation occurs in poverty research. Hence, the initial conditions below specifically relate to the social scientific study of poverty.

SC1: The two comparisons groups have hierarchical statuses.

IC1: **In poverty research, the poor have a lower status relative to the mainstream.**

SC2: The relevant society or context demonstrates social stratification in terms of status, power, and economic resources.

IC2: U.S. society demonstrates status, power, and economic stratification. Moreover, the very context in which U.S. poverty research is conducted- the academy- also demonstrates stratification in terms of status, power, and resources.

SC3: A process of documentation and categorization occurs, either within the particular context or general society.

IC3: Social science research on poverty is an instance of the process of documentation and categorization—namely, of the poor and poverty—occurring within the specific context of modern academic research and the broader background of U.S. society.

Empirical Propositions

As a result of the above discussion, I have developed the following propositions that I propose to empirically examine in future work:

P1: Individual or group characteristic of the urban poor are seen as problematic, if and only if, the urban poor's characteristics diverge from those of the non-poor. And furthermore, the seeming divergence in characteristics between groups is associated with a process of differentiation.

P2: In such cases, the behavioral difference of the urban poor is portrayed as inferior (i.e. deviant, pathological, or harmful) in a majority of the sampled poverty works**.**

P3: In such cases, the cultural difference of the poor is portrayed as inferior (i.e. deviant, pathological, or harmful) in a majority of the sampled poverty works**.**

P4: The 'integration' of the urban poor with the non-poor is represented as a solution to the poverty in a majority of the sampled poverty research. In other words, the non-poor is redemptive of the poor; the order to the disorder of the poor**.**

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APPENDIX A

CODEBOOK

This document ("codebook") provides instructions for using the attached coding form. The codebook is divided into three sections. The first part provides a general description of the research project. The following segment defines key concepts. Finally, the third part has general instructions for analyzing ('coding') the journal article.

Part 1: Project Description

Controversy and debate characterize the academic study of urban poverty. And yet it is seemingly a 'common sense' proposition among urban poverty researchers that the urban poor are different from everyone else in society. Surprisingly, there is little to no empirical research on the actual amount of consensus (and disagreement), among poverty researchers, on the basic question of: are the poor different?

Accordingly, this research project explores how social science articles evaluate the culture and behavior of the urban poor in terms of difference. Specifically, to what extent do social science articles associate distinctive (i.e. 'different') behaviors with the urban poor? Similarly, to what degree do social science articles believe that the urban poor demonstrate a distinguishing culture? I explore these key questions, by studying the ways in which the urban poor are compared to other groups.

Part 2: Glossary of Key Terms

In order to reliably analyze articles ('code'), important research concepts must be comprehended (and used) in a consistent manner. In other words, I cannot have my personal definition of term X and you have your own. Accordingly, the purpose of this glossary is to provide coders with clear definitions of concepts.

Before proceeding to part three, familiarize yourself with the definitions on the following page.

NOTE: key terms are bolded throughout both the codebook and coding form. Hence, if a concept is unclear while coding or if you forget the definition of a term, refer to this section for clarifications and stick to these definitions.

Behavior: everyday actions of individuals or groups.

Comparison: when at least two distinguishable groups of people are evaluated and contrasted in relation to each other. For this project, there are two types of comparisons.

      Intragroup comparison: this occurs when the article compares behavioral and/or cultural characteristics within the *population sample*.

      Intergroup comparison: this occurs when the article compares behavioral and/or cultural characteristics of the *population sample* with another, distinct group which is not part of the *population sample*.

Comparison Group: a collection of individuals who are compared and contrasted to at least a portion of an article's *population sample*. There can be two forms of comparison groups: **Intragroup referent**: (1) a subset of individuals who are part of an article's *population sample* but whom are distinguished by at least one characteristic from other constituents

      Intergroup referent: a collection of individuals who are: (1) compared to the *population sample*; (2) not part of the article's *population sample.*

Coding: the act of reading, attaining, and documenting specific information relevant to this project. The act of coding requires that individuals follow the instructions outlined in the codebook and coding form throughout all the stages of the coding process (i.e. reading, attaining information, and documenting information).

Coder: an individual who codes an article.

Culture: is comprised of at least two elements. First, culture is a shared value system which tells group members what is good and desirable in life. Thus, culture embodies the collective values a group holds. Second, culture is a shared meaning system which provides group members—via cognitive tools such as symbols, frames, and more—means by which to interpret and make sense of their everyday experience.

Normative evaluation: Norms are behavioral standards. Therefore, a normative evaluation is one which determines, in the end, whether something in the world is positive or negative (good/bad, undesirable/desirable) because of its ability, or inability, to meet a standard.

Values: are conceptions, binary and evaluative in nature, of what is desirable, and conversely, undesirable.

Target Population: the entire set of persons of interests in a particular study.

Population Sample: A subset of individuals who are members of the population and are selected in order to represent the *target population* in a particular study

Part 3: Coding Instructions

In order to attain consistency, **coders** should follow the instructions below. Generally, an individual should code an article in no more than one hour. More specifically, I suggest the following approach for analyzing the article (with suggested timeline).

Step 1: Skim with the purpose of gaining enough information to answer the question: "what is this article about?" See suggestion below. (10 minutes)

1. Read questions 1-3 (especially, refer to glossary for definition of the terms culture and behavior. Also, for questions #2 and #3 pay special attention to the article's methodology section)

2. Skim article—
    a. Read the title
    b. Read the abstract, if available
    c. Skim intro
    d. Flip through the article, paying special attention to the organization of book by subheadings (i.e. intro, methods section, etc.)
    e. Skim conclusion

3. Answer questions 1-3 in coding form

Step 2: Quickly read whole article with four broad questions in mind (20 minutes)

After answering questions 1-3, read article again. Do not take longer than 20 minutes in re-reading the article. Try to read as much of the article as you can within the time limits. The purpose of reading is not to process every single bit of information provided by the article. Rather, the purpose of reading is to gain enough information to answer the following four broad questions:

(1) If the article has a behavioral or cultural focus, what is the article's **target population** and **population sample**?

(2) What type of comparison does the article do? (i.e. **intragroup comparison, intergroup comparison**?)

(3) When the article conducts an **intergroup comparison**, how are the two groups evaluated in terms of *difference*? Are the groups seen as being similar, different, both?

(4) When the article conducts an **intergroup comparison**, what is the article's **normative evaluation** (positive, negative, or ambivalent, or neutral) of the behavior and/or culture of the **population sample**?

In order to answer these questions, I suggest using a sheet of scratch paper or the back of the article being coded to keep track of relevant pages or sections. I also recommend the following reading strategy: press your thumb and first two fingers together and use this 'pointer' to move across the lines of the article. Go at a speed that is slightly faster than is comfortable for your eyes (Mortimer and Van Doren, pp. 40-41). This approach will help you to read quickly and to avoid fixating your eyes on a particular section. Once you have begun reading, do not stop. **You are NOT expected to read the whole article within the suggested time frame.** Rather, your goal while reading is to try to attain enough information—as quickly and thoroughly as possible within the time restrictions—to answer the four above questions.

Step 3: Answer specific questions in coding form (30 minutes).

After attaining general information to answer the four broad questions, proceed to questions 4-14 in the coding form. Answer the questions in the order they appear. In order to answer these questions you may have to refer to the article once more. But this time you will only read particular sections to answer the questions in the coding form. Hence, in this reading you will supplement the information from your prior reading. The goal then is to augment and verify the judgments you made in step 2.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- Only answer applicable sections. In the coding form, I ask you to provide information on a variety questions, some of which may not be applicable to your article.

- Refer to the <u>introduction</u> and <u>conclusion</u> sections of the article.
    Usually in these sections academic articles 'situate' themselves within the larger academic field. Hence, these two sections will most clearly state the **target population** of the article. Additionally, these two sections are likely to most clearly state the articles **normative evaluation** as well as its assessment of whether the **population sample** in terms of difference.

- Refer to the <u>methodology</u> section of the article
    Conventionally, academic articles describe the characteristics of their **population sample** in the methodology section. Hence, this section will provide information on both the **population sample** and the types of **comparison** the article conducts.

- Focus on <u>key terms</u>
  What key terms does the article use in the introduction and conclusion of article? Use these key terms to determine the **target population** of the article as wells as its **comparisons group(s)**. Also, if you have convenient access to the PDF of the article, search for the terms you believe are relevant in order to determine the terms (racially specific or generic) associated with the **intergroup referent**.

- If you have additional thoughts or comments about a particular question, please explain in an open space near the question of interest.

APPENDIX B

CODING FORM

Coding Information:
Name of Coder:_____

Article Identification #: _____

Full Title of Article:_____

Publication Year:_____

Date of Coding: _____

Time spent Coding: _____

Focus of Article

1) Does the article demonstrate a behavioral and/or cultural focus[12]? (choose one)

   a) No

   b) Yes

2) If the above answer is yes, does the article focus on: (chose one)

   a) Only behavior

   b) Only culture

   c) Both behavior and culture

   d) Not applicable

---

[12] An article has a cultural or behavioral 'focus' if the article aims to do at least one of the following: (1) concentrate on describing the behavioral and/or cultural characteristics of a particular group; (2) study the extent to which one group demonstrates behavior and/or a culture which is distinctive or not (similar) to a comparison group; (3) explores the consequences (negative, positive, or neutral) of the behavior and/or culture of a particular group; (4) discusses factors that are believed to cause the behavior and/or culture of a particular group.

3) Where does the article conduct its research? (chose one)

   a) Domestically (in the United States)

   b) Internationally (not in the United States)

      i) Elaborate:_____

   c) Both, domestically and internationally

If the answer to question 1 is yes, CONTINUE to question 4.

STOP if the answer to question 1 is no. Instead, please re-read the article for an extra 10 to 15 minutes in order to supplement you general sense of the article. Afterwards, succinctly—three to four sentences—summarize the research topic of the article below. Finally, if interested go to end of coding form to complete an optional survey. Thank you for your time and assistance.

CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE

Target Population & Population Sample

4) What is the article's **target population**? That is, what group of people does the article want to talk about? (choose one)

   a) The poor, in general

   b) The urban poor, in general

   c) Other:_____

5) What collection group of people does the article actually deal with? Describe the characteristics (where applicable) of the articles' **population sample** below.

AGE (what is the sample's age distribution, if applicable):

EMPLOYMENT STATUS (i.e. employed unemployed, public assistance, retired, if applicable):

GENDER (what is the gender breakdown, if applicable):

RACE (what racial group or groups are studied, if applicable):

Give additional information below that is not covered above, or if you need more space to explain the *population sample*:

Comparison Group(s)

6) What type of comparison does the article do? (choose one)

   a) Intragroup comparison (compares within its own **population sample***)*

   b) Intergroup comparison (compares to group outside its own **population sample**)

   c) Both, intragroup and intergroup comparison

   d) Other:_____

   e) No comparison

7) To what specific groups, if any, is the behavior and/or culture of the **population sample** compared to? That is, who is the **comparison group(s)**? (choose all that apply)

   a) The article's own **population sample**

   b) The non-poor (all groups besides the poor)

   c) Other:_____

   d) No comparison group

8) When the article conducts an **intragroup comparison** (compares within its own **population sample**), on what basis does the article distinguish within the group? Explain below.

Beginning with question #09, this coding form concentrates on the *intergroup comparison* between the *population sample* and the *intergroup referent*. If the article does NOT conduct an *intergroup comparison*, you are <u>finished</u> coding. Thank you for your time and assistance. If interested, proceed to the end of coding form to complete an optional survey.

If the article does conduct an *intergroup comparison*, please answer questions 9-14.

9) When the article conducts an **intergroup comparison** (compares to group outside its own **population sample**), list terms associated with the **intergroup referent**.

10) Using the terms from the preceding question, determine whether the **intergroup referent** is associated with a particular racial group, or instead, a generic term such as American, mainstream, etc.? (choose all that apply)

   a) A specific racial group

      i) What is the racial group associated with the comparison

         group:_____

   b) A generic term (i.e. American, mainstream, etc)

      i) List terms:_____

   c) Other:_____

Assessing Difference

11) In terms of difference, how is the *behavior* of the **population sample** compared in relation to the **intergroup referent**? (chose one)

   a) Behaviorally similar

   b) Behaviorally different

   c) Both, behaviorally different and similar

   d) Other:_____

12) In terms of difference, how is the *culture* of the **population sample** compared in relation to the **intergroup referent**? (choose one)

   a) Culturally similar

   b) Culturally different

   c) Both, culturally different and similar

   d) Other:_____

Normative Evaluation

13) When the article conducts an **intergroup comparison**, what is the article's
normative evaluation of the **population sample**'s *behavior*? (choose one)

    a) Positive

    b) Negative

    c) Ambivalent (a mix of positive and negative evaluations)

    d) Neutral

    e) Other:_____

14) When the article conducts an **intergroup comparison**, what is the articles'
normative evaluation of the **population sample**'s *culture*? (choose one)

    a) Positive

    b) Negative

    c) Ambivalent (a mix of positive and negative evaluations)

    d) Neutral

    e) Other:_____

END OF CODING FORM

**Thank you for your participation in this project. Your time and assistance are
greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or feedback about the project, I can
be contacted by email at fariasr30@gmail.com. Again, thanks!**

If interested, proceed to the next page to complete an optional survey evaluation.

Survey Evaluation

I. Were the questions clear?

    a. No

    b. Yes

II. If no, which question, and what about them, was unclear?

III. Were there any particular questions or sections of the coding form that were difficulty to answer? In particular, did you feel unsure or uncertain about answering some of the questions?

IV. Were the definitions for the key terms clear?

    a. No

    b. Yes

V. If no, which definition, and what about them, was unclear?

VI. Do you have any suggestions for improving the survey, especially in terms of its clarity?

APPENDIX C

INDEPENDENT CODING AGREEMENT

	#1-Is there a behavioral/ cultural focus?	#2-Is the focus, behavior and/or culture?	#3-Is research conducted internationally? Domestically?	#4-Target Population?	#6-Type of Comparison?	#7-Compar-ison group(s)?	Agree-ment (%)
Personal Coding Article #34-1960s Ind. Coder 1	B	B	A	C	A	A	50%
	B	A	A	C	C	A,C	
Personal Coding Article #222-1990s Ind. Coder 2	A	D	C	C	N/A	N/A	50%
	B	B	C	C			
Personal Coding Article #12-1980s Ind. Coder 3	B	C	B	C	A	A	100%
	B	C	B	C	A	A	
Personal Coding Article #26-1970s Ind. Coder 4	B	C	A	A	C	A,B	66%
	B	C	A	B	C	A	

NOTE: blue signifies agreement between independent coder and me

	#1-Is there a behavioral/ cultural focus?	#2-Is the focus, behavior and/or culture?	#3-Is research conducted internationally? Domestically?	#4-Target Population?	#6-Type of Comparison?	#7-Compar- ison group(s)?	Agree- ment (%)
Personal Coding Article #54- 1970s Ind. Coder 5	B B	B C	A A	A B	C A	A,C A,B,C	33%
Personal Coding Article #121- 2000s Ind. Coder 6	B A	A D	A A	N/A	N/A	N/A	33%
Personal Coding Article #167- 2000s Ind. Coder 7	A B	D A	B B	N/A	N/A	N/A	33%
Personal Coding Article #100- 1990s Ind. Coder 8	B B	C C	B B	B B	A C	A A,C	66%
Personal Coding Article #74- 1970s Ind. Coder 9	A B	D C	A A	N/A	N/A	N/A	33%

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