
Ideological and Attributional Boundaries on Public Compassion: Reactions to Individuals and Communities Affected by a Natural Disaster

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The present study explored whether ideologically based attributions for why people need public assistance (a) emerge even in the context of an external-uncontrollable cause of need; (b) generalize across different levels of analysis, for example, across different forms of assistance, as well as across different types of claimants (individuals or groups); and explored (c) the role of promised reform on willingness to help those with personal responsibility for their plight. Ideological and attributional differences in willingness to help emerged even in the context of a natural disaster. Liberals tended to suspend the usual consequences of attributional analysis when making judgments about humanitarian aid by helping even the irresponsible; conservatives did not. Liberals and conservatives alike were more supportive of aid designed to meet primary than secondary needs, aid made contingent on future reform, and of help for communities over individuals.

The United States is both a democratic and a capitalistic society. However, the marriage between capitalism and democracy is often tense (Dahl, 1989). On one hand, capitalism focuses on a belief in individualism, self-reliance, and self-determination. Through hard work and ability, people should strive to cultivate marketable skills and products of value to others. In the process, enormous inequalities can emerge. Some people amass great power over others (e.g., employers over employees, landlords over tenants, creditors over debtors). On the other hand, our government was founded on the democratic ideal of equality of citizenship and its attendant rights. Free speech, the right to vote, and (in some people's minds) even a right to a basic subsistence are seen as basic entitlements of citizenship that need not be earned in the competitive marketplace (Okun, 1975). These conflicting value orientations—individualism and self-reliance on one hand, egalitarianism on the

other—lead to different positions regarding the obligation of the collective to help the disadvantaged (Dionne, 1991; Mead, 1988), or the extent to which people are committed to the notion of public compassion.

Support for public compassion, or for using collective resources to help the less fortunate members of society, appears to depend largely on ideologically patterned attributions for why people are likely to need government assistance. Conservatives blame poverty on self-indulgence and the lack of moral standards and intelligence. Liberals see the poor as victims of unjust social practices and structures. These ideological differences in attributions for poverty predict willingness to expand social programs. Liberals generally favor, whereas conservatives oppose, increased spending on social programs (Feather, 1985; Kluegel, 1990; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986; Williams, 1984).

To better address whether ideological differences in attributional style transcend scripted attitudinal positions and instead reflect ideological differences in cognitive and/or affective style, the present study investigated whether the same ideological and attributional effects

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are observed in an atypical need domain and, moreover, a need domain in which the context pulled more strongly for external-uncontrollable than internal-controllable explanations for why people need assistance. Specifically, the present study reported on ideological differences in response to victims of a natural disaster (the 1993 Midwest Flood). Investigating public compassion in the context of a natural disaster provides an excellent opportunity to explore a number of questions neglected in the social psychological literature, such as the following: (a) Do people still turn to individual-level explanations for why people need help even in the context of a natural disaster—the quintessential external-uncontrollable cause of need? (b) Are people equally responsive to disaster victims' long-term or secondary needs (e.g., a replacement home) as they are to disaster victims' immediate survival needs (e.g., clean water, temporary shelter)? (c) Are people any more or less responsive to community-level requests than individual-level requests for disaster aid? and (d) To what extent do ideological differences emerge in a context for which there is not a well-rehearsed ideological script?

PERCEPTIONS OF CAUSALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF A NATURAL DISASTER

Natural disasters are generally seen as acts of nature, that is, causes of harm that could not be prevented by anyone, much less those victimized by it (cf. Brun, 1992). Examining reactions to victims of a natural disaster provides an excellent test of the boundary conditions of attributional explanations for ideological differences in willingness to support public assistance programs. According to attributional models of helping, cognitive appraisals for why people need help should be processed in a three-stage sequence. Initial explanations for why someone needs assistance (e.g., this family's house was rendered uninhabitable by the flood) are processed according to the following sequence:

1. Causal analysis: Why does the claimant need help?
2. Affective arousal: Different explanations trigger different affective reactions. Claimants who are attributed to have internal-controllable sources of need (i.e., who are high in personal responsibility) are predicted to arouse negative affective reactions such as anger. Those whose need is attributed to other causes are more likely to arouse sympathy and concern.
3. Behavior: In this case, a decision to provide or withhold public assistance. (Weiner 1986, 1995)

To the extent that ideological differences reflect baseline propensities to make internal-controllable versus external or uncontrollable attributions, liberals and conservatives will have different affective reactions toward

claimants and vary in their willingness to provide public assistance. Considerable research supports the close connections between cognitive appraisal, affective arousal, and intentions to help (Amato, 1986; Batson, Duncan, Ackerman, Buckley, & Birch, 1981; Meyer & Mulherin, 1980; Reizenzein, 1986; Weiner, 1986, 1995; Weiner, Perry, & Magnusson, 1988). Similarly, other research is consistent with ideological differences in attributions for why people need help and subsequent affective reactions and decisions about whether to assist different claimants (Skitka, McMurray, & Burroughs, 1991; Skitka & Tetlock, 1992, 1993a; Zucker & Weiner, 1993).

Because a flood (and particularly a flood of the magnitude of the Midwest Flood) is seen as a catastrophic and external-uncontrollable event, at first pass it would seem that such a disaster would trigger unqualified sympathy and compassion and a subsequent desire to respond to the needs of those caught by it.¹ Consistent with this notion, it is considered to be nearly political suicide for legislators to vote against providing Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assistance (Berenson, 1994; Goodwin & Smith, 1995). Therefore, the domain of disaster assistance provides nearly an ideal backdrop to examine the extent to which observed ideological differences in willingness to support public assistance reflect truly different cognitive-affective orientations toward thinking about the needy, or instead reflect well-rehearsed ideological scripts that both direct and justify people's position on public assistance.

Examination of reactions to disaster victims also provides an opportunity to explore an interesting juxtaposition of necessary versus sufficient causes for why people need help. The flood was the primary cause of why claimants needed assistance: If the flood had not occurred, there would be no need for clean water or food, temporary shelter, or a replacement home. Lack of insurance, although a contributing factor to why many of the victims of the 1993 Midwest Flood needed help, was not the root cause of claimants' need for assistance.

The prediction that people will respond with unqualified compassion to victims of a natural disaster, however, presumes that at least in this context, people will not adhere to their typical tendency to ignore situational information in favor of focusing on personal causes of behavior. One of the most pervasive findings in social psychology has been the tendency of people to turn to dispositional rather than situational explanations for others' behavior (e.g., Ross, 1977). The tendency to make the fundamental attribution error occurs even when people are made explicitly aware of situational constraints on their own as well as targets' behavior (e.g., Gilbert & Jones, 1986). In short, there is some suggestion that even in the face of a blatant external-uncontrollable

explanation for why people need help, perceivers may nonetheless focus on features of persons when deciding whether to help (cf. Gilbert, 1989; Quattrone, 1982).

It is hypothesized here that perceivers will evaluate whether there are any personal causes for why disaster victims require assistance, and to the extent that personal causes are revealed (e.g., Mr. Carlson did not have flood insurance), these reasons will become focal in perceivers' attributions for why victims need assistance. To the extent that perceivers come to conclusions that a given target's need for assistance is internal and controllable, they will be less willing to support giving that victim disaster assistance. In addition, to the extent that ideological differences reflect a consistent cognitive style (cf. Wanke & Wyer, 1996) rather than a situationally scripted response, conservatives should be more likely than liberals to invoke personal attributions for why people need assistance, with subsequent implications on their willingness to help.

PRIMARY VERSUS SECONDARY NEEDS

Studying helping and allocation decision making in the context of a natural disaster also allows for examination of the boundaries of public compassion. In most studies of helping behavior, the dependent variable is whether help is provided. Shifting focus to distributions of public assistance, the question is usually not whether help is provided to a single needy other, but expands to become a decision about who receives help, how much help, and what kind of help to provide. To date, there has been very little investigation of what kinds of help people think are appropriate to provide when there is a potential range of responses to a problem.

Disaster victims need a variety of resources, ranging from clean water and temporary shelter to the replacement of a home. Although attributional theories of helping are agnostic with respect to differential predictions as a function of type of aid, some research hints that there are indeed constraints on people's willingness to respond to different kinds of requests as a function of whether the resources being asked for address primary or secondary needs. For example, Bickman and Kamzan (1973) found that people were considerably more reluctant to help someone requesting money in a grocery store to buy a tube of cookie dough (a relative luxury item) than milk.

In the spirit of Maslow's need hierarchy (Inglehart, 1977), public compassion may be primed most powerfully in resource domains that are critical for physical survival, such as food, health, or shelter. For example, although job training augments the likelihood that those who are unemployed can satisfy their primary needs, providing people with jobs or additional training may be perceived as a relative luxury given the number

of jobs available at the low end of the income distribution. Dignity, status, and upward mobility may be perceived to be extras, not to be doled out even by liberals to people who have brought ill-fortune on themselves. But when resources are linked directly to survival, are at least some perceivers willing to expand the moral community to include even those who placed themselves at risk? Similarly, Okun (1975) argues that liberals and conservatives differ in what they consider to be rights, or entitlements, of citizenship. Liberals are more likely than conservatives to see a minimum subsistence as a right (like the right to vote or to police protection) than something that has to be earned competitively in the marketplace. Conservatives are more likely to endorse the hard form of self-reliance, such as "those who do not work, shall not eat." Conservatives may therefore be more likely than liberals to withhold even immediate humanitarian aid from those who failed to protect themselves against peril. However, liberals are unlikely to see the fulfillment of secondary needs as basic entitlements of citizenship. Liberals and conservatives should therefore be equally reluctant to provide the personally responsible with aid designed to meet secondary, rather than primary, needs.

WHAT IF THE PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE REFORM?

The tension between helping the needy without rewarding people who fail to protect themselves against risks recurs when considering the possibility of second chances. Reactions to reform can be based on compassion, fear of creating a slippery slope, or sustained punitiveness (see also Skitka & Tetlock, 1993b, study 3). If people who violated an implicit social contract to behave responsibly truly reform, then some people may believe the repenters deserve to be rewarded and reintegrated into the moral community. The underlying logic is that other free riders might witness this reward contingency and be inspired to change their behavior as well. Alternatively, people may continue to be reluctant to help repentant free riders to the same degree as non-free riders, because they may believe that allowing second chances will undermine motivation to do well the first time around—why not third or fourth chances?

Some research has found that people were less angry and punitive toward personally responsible claimants if there were clear indications that the claimants had reformed (Schwarzer & Weiner, 1991; Skitka & Tetlock, 1993b). Interestingly, conservatives were even more willing to help a target who had reformed than one who had never "sinned" at all (Skitka & Tetlock, 1993b). However, it is less clear whether the promise of making aid contingent on future precautions will have a similar effect of returning the personally responsible to the moral community.

GROUPS VERSUS INDIVIDUAL
CLAIMS FOR ASSISTANCE

Applying theories of helping to the domain of public compassion also raises the question of whether the decision to help an individual (the usual focus of helping research) is similar to the decision to help a group of needy others. Public policy makers rarely consider individual case studies when voting on legislation to intervene in emergencies like the Midwest Flood. To what extent are decisions to help groups different or similar to decisions to help individuals?

Some research indicates that people process social information differently for individual and group targets. People tend to have poorer recall of group than individual behaviors, and slower recognition of statements associated with groups than individual targets (McConnell, Sherman, & Hamilton, 1994; Srull, Lichtenstein, & Rothbart, 1985). Other research supports the notion that groups are seen as having less of a real social existence than individuals, and this in turn affects how people process information about them (McConnell et al., 1994).

In addition to research that reveals that people process information differently about groups than individuals, other research suggests that individuals are evaluated more favorably when judged alone than when the same individual is judged as a member of an aggregate or group (Sears, 1983). However, when group descriptions are provided rather than descriptions of individuals in a group context, people were less likely to make negative inferences about groups than individuals (Coovert & Reeder, 1990). Other research has indicated that empathizing with an individual group member (e.g., someone with AIDS or who is homeless) subsequently leads to more positive reactions toward the entire group—that is, AIDS victims and the homeless overall (Batson et al., 1997), but only if the individual target is not personally responsible for his or her plight.

Too little research has been done to make strong predictions about how people will view individual versus group claims for assistance in the context of a natural disaster. However, based on the evidence collected to date, people may process information about groups (in this case, communities affected by the flood) differently than individuals, which in turn may lead to different attributional and helping thresholds.

In summary, the present study extended investigation of attributional explanations for ideological differences in willingness to support public assistance. It was predicted that liberals and conservatives differ in their thresholds for ascribing personal responsibility for why people need public assistance, and that these differences would be revealed even in a need domain for which liberals and conservatives have not been handed an easy

script. The tendency to ascribe varying levels of responsibility was assessed by tapping general policy preferences in the disaster aid domain (e.g., degree of support for federal disaster aid versus the belief that it is citizens' responsibility to protect themselves against natural hazards), as well as reactions to specific claimants (either individuals or communities).

Liberals were not predicted to be bleeding hearts who ignore attributional information and provide help of all types to all comers. Rather, it is proposed that liberals have come to view basic subsistence as a right of all community members, and they will therefore suspend the normal consequences of the attribution-affect-action sequence when considering allocations of basic humanitarian aid. When aid addresses needs outside of basic subsistence, the liberal bleeding heart is predicted to form a scab. Liberals are predicted to be unwilling to use the public purse to return flood victims to their prior standard of living, and will be especially unlikely to provide this kind of assistance to those who did not take steps to protect themselves against flood losses.

In contrast, because conservatives do not see basic subsistence as a fundamental right or entitlement, they will not suspend attributional analysis, even when allocating basic humanitarian aid. Conservatives were predicted to be willing to provide humanitarian aid to claimants who came to harm despite taking some personal precautions, but should be less likely than liberals to expand the moral community to provide even humanitarian aid to those who recklessly placed themselves at risk. Of additional interest was extending investigation of conservatives' willingness to embrace reform—are promises of future reform sufficient for conservatives to soften their stance toward the irresponsible? Finally, the present study also investigated the exploratory question of how people respond to requests for assistance from not only individuals but also groups.

METHOD

SUBJECTS

A sample of 1,015 adult members (representing a 72% response rate) of random-digit dialed (RDD) households in the continental United States was contacted between October 15, 1993 and November 15, 1993. Most areas of the Mississippi and Ohio River valleys were still flooded at this time, or were flooded a second time. Sampling was based on a multistage cluster design, structured so that each adult in the United States living in a household with a telephone had an equal chance of being selected. This national sample was segmented into six distinct replicates that became the source samples for the six versions of the survey (six different orders of stimulus materials were used to control for possible

order effects). Therefore, each version of the questionnaire was administered to a complete national sample.

The sample consisted of 564 females and 451 males, who ranged in age from 18 to 92 ($M = 41$, $SD = 15.87$). Of the respondents, 70% lived in a single family home, 20.5% in an apartment or condo, 5.7% in a mobile home, and 3.7% had some other form of residence. The sample was 8.6% African American, 3.3% Native American, 3.3% Latino or Hispanic, 0.6% Asian, and 82.2% Caucasian. Of the sample, 7% had been somehow personally affected by the Midwest Flood and 18% personally knew someone who had been affected by the flood. Exploratory analysis indicated that people who were personally affected by the flood were less supportive of providing any type of aid to flood victims than were those who had not been personally affected by the flood. Hypothesis testing controlling for self-interest did not change the observed pattern of results, so these respondents were retained in all analyses.

PROCEDURE

Professional interviewers from the Public Opinion Laboratory (POL) facility at Northern Illinois University conducted interviews. The POL operates a 30-station computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system, using two parallel Novell networks and an Electronic Questionnaire (EQTM) software system. Although a survey approach was used, the survey included an experimental design tapping respondent reactions to claimants that varied as a function of type (community or individual) and responsibility information (whether targets took any predisaster preventive measures, such as purchased flood insurance or built flood walls or levees).

STIMULUS MATERIALS

Respondents were asked to give their reactions to three different communities devastated by the 1993 Midwest Flood. Although given hypothetical names, the descriptions were representative of real communities affected by the flood. The communities varied in the extent that they had taken protective measures against flood damage: Plan Ahead Place, a town that had invested a share of its tax dollars to build a flood wall or levee to protect it from up to 50 feet of water; Tour Town, a town that elected not to build a flood wall or levee because it would ruin the view and therefore negatively affect tourism, its major economic base; and Bail-Out by the River, a town that did not build a flood wall or levee because they voted against increasing local taxes to build it.

In addition to the communities, respondents were also asked to respond to three different individuals whose homes or businesses had been destroyed by the flood, also representative of real people affected by the

flood: Mr. Adams, an individual who had always maintained flood insurance; Mr. Bell, an individual who purchased flood insurance only after it became obvious that his property would be flooded; and Mr. Carlson, an individual who did not buy flood insurance but who counted on federal disaster assistance should a flood occur.

A primarily within-subject design was chosen because theories about allocation decisions involve how people cope with competing claims for resources. It follows that participants need to have information on the entire pool of applicants. Most real-world allocation decisions take on within-subject forms; for example, faculty hiring committees have access to all applicant files, medical ethics committees have the files of all patients waiting for organ transplants, and Congress has a notion of the number and type of people who apply for welfare aid when deciding their budget. Community and individual descriptions were presented in counterbalanced order, crossed with three different orders of claimants within communities and individuals to guard against any potential order effects.

MEASURES

In addition to providing some basic demographic information, respondents answered questions about disaster assistance policies generally (see Table 1), in addition to questions about specific targets that tapped perceived responsibility for needing assistance, blame for needing assistance, measures of positive affect (sympathy), negative affect (anger), and five measures of willingness to help: support of immediate humanitarian assistance, money targeted to rebuild homes and businesses in the same location, bail-out grants that would provide victims with the full replacement value of their home, funds to relocate people out of the affected area, and whether the provision of any federal aid (of any kind) should be contingent on a commitment to take precautionary measures in the future. In addition, respondents were asked how unfair it would be if a given claimant did not receive federal aid, and the extent that they felt each target deserved federal assistance. All questions were on 7-point scale response formats.

POLITICAL ORIENTATION

Several measures of political orientation were also included in the survey. Self-reports of both party identification and political orientation were assessed using measures that asked ideological orientation (from very liberal to very conservative), strength of ideological orientation, and for respondents who were at the midpoint, more focused questions such as more like a liberal or a conservative. Party identification was assessed using a similar format. In addition to these measures, five items were included from established attitudinal and personal-ity measures of political ideology: how important respon-

TABLE 1: Respondents' General Support for Disaster Assistance (in percentages)

	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>
People who live in areas at high risk for natural disasters should accept the consequences when a disaster strikes. Liberals, $M = 4.13$; conservatives, $M = 4.78$	31.5	14.5	54.1
It is the appropriate role of the federal government to provide assistance to victims of natural disasters, such as the 1993 Midwest Floods. Liberals, $M = 5.61$; conservatives, $M = 4.88$	16.5	12.2	71.3
It is the appropriate role of the federal government to provide flood insurance to people who live in flood plains. Liberals, $M = 4.97$; conservatives, $M = 4.14$	31.7	11.6	56.6
The federal government should provide flood insurance if a big flood happens once every 100 years. Liberals, $M = 4.92$; conservatives, $M = 4.17$	33.2	11.1	55.6
The federal government should provide flood insurance if a big flood happens once every 10 years. Liberals, $M = 4.81$; conservatives, $M = 3.83$	37.5	9.7	41.4
It is the appropriate role of the government to build protective flood walls or levees to protect communities from future flooding. Liberals, $M = 4.81$; conservatives, $M = 4.26$	31.9	11.4	56.6
It is the responsibility of individual communities located in flood plains to build their own flood walls or levees to protect them from future flooding. Liberals, $M = 5.12$; conservatives, $M = 5.57$	16.9	9.8	73.3
It is the responsibility of individuals who live in flood plains to protect their investment by buying flood insurance. Liberals, $M = 6.17$; conservatives, $M = 6.50$	5.4	3.5	91.2
People who do not buy flood insurance are just as deserving of federal assistance in a natural disaster as those who do buy it. Liberals, $M = 4.17$; conservatives, $M = 3.62$	46.0	9.2	44.8

NOTE: Responses were based on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) response format. For presentation purposes, *strongly agree* and *agree* were collapsed into a single category, as were *strongly disagree* and *disagree*. All political orientation differences were significant at $p < .01$.

dents believed it was to strengthen law and order, to preserve respect for authority, to maintain respect for the United States as a world power, to improve politeness in daily behavior, and to follow God's will (see also Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986).

A principal components analysis of self-reported political orientation, party identification, and the personality/attitudinal items yielded a single, internally consistent solution. Component scores were calculated using the regression method. High scores reflected greater conservatism, and low scores on this measure reflected greater liberalism. Respondents scoring below the 40th percentile ($n = 394$) were labeled liberals and respondents scoring above the 60th percentile were labeled conservatives ($n = 412$), leaving a total sample size of $N = 806$ for analyses that included political orientation as a variable.²

VALIDATION OF THE POLITICAL ORIENTATION MEASURE

Seven additional questions on the survey assessed traditional policy positions on which liberals and conservatives generally differ. If the political orientation measure was valid, significant differences among high and low scorers should emerge on each of these items. Analysis supported the validity of the measure. Conservatives were significantly more angered by "poor people who spend their money on fancy clothes or big cars rather than spending the money to feed and clothe their fami-

lies," $t(804) = 7.72, p < .001$; by "someone who collects welfare because he or she is too lazy to get a job," $t(804) = 8.70, p < .001$; by "giving blacks and other minorities special advantages in jobs and schools," $t(804) = 13.89, p < .001$; and by "government officials interfering and trying to tell us what we can and cannot do with our own lives," $t(804) = 5.65, p < .001$. They were less angry about "the lack of affordable medical care for people who do not have jobs," $t(804) = -6.51, p < .001$; "when people are treated unfairly because of their race," $t(804) = -2.85, p < .003$; and "special tax benefits like tax breaks going to the richest people and biggest business," $t(804) = -7.04, p < .001$.

RESULTS

The results section was organized into four parts: (a) general attitudes about federal disaster assistance, (b) reactions to individuals affected by the Midwest Flood, (c) reactions to communities that were affected by the flood, and (d) comparisons of reactions to communities versus individuals. Because of the large sample size, many effects could achieve statistical significance without representing meaningful effects. To help correct for this possibility, only results with an effect size of ω^2 greater than or equal to .01 were reported. For similar reasons, alpha was set at .01 for all planned and post hoc comparisons.

General Attitudes About Federal Disaster Assistance

As can be seen in Table 1, the vast proportion of the respondents strongly believed that it was the responsibility of individual communities located in flood plains to build their own flood walls and levees (73.3% agreed), in addition to it being the responsibility of individuals who live in flood plains to protect their investment by buying flood insurance (91.2%). A smaller percentage of the sample felt that it was the appropriate role of the government to build floodwalls and levees (56.6%) or to provide inexpensive flood insurance to people who live in flood plains (56.6%). The sample was mixed, however, as to whether people who did not buy flood insurance were just as deserving of federal assistance in a natural disaster (46.0%) as those who did (44.8%).

As can also be seen in Table 1, respondents varied in their support for disaster policies as a function of political orientation. Liberals were more in favor of providing federal disaster aid in all forms than conservatives and less likely to feel that it was the individual's or community's sole responsibility to cope with the consequences of a natural disaster such as the 1993 Midwest Flood (see Table 1 for additional detail; all differences were statistically significant at $p < .01$).

Reactions to Individual Victims of Natural Disaster

Analysis of reactions to individual victims of the Midwest Flood generally supported the following predictions: (a) even in the context of a natural disaster, perceivers still sought out and used information about personal responsibility when judging how deserving needy others were of public assistance, and other results supported the links between political orientation and judgments of being deserving; (b) liberals were more likely than conservatives to support providing public assistance to flood victims, and were specifically more likely to provide humanitarian aid to the irresponsible than were conservatives; (c) neither liberals nor conservatives, however, were enthusiastic about providing for flood victims' secondary needs; and (d) aid contingent on future reform was viewed positively by both liberals and conservatives.

JUDGMENTS OF RESPONSIBILITY

The first set of analyses examined whether respondents in fact attributed varying degrees of personal responsibility to individual claimants. Consistent with hypotheses, perceivers were willing to ascribe personal responsibility and blame for needing assistance to individuals, despite the external-uncontrollable context in which their need arose.

Two questions assessed judgments of responsibility for needing assistance: The extent to which respondents believed that a given individual should have taken greater precautions against flood damage, and the extent to which a given individual was to blame for his predicament. These ratings were correlated within individuals (r s ranging from .47 to .61, all p s $< .001$), and therefore were collapsed into a single item for analysis. Analysis of responsibility judgments as a function of a 3 (individual target) and 2 (political orientation of the respondent) mixed design analysis of variance (ANOVA) yielded significant main effects for the individual, $F(2, 1598) = 974.19, p < .001, \omega^2 = .65$; and political orientation, $F(1, 799) = 25.71, p < .007, \omega^2 = .01$.

Mr. Adams, who always maintained flood insurance, was seen as the most blameless for his predicament ($M = 2.06$), in contrast to Mr. Bell, who bought insurance at the last minute ($M = 4.87$), or Mr. Carlson, who never bought flood insurance but instead counted on federal disaster assistance if the worst happened ($M = 6.07$). Conservatives rated individuals to be more responsible ($M = 4.60$) than did liberals ($M = 4.24$).³

Consistent with the hypotheses, participants were sensitive to individual levels of responsibility for needing assistance, even in the context of a natural disaster as the *prima facie* cause of need. In addition to being an interesting result in itself, these analyses also represent manipulation checks on the extent to which the individual target descriptions manipulated personal responsibility.

DESERVINGNESS OF DISASTER AID: REACTIONS TO INDIVIDUALS

It was hypothesized that participants would evaluate the extent to which individuals revealed any personal causes for needed assistance, and to the extent that personal causes were revealed, that these (rather than the situational context of the disaster itself) would become focal in judgments of the extent to which claimants deserved assistance.

Results supported the notion that participants indeed relied on personal information to determine if one was deserving, even in the context of a strong situational alternative such as a natural disaster. In addition, the predicted ideological differences in reactions to claimants also emerged. However, the analysis revealed that political orientation had more of a direct than mediated effect on judgments of being deserving.

Two questions tapped the extent to which respondents viewed claimants as deserving of disaster aid: the extent to which each individual was seen as deserving of federal disaster assistance, and how unfair it would be if each individual received no assistance. These ratings correlated at least at $r = .57, p < .001$ within each individ-

ual, and were therefore collapsed together as a single rating of deservingness.

Participants viewed claimants who took different levels of precautions as differentially deserving of federal disaster assistance, $F(2, 1600) = 324.37, p < .001, \omega^2 = .29$. Tukey's test indicated that Mr. Adams, who always maintained flood insurance, was seen as more deserving ($M = 5.55$) of assistance than Mr. Bell, who never had insurance ($M = 4.43$), or Mr. Carlson, who purchased insurance at the last minute ($M = 3.93$).

In addition, ideological differences emerged in how participants viewed victims' deservingness of disaster assistance. Liberals perceived claimants as more deserving of federal assistance ($M = 4.85$) than did conservatives ($M = 4.64$), $F(1, 800) = 17.53, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02$. This effect was qualified by the extent to which the individuals had taken flood precautions, $F(2, 1600) = 5.81, p < .003, \omega^2 = .01$. Simple effects analysis at the level of each individual revealed that liberals and conservatives did not differ in the extent to which they perceived Mr. Adams as deserving of assistance, $F(1, 800) = 2.90, ns$; however, liberals perceived Mr. Bell and Mr. Carlson to be more deserving of aid than did conservatives, $F(1, 800) = 17.53, p < .001$, and $F(1, 800) = 23.11, p < .001$, respectively.

Interestingly, although strong main effects as a function of individual emerged with sympathy, $F(2, 1608) = 330.36, p < .001, \omega^2 = .29$, and anger, $F(2, 1608) = 302.26, \omega^2 = .27$, neither of these variables was affected or qualified by political orientation. Mr. Adams aroused more sympathy ($M = 6.10$) than Mr. Bell ($M = 4.54$) or Mr. Carlson ($M = 4.09$). Similarly, Mr. Adams aroused less anger ($M = 1.41$) than Mr. Bell ($M = 2.70$) or Mr. Carlson ($M = 3.18$).

To summarize the results at this point, ideological differences emerged in willingness to help claimants. Liberals were more prepared to help those perceived to be personally responsible than were conservatives. However, because ideological differences in the tendency to attribute responsibility to flood victims were small and affective differences were nonexistent, the results seem to suggest that the effect of ideology on perceptions of deservingness in this context is not fully mediated by attributional or affective differences. Structural equation models within each target (e.g., Mr. Adams, Mr. Bell, and Mr. Carlson), using ideology as a continuous measure, and judgments of blame and the extent to which individuals could have taken greater precautions as continuous measures of responsibility, anger and sympathy for negative and positive affect respectively, and deserving and unfairness as the criterion, supported the basic attribution-affect-action sequence (Figure 1 presents results for Mr. Carlson as an example; the same basic pattern emerged regardless of individual). However, add-

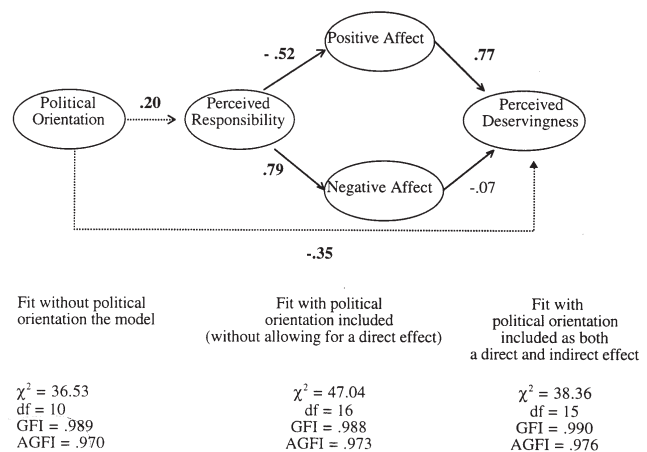


Figure 1 Path diagram representing reactions to Mr. Carlson, who never bought flood insurance.

NOTE: GFI = Goodness-of-Fit Index; AGFI = Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index. The path coefficients that are in boldface were significant. Dashed lines indicate the effects for political orientation when included in the model for demonstration purposes; the path coefficients represented by solid lines are those observed when political orientation was not included in the model.

ing political orientation to the models did not significantly improve the fit for any of the individuals. The direct effect of political orientation on being deserving was greater than the effect of ideology mediated through attributions and affect.

These analyses indicated that attributions of responsibility were strongly related to both positive and negative affective reactions to claimants, but only positive affect mediated the relationship between responsibility and deservingness in this context. Although direct effects of political orientation on deservingness emerged as predicted, not all of the variance could be accounted for by differences in how liberals and conservatives made attributions about, and subsequently affectively reacted to, claimants. Liberals' and conservatives' responsibility judgments and affective reactions were therefore more similar than different, despite the fact that they showed differential thresholds in willingness to help claimants that varied in the extent to which they took precautions to protect themselves against flood losses.

AID DESIGNED TO MEET PRIMARY VERSUS SECONDARY NEEDS

To what extent did the results that emerged with general impressions of being deserving translate across various kinds of assistance? The next analyses addressed the following hypotheses: (a) respondents would be more supportive of providing for claimants' immediate survival needs than providing for claimants' secondary needs, and (b) liberals and conservatives would be

equally supportive of providing humanitarian aid to individuals who took precautions against flooding, but conservatives would be less supportive than liberals of providing even humanitarian aid to those who had not taken flood precautions. Results supported both hypotheses.

A within-subject ANOVA that compared support for humanitarian aid, rebuilding, buyout, or relocation of flood victims indicated significant differences in participants' willingness to support different kinds of aid, $F(3, 2,976) = 443.02, p < .0001, \omega^2 = .31$. As can be seen in Table 2, participants were much more supportive of humanitarian aid than aid that was designed to address more secondary needs.

Also as predicted, liberals and conservatives were equally supportive of providing Mr. Adams with humanitarian assistance, $F(1, 804) = 2.94, ns, \omega^2 < .01$, but liberals were more supportive than conservatives of providing both Mr. Bell and Mr. Carlson humanitarian assistance, $F(1, 804) = 5.64, p < .01, \omega^2 = .01$, and $F(1, 804) = 8.10, p < .01, \omega^2 = .01$, respectively (see Table 3). Similar interactions did not emerge at other levels of help type: Although liberals were generally more supportive of all forms of assistance than conservatives, like conservatives, they were nonetheless less likely to support helping the irresponsible.

REFORM

It was also predicted that participants, and perhaps especially conservatives, would be more willing to open the public purse if aid was made contingent on the promise of taking precautions against flooding in the future. Results indicated that conservatives were not more supportive of contingent aid than liberals, but were as supportive as liberals.

To test this hypothesis, the following three levels of aid were compared: aid contingent on future reform, humanitarian aid, and aid designed to address secondary needs (support for rebuilding, buyouts, and relocation were collapsed for this analysis for ease of interpretation). Analysis of an aid (3) by individual (3) by political orientation (2) mixed design analysis of variance yielded strong main effects for both individual, $F(2, 1590) = 238.21, p < .0001, \omega^2 = .23$ (that replicated the results observed with deservingness), and for type of aid, $F(2, 1590) = 493.57, p < .0001, \omega^2 = .38$. Tukey's test indicated that willingness to support federal disaster assistance if it was made contingent on the promise of future reform ($M = 5.30$) was viewed as favorably as providing humanitarian assistance without contingencies ($M = 5.57$), and more favorably than providing secondary aid without contingencies ($M = 3.88$). No other effects were significant.

TABLE 2: Average Support for Different Types of Aid to Individuals and Communities

	<i>Individuals</i>	<i>Communities</i>
Humanitarian aid	5.56 _a (1.45)	5.85 _b (1.35)
Aid to rebuild	4.30 _a (1.65)	4.86 _b (1.87)
Aid to buyout	3.49 _a (1.87)	3.39 _a (1.87)
Aid to relocate	3.99 _a (1.87)	3.98 _a (1.92)

NOTE: Standard deviations are reported in parentheses. All pair-wise comparisons within individuals and communities were significantly different, using Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) test at $p < .01$. Community and individual means with different subscripts were significantly different.

TABLE 3: Average Willingness to Support Providing Different Individuals With Aid Designed to Address Primary (humanitarian) Versus Secondary Needs

	<i>Liberals</i>	<i>Conservatives</i>
Humanitarian aid		
Mr. Adams	6.23 _{aa} (1.55)	6.04 _{aa} (1.58)
Mr. Bell	5.53 _{ab} (1.85)	5.22 _{bb} (1.81)
Mr. Carlson	5.41 _{ab} (1.87)	5.03 _{bc} (1.95)
Secondary aid (rebuild, buyout, or relocate)		
Mr. Adams	4.75 _{aa} (1.61)	4.32 _{ba} (1.67)
Mr. Bell	3.98 _{ab} (1.60)	3.46 _{bb} (1.70)
Mr. Carlson	3.71 _{ac} (1.60)	3.06 _{bc} (1.69)

NOTE: Mr. Adams always maintained flood insurance, Mr. Bell bought insurance only after knowing he would be flooded, and Mr. Carlson never bought insurance and counted on federal disaster aid. Standard deviations are reported in parentheses. The first subscript refers to differences as a function of political orientation. Means with different subscripts going across were significantly different across liberals and conservatives. The second subscript compares means as a function to target. Means within each level of help (humanitarian or secondary aid) with different subscripts were significantly different. All differences were compared using Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) test at $p < .01$.

The next section investigated the extent to which these patterns of results generalized to how people responded to requests for assistance from communities, rather than individuals.

Reactions to Communities Affected by the Midwest Flood

Results indicated that the same variables predicted perceived deservingness with communities, as did individuals. However, direct comparisons of individuals and communities (collapsing across their general descriptions to allow for direct statistical comparisons) indicated that although communities were perceived similar to individuals in terms of perceived responsibility, they nonetheless were seen more sympathetically and deserving of assistance. Analysis of willingness to support specific

kinds of help revealed that respondents supported providing humanitarian aid and assistance designed to rebuild more to communities than to individuals, but were equally unenthusiastic about providing individuals and communities aid to buy out their homes or to relocate to a different area. A more detailed description of these results is reported below.

JUDGMENTS OF RESPONSIBILITY

Consistent with reactions to individuals, respondents attributed varying levels of responsibility for needing assistance to the three different communities, Plan Ahead Place, Tour Town, and Bail-Out by the River. Respondents reported their perceptions of whether the communities could have done more to prevent being damaged by the flood, the communities' blameworthiness, and whether each community was responsible for needing government assistance. Because these items were significantly intercorrelated within each community (r s ranged from .26 to .49, all p s < .001), they were collapsed into a single scale of responsibility.

An analysis of the 3 (community) by 2 (political orientation) mixed-design ANOVA with the dependent variable of responsibility yielded a significant main effect for community, $F(2, 1856) = 88.78, p < .001, \omega^2 = .14$. Plan Ahead Place was seen as the least responsible of the three communities ($M = 2.06$), with Tour-Town ($M = 4.78$) and Bail-Out by the River ($M = 4.78$) as equally and more responsible (the comparison between the latter two means yielded an $F < 1$). No other effects were significant.

These results indicated that communities that did not take precautions for protecting themselves against a flood by building either a flood wall or levee were seen as equally and more responsible for incurring damage due to the flood than those communities that did, regardless of why they failed to take precautions (i.e., to avoid raising taxes or because of a concern about disturbing their tourist-based economy). Because Tour Town and Bail-Out by the River did not differ in perceived responsibility, they were collapsed together in subsequent analyses.⁴

It should be noted that the effect size for the manipulation of responsibility was considerably smaller at the community level of analysis ($\omega^2 = .14$) than what was observed at the individual level of analysis ($\omega^2 = .65$), suggesting that it may be more difficult to make attributions of responsibility with respect to communities than it is for individuals.

DESERVINGNESS OF DISASTER AID: REACTIONS TO COMMUNITIES

Because so little previous work had been done examining how people think about collectives relative to indi-

viduals, especially in help settings, it was difficult to generate strong hypotheses regarding whether people would similarly turn to community characteristics (such as whether they voted to build a flood wall) when making judgments regarding being deserving of disaster aid. Results indicated that at least in this context, people did base their judgments on the extent to which communities took prior precautions against flooding.

Two questions tapped the extent to which respondents viewed communities as deserving of disaster aid: the extent to which each community was seen as deserving of federal disaster assistance, and how unfair it would be if each community received no assistance. These ratings correlated at least at $r = .51, p < .001$ within each community, and were therefore collapsed into a single rating of deservingness.

An analysis of perceived deservingness as a 2 (function of community: Plan Ahead Place vs. Bail-Out by the River/Tour Town) by 2 (political orientation) mixed-design ANOVA revealed significant main effects for both community, $F(1, 797) = 320.85, p < .0001, \omega^2 = .29$, and for political orientation, $F(1, 797) = 24.71, p < .0001, \omega^2 = .03$. Plan Ahead Place was seen as more deserving ($M = 5.53$) than Bail-Out by the River and Tour Town ($M = 4.55$), and liberals perceived the communities to be more deserving ($M = 5.76$) than did conservatives ($M = 4.84$).

Similar to the individual-level analysis, strong main effects were also observed as a function of community with the dependent variable of sympathy, $F(1, 794) = 539.59, p < .0001, \omega^2 = .41$, and anger, $F(1, 800) = 2,007.52, p < .00001, \omega^2 = .71$. Plan Ahead Place aroused nearly maximum levels of sympathy ($M = 6.22$), whereas the other communities aroused more moderate degrees of sympathy ($M = 5.48$). Plan Ahead Place aroused virtually no anger ($M = 1.51$), whereas the other communities aroused some degree of anger ($M = 5.08$).

Structural equation modeling was conducted to more fully explore the extent to which attributional and affective differences could account for ideological differences in how people thought about community-level deservingness of postdisaster aid, following the same rationale as followed with individuals. Models were tested across all three communities, and results showed the same high degree of consistency with communities as was observed with individuals. As can be seen in Figure 2 (which presents the results for Plan Ahead Place as an example), the effects of political orientation were not fully mediated by attributions or affective reactions toward communities. The models did, however, support the attribution-affect-action model of Weiner (1986), with the caveat that mediation of responsibility effects on deservingness occurred only through positive, rather than both positive and negative, affect.⁵

*AID DESIGNED TO MEET
PRIMARY VERSUS SECONDARY NEEDS*

The next set of analyses addressed whether people were (a) less enthusiastic about providing for community's secondary relative to their primary needs, and (b) whether ideological differences emerged in willingness to provide humanitarian assistance to those communities that did not take precautions against flood damage.

The hypothesis that participants would be more supportive of humanitarian aid than aid designed to return people to their predisaster standard of living was supported. A within-subjects ANOVA that compared support for humanitarian aid, aid to help affected communities rebuild their towns, aid to provide communities with buyouts, or aid designed to relocate the community to a safer location yielded a significant effect for type of help on support, $F(3, 2310) = 511.14, p < .0001, \omega^2 = .40$ (see Table 2). Although Tukey's tests indicated that all pair-wise comparisons were significant, there was clearly the greatest amount of support for immediate humanitarian assistance, and to some extent to rebuild the communities. Participants were considerably less eager to provide aid to provide buyouts or to relocate the community.

Also paralleling the findings with individuals, liberals ($M = 6.13$) and conservatives ($M = 6.09$) were equally supportive of providing humanitarian aid to Plan Ahead Place, $F(1, 802) < 1, ns$, but conservatives ($M = 5.51$) were less supportive than liberals ($M = 5.74$) about providing humanitarian aid to Tour Town and Bail-Out by the River, $F(1, 802) = 10.23, p < .01, \omega^2 = .01$. Ideological differences at other levels of help reflected the main effect that liberals were more supportive of providing aid, regardless of kind, than were conservatives.

REFORM

The hypothesis that participants, and perhaps especially conservatives, would be receptive to the notion of future reform was also tested at the community level of analysis. Analysis of the 3 (aid: contingent on future reform, humanitarian aid, and aid designed to meet secondary needs) by 2 (community) by 2 (political orientation) mixed-design ANOVA yielded main effects for community, $F(1, 768) = 90.11, p < .0001, \omega^2 = .11$ (that replicated the pattern reported earlier with deservingness), and type of help, $F(2, 1536) = 536.58, p < .0001, \omega^2 = .41$. Tukey's test indicated that willingness to support federal disaster assistance if it was made contingent on the promise of future reform ($M = 5.59$) was viewed as favorably as noncontingent humanitarian aid ($M = 5.86$) and more favorably than providing noncontingent secondary aid ($M = 4.07$).

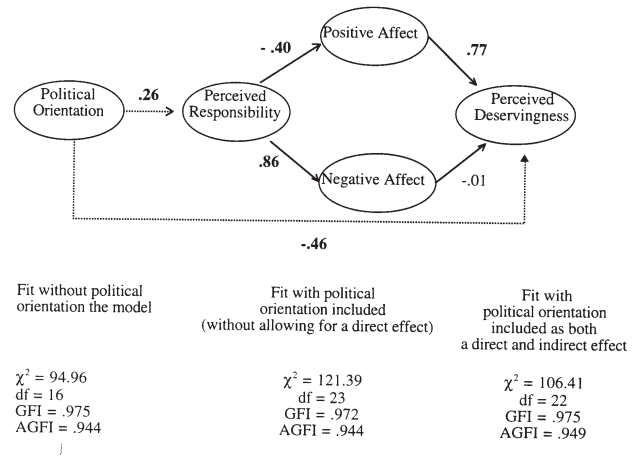


Figure 2 Path diagram representing reactions to Plan-Ahead Place, the community that spent local tax dollars to build flood walls and levees.

NOTE: GFI = Goodness-of-Fit Index; AGFI = Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index. The path coefficients that are in boldface were significant. Dashed lines indicate the effects for political orientation when included in the model for demonstration purposes; the path coefficients represented by solid lines are those observed when political orientation was not included in the model. Similar patterns emerged when the model was fitted to reactions to Tour Town and Bail-Out by the River.

In addition to this effect, a significant aid by political orientation interaction was observed, $F(2, 1536) = 8.69, p < .0001, \omega^2 = .01$. Conservatives were as likely as liberals to support providing aid contingent on future precautions, $F(1, 800) = 1.32, ns, \omega^2 < .01$. Liberals and conservatives similarly did not differ in their support for humanitarian aid, $F(1, 802) = 2.47, ns, \omega^2 < .01$ (however, see earlier ideological differences in willingness to support humanitarian aid as a function of community precautions). Liberals, however, were more supportive of providing for communities' nonprimary needs ($M = 4.36$) than were conservatives ($M = 3.80$), $F(1770) = 29.05, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04$, although the absolute values of the means do not reflect a high degree of enthusiasm for secondary aid, even on the part of liberals.

*Comparisons of
Individuals and Communities*

Because reactions to both individuals and communities were collected in the same study, analysis was possible comparing the relative willingness to help social collectives versus individuals more directly. Because community and individual descriptions were not perfectly parallel, community and individual descriptions were averaged for these analyses. Only results that

included target as a factor (i.e., the community/individual distinction) are reported below.

*RESPONSIBILITY, AFFECT,
AND DESERVINGNESS*

Analysis of responsibility judgments (the average of the extent to which respondents blamed the target, and their belief that the target should have taken greater precautions) as a function of a 2 (target: community or individual) by 2 (political orientation) mixed-design ANOVA indicated that communities ($M = 4.29$) and individuals ($M = 4.32$) were held equally responsible for their plight, $F(1, 770) < 1$. Political orientation did not qualify this result.

Similar analysis with the dependent variable of sympathy revealed a large effect for target, $F(1, 801) = 148.67$, $p < .0001$, $\omega^2 = .16$. Communities aroused more sympathy ($M = 5.46$) than did individuals ($M = 4.81$), a result that was not qualified by political orientation. Target or political orientation, however, did not affect anger. Communities were also seen as more deserving of assistance ($M = 5.07$) than individuals ($M = 4.66$), $F(1, 793) = 117.31$, $p < .0001$, $\omega^2 = .13$, a result that was not qualified by political orientation.

TYPES OF ASSISTANCE

To explore whether there were differences in willingness to provide individuals versus communities with specific kinds of help, a 2 (target) by 5 (help: humanitarian, rebuild, buy out, relocate, or aid contingent on future reform) by 2 (political orientation) mixed-design ANOVA was conducted. Results revealed a significant main effect for target, $F(1, 763) = 43.15$, $p < .0001$, $\omega^2 = .05$; and a target by help interaction, $F(4, 3052) = 23.14$, $p < .0001$, $\omega^2 = .03$. Replicating the effect observed with deservingness, participants were overall more supportive of providing aid to communities ($M = 4.66$) than to individuals ($M = 4.48$).

Analysis of the simple effects of target at different levels of help indicated that participants were more willing to support providing communities than individuals with humanitarian aid, $F(1, 803) = 26.06$, $p < .0001$, $\omega^2 = .03$; aid to rebuild, $F(1, 798) = 80.36$, $p < .0001$, $\omega^2 = .09$; and aid contingent on future reform, $F(1, 799) = 31.68$, $p < .0001$, $\omega^2 = .04$. Participants were not more likely to support communities over individuals with respect to aid designed to buyout, $F(1, 772) = 3.27$, *ns*, $\omega^2 < .01$; or to relocate flood victims, $F(1, 795) < 1$ (see Table 2 for more detail).

In summary, although there was a considerable degree of parallelism between the variables that affected perceptions of how deserving communities and individuals were of disaster aid, there was also a strong main effect preference for helping communities over individuals. Differences between communities and individu-

als disappear, however, when aid was designed to serve more secondary than primary needs.

DISCUSSION

Federal emergency assistance for victims of natural disasters can be the only thing that stands between the victims and financial ruin. For the rest of the country, that is, the taxpayers of America, federal disaster assistance programs represent a multibillion dollar investment in the personal and economic renewal of fellow citizens. Do people feel that the government should step in and help people who have suffered the consequences of a natural disaster, or does the American public feel that the government should stay out of the insurance and bail-out business and let people cope on their own? What kinds of help should be provided, and to whom?

Results of this study indicated that there were clear main-effect preferences for claims that came from communities, rather than individuals. Although individual descriptions might be viewed more favorably when presented alone than as a member of a group (Sears, 1983), descriptions of groups were viewed more favorably than descriptions of individuals in this context (see also Covert & Reeder, 1990).

Other results indicated that even in a domain for which there was not an easily applied ideological script, liberals and conservatives nonetheless differed in their tendency to ascribe personal responsibility for needing assistance. In reporting general attitudes about providing flood assistance, conservatives consistently held individuals more responsible for their plight and for resolving it than did liberals. Liberals, on the other hand, were more likely to feel that people who did not take flood precautions should regardless receive federal assistance.

Consistent with the ideological differences observed at this global level were differences observed in reaction to specific claimants for federal disaster assistance that varied in the extent to which they had taken precautions against flood damage. Liberals and conservatives were generally equally likely to ascribe more personal responsibility and blame to targets (both communities and individuals) that did not take flood precautions than those that did. Although liberals, like conservatives, acknowledged that disaster victims who had not taken precautions (e.g., bought personal insurance, or who did build flood walls or levees) were more responsible for needing disaster assistance than those that did, liberals nonetheless appeared to suspend the normal consequences of the attributional-affect-action sequence when considering these people's relative deserving of aid. Despite seeing specific disaster victims through a similar attributional and affective lens as conservatives, liberals nonetheless saw disaster victims as more deserving of assistance than did conservatives.

Previous research has hinted that there may be differences in the way that liberals and conservatives react to, or differentiate between, primary and secondary needs. By considering multiple levels of assistance, the present study determined that liberals' public compassion was not constrained by attributional analysis when aid addressed primary relative to nonprimary needs (e.g., clean water, food, and immediate shelter vs. a buyout). Liberals supported providing those who did not take flood precautions with humanitarian aid to the same extent as those who had, whereas conservatives were less supportive of providing even immediate humanitarian aid to those who had not taken actions to protect themselves against risk. Liberals and conservatives alike, however, were unenthusiastic about using federal disaster assistance to provide assistance beyond immediate humanitarian aid, especially for those who had not taken flood precautions in the first place. Although not uncommon forms of disaster assistance, willingness to provide flood victims with money to either rebuild, buy out, or relocate was markedly less enthusiastic than willingness to provide flood victims with assistance designed to meet primary survival needs. Finally, liberals and conservatives alike were also more willing to support providing federal assistance if that aid was made contingent on recipients taking future precautions against flood damage.

Taken together, these results seem to support the notion that liberals are not mindlessly ignoring attributional information; instead, they are making considered judgments about when to (and when not to) use that information in making a judgment about whether a target is deserving. When allocating resources designed to meet primary needs, such as humanitarian aid to people affected by a natural disaster, liberals appear to suspend the usual consequences of attribution-affect-action sequence and help even those who recklessly placed themselves at high risk.

The results point to a potentially complex interplay of cognitive and motivational concerns that direct people's willingness to help the disadvantaged. Specifically, the finding that liberals seem to suspend the typical consequences of the attribution-affect-action sequence under some circumstances (e.g., when allocating humanitarian aid) seems to be a particularly ripe domain for further research. Similar to recent ideas about prejudice developed by Devine and her colleagues (Devine, 1989; Devine, Monteith, Zuwerick, & Elliot, 1991), it could be that even though liberals make internal-controllable attributions for why some of the claimants needed assistance, these attributions were inconsistent with a set of internalized values that dictated that they should help everyone meet their primary needs. Conflict between liberals' principled commitment to egalitarianism and

the conclusions of attributional analysis may be especially strong when deciding whether to provide claimants with humanitarian assistance, presuming that liberals do see humanitarian aid as more of a right than a good to be distributed.

Research indicates that liberals find trade-offs between lives and money to be especially painful and awkward, and they will go out of their way to avoid these kinds of choices; however, conservatives do not (Skitka & Tetlock, 1993b). Therefore, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that whenever possible, liberals are likely to resolve the aroused conflict between not helping the irresponsible and egalitarian values tied to saving lives by suppressing the conclusions of causal analysis, and helping even the irresponsible if resource availability permits it. Just as low-prejudiced people experience more compunction about any negative reactions they have toward ethnic minorities or homosexuals, liberals may feel compunction about their negative reactions to the personally responsible when considering their basic survival needs; reacting negatively may threaten liberals' self-image as being open-minded and egalitarian.

In contrast, conservatives' values are shaped much more by a commitment to self-reliance and a work ethic than by a commitment to egalitarianism. Conservatives are not likely to experience any particular value conflict or compunction about withholding assistance from the personally responsible—doing so is consistent with their core values. According to this analysis, conservatives would have little value conflict in this context, and therefore little motivation to suppress acting on the conclusions of attributional analysis.

These ideas are also consistent with Judd and Krosnick's (1989) model of political memory organization, which suggests that specific issue positions are organized in memory around multiple crowning postures or values (e.g., equality, freedom). A specific policy position (e.g., flood assistance) is likely to be evaluated against these crowning postures, which are likely to be organized very differently for liberals and conservatives. In a related vein, Tetlock's value pluralism model (1986; Tetlock, Peterson, & Lerner, 1996) suggests that liberals hold more conflicting values and are more likely to recognize and be sensitive to value conflict. Although one implication of this is that liberals may have more difficulty maintaining a perfectly constrained or consistent political belief system, it also suggests that liberals may be more likely to recognize conflicts between attributional analysis and crowning values and, if they have sufficient cognitive resources to bring to bear to the problem, to be able to suppress the effect of the former to allow action as a function of the latter (cf. Gilbert, 1989; Gilbert, Pelham, & Krull, 1988). This interpretation suggests that the one-step attributional process implicit in Weiner's attri-

butional model of helping (1986, 1995) may need to be revised to reflect a stage theory similar to Gilbert's (1989) model of how people make trait inferences. People may spontaneously make responsibility judgments, which then are only corrected for later in the judgmental sequence if the perceiver has sufficient cognitive capacity or motivation to do so.

In addition to being a fruitful area to explore in its own right, the above analysis also points to some provocative predictions about what might happen if allocators work under conditions of scarcity, followed by a period of abundance. My previous research has found that under scarcity, liberals and conservatives alike deny lifesaving resources (e.g., organs for transplant, azidothymidine [AZT] treatment) to the personally responsible. Under no scarcity, liberals tend to help everyone, but conservatives tend to still withhold help from those responsible for their predicament (Skitka & Tetlock, 1992).

If liberals do feel compunction about not allocating aid designed to address primary needs equally to all, to reduce the awkwardness of these conflicted feelings, they may need to generate justifications that accentuate the deserving of those chosen and the undeserving of those rejected under scarcity. These justifications may come to be functionally autonomous of the resource constraints that originally motivated them. Claimants rejected under scarcity could come to be seen as less worthy of assistance, even after scarcity constraints are removed, as allocators attempt to make their attitudes consistent with their actions (Festinger, 1957). Because only the undeserving are going without assistance, scarcity could easily become self-perpetuating (cf. Ross & Ellard, 1986).

Although the results of the present study should be viewed with some caution because they relied on reactions to hypothetical claimants, the present study provides a good test of the generalizability of attributional models of helping and allocation preferences. The data were collected during the height of the flood crisis in the Midwest, when the devastation of homes, farms, and communities were common fodder for the evening news. Although the targets presented in the survey were not real claimants, they were highly vivid ones given the context in which the survey was conducted (cf. Amato, 1986). Moreover, by using an experimental design within a national survey, the present study was able to maximize internal validity while gaining a great deal of external validity. The use of a representative sample is especially important, as theories of allocation preferences move away from an exclusive focus on the allocation of wages and rewards to explore allocation preferences in sociopolitical contexts. Allocation of sociopolitical resources, such as welfare or federal emer-

gency assistance, may not have the same psychological meaning when judged by an interested as compared to a disinterested respondent. Relying exclusively on college students for hypothesis testing in these domains is relying on people who have yet to become invested in maintaining the current system (i.e., they are less likely to have paid income taxes). Therefore, an additional important contribution of the present study is that it not only extended our understanding of the attributional and ideological boundaries on public compassion, but it also tested these hypotheses using a representative sample.

Social psychological research has made enormous progress in understanding when individuals will be willing to extend help to another needy individual (for reviews, see Clark, 1991; Schroeder, Penner, Dovidio, & Piliavin, 1995). The present study contributes to what we know about prosocial behavior beyond this by initiating investigation of public compassion—that is, willingness to commit collective resources to assist the less fortunate members of the community. Although there are some strong parallels between individual-level helping behavior and public compassion, there are also some important distinctions. For example, the need contexts being addressed in the public sphere are generally of a much larger scale, and involve longer term commitments, than do individual-level interventions. In addition, through the use of public resources, people can provide assistance for problems that they individually (or locally) could not as effectively resolve. Willingness to support using tax dollars to help disaster victims, the poor, or other targeted constituencies involves costs, but not the same level of personal risk that individually intervening in an emergency may involve. In addition, public decisions to intervene also involve trade-offs that may not typically characterize individual-level decisions to intervene in an emergency. For example, spending x amount of dollars on disaster aid means that there is that much less money left to spend on other public programs, such as education, defense, or infrastructure. How do people believe that we should deal with these competing claims on the public purse? When are people prepared to say that we should increase taxes to help more people at the margins, and when do they draw the line and say enough is enough?

Public compassion as a research topic can draw on and inform not only theories of prosocial behavior, but also theories of distributive justice and allocation behavior. Rawls (1971) defined distributive justice as the set of principles that people use to decide how to distribute both the benefits and burdens of social cooperation. Presumably one benefit of social cooperation is that communities can provide a safety net for their citizens. In addition to further exploration of the psychology of pub-

lic compassion and how people think we should distribute the benefits of social cooperation, further research should also begin to explore how people think the burdens of social cooperation (e.g., taxes, nuclear waste dumps, and wartime conscription) should be shared and distributed.

NOTES

1. The 1993 Midwest Flood was associated with the largest amount of precipitation, river levels, area of flooding, and economic losses in U.S. recorded history (Interagency Flood Plain Management Review Committee [IFMRC], 1994; National Weather Service, 1994).

2. This strategy was used for identifying political groups for the following reasons: (a) the principal components analysis revealed a single factor solution with the measures used, so it was reasonable to treat liberalism/conservatism as a single bipolar dimension, at least with this sample; (b) using self-identification alone has been judged as problematic, because people in different areas of the country may view themselves only in terms of their neighbors (e.g., someone who calls himself or herself a conservative in Berkeley, California may not look very similar attitudinally to someone who calls himself or herself a conservative in Tuscaloosa, Alabama), so self-identification was weighted with personality and attitudinal scale items to more accurately gauge relative degrees of liberalism and conservatism, a method judged as superior to self-identification alone (e.g., Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986; Stone, 1983); (c) a comparison of different identification strategies indicated that the present method (dropping the middle 20% and using scores derived from a principal components analysis of both self-identification items, as well as more subtle personality/attitudinal items) yielded the best discrimination on the validation check items; and finally, (d) including a moderate group did not yield any informative results or change the results observed with a dichotomous strategy.

3. Unless explicitly stated otherwise, all pair-wise comparisons between any means described in the results section were significant at $p < .01$ using Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) test.

4. Tour Town and Bail-Out by the River did not significantly differ in any subsequent analysis.

5. The larger number of degrees of freedom associated with the model depicted in Figure 2 than in Figure 1 are due to one additional observed variable that was included for the latent construct of responsibility in this model, specifically, the item "How much was Plan Ahead Place responsible for being damaged by the flood?" A parallel item was mistakenly not included in the survey for individuals.

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