FRAMING LIBERALISM

Melinda N. White

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Approved by:

James A. Stimson

Michael B. MacKuen

Justin H. Gross

ABSTRACT

MELINDA N. WHITE: Framing Liberalism.
(Under the direction of James A. Stimson)

Self identification as "liberal" has declined quite notably in the United States since the mid 1960s. Part of the explanation of this decline is a growing association of the connotation of liberalism along the lines of race, protest, counter culture, and the like. I investigate the portions of this group association thesis which are possible to observe in the ANES feeling thermometer data and observe clear evidence of growing group association with the term. That raised the question of where the group association arises. I hypothesize media framing as the cause and observe it by word counts, which I take as proxies for frames. I observe fairly strong associations between presumed cause, media frames, and effect, change in perceptions of "liberals."

For Paul M. Kellstedt, whose continuing guidance has helped me to get this far in my academic career.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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0.1 Introduction

In an effort to understand a central paradox of American politics—how so many Americans can hold culturally and economically liberal opinions, yet call themselves conservatives—Ellis and Stimson (2012) evaluated the way that the mass media frames the very words "liberal" and "conservative." In convincing fashion, they demonstrated that the dominant frames of ideological language are ones that slur liberal symbols, and mostly venerate conservative ones. Moreover, their search confirmed what previous research considering the mainstream media's treatment of ideological terms: that "conservative" is used far more frequently than "liberal" (Ellis and Stimson 2012; Brady and Ma 2003; Eisinger, Veenstra and Koehn 2007).

This disparity is not reflective of media bias, however. Instead, news media mostly cover what political elites *say*, and conservative elites are much more likely to call themselves and their platforms "conservative." Instead, then, the message of these studies highlights a more general phenomenon, one with important implications for the study of ideological identification in the mass public: that the media transmit the dominant features of political debate chosen by political elites. Thus, the symbols that citizens tie to the labels "liberal" and "conservative" are largely dictated by the media and political elites.

Ellis and Stimson (2012) and others have demonstrated how the media frame ideological labels for the public and the influence these frames have, but typically cover only short time periods. Ellis and Stimson, for instance, evaluated three two-month time periods, all since 2000. While these studies have helped build consensus that media framing effects are pervasive, I believe there is more work to be done. I wish to build on these studies and others, and offer a longitudinal analysis of the presentation of "liberal" and "conservative" in the mass media. In particular, I wish to identify the dominant symbols—both political and non-political—that have been associated with "liberal" and "conservative" from 1936—2012.

To demonstrate the capacity of media framing effects, I observe changing correlations of feeling thermometers with liberals and these groups. I posit that shifts in affects are strongly influenced by the media's treatment of these important political and non-political groups.

0.2 The Power of Framing

The average citizen relies on the mass media for his or her political information, so it is the media's job to decide which stories constitute news, which issues are important, and how the issues should be presented to the public. This statement has not always been believed as true. Early media scholars failed to find evidence that the media played any role in persuasion and, instead, only worked to reinforce the already held political preferences of citizens (Lazarsfeld 1948; Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954; Klapper 1960).These early minimal effects views have been shown to be wrong by more sophisticated theories describing exactly how the media influences the public. Concepts of *agenda setting, priming, and framing* have been created in order to conceptualize the power that the media have in influencing individual preferences (MacKuen 1984; Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Krosnick 1990). Agenda setting is defined as the media's power to decide which issues to cover—and therefore prioritize for public action. Priming is the media's power to focus the attention of the public. And framing is the media's power to choose how to present an issue—in one perspective rather than another—including what words or tones to use in issue coverage. The concepts of agenda setting and priming have been the main focus of many articles addressing voting behavior, but in the context of policy preferences and considerations, framing may be the better choice.

In an effort to show how elites can use the media in order to manipulate public opinion, Chong and Druckman (2007) consider real world scenarios in which elites are using competing frames in order to gain support for their stances on various policies. They pit frames with varying degrees of strength against one another and find that the strength of a frame influences the power of the frame. Specifically, they find that as a frame's strength increases the persuasion power associated with the frame also increases. Zaller (1992) give an example of another way in which competing frames are able to influence public opinion. Zaller (1992) presents the "Receive-Accept-Sample"

model (RAS) arguing that individuals have conflicting views on specific issues and the individual's preferences at any given time are determined by what considerations are at the top of his or her head. He uses liberal and conservative considerations as an example of the RAS model and shows that the probability of a liberal response at any given time is a factor of the number of liberal considerations available in a person's mind divided by the individual's total number of both liberal and conservative considerations. Therefore, the media have the ability to influence an individual's views by repeatedly framing specific issues in a certain context in order to increase the proportion of issues considered in that context.

0.2.1   What Considerations?

When Americans decide that they do or do not like "liberals" as a group, who is it that they have in mind? A natural way to approach the question would be to decide what "liberal" implies in terms of policy preferences and then assume that the sorts of people who hold those preferences are what people have in mind, but that will not work because many people who advocate the standard liberal agenda tell us that they do not particularly like "liberals." Many Americans who want government to do more, to sustain Social Security and Medicare, to increase the minimum wage, to support labor unions, to enhance workplace safety, to clean up the environment, to do more on education then tell us that they do not think of themselves as liberals and do not particularly like liberals as a group.

So—in Zaller's 1992 terms—the considerations that come to mind when Americans think about liberals are not Medicare or Social Security or education or environment or minimum wage or all the other things that actual liberals stand for. So what are the considerations that spring to mind and how could we know them? Those are among the central questions of this research.

And there is more than mere slippage between "liberal" as a set of policy preferences and "liberal" as a symbol applied to some mysterious "them" described by the label. The policy preferences are on average very popular. And the "them" are on average very unpopular, a group most Americans prefer not to join. So the slippage is directional. "Liberal" as policy preferences on specific issues is popular. "Liberal" as a symbol and as a description of a group of actors is not.

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Party has a complicated, not simple, relationship to "liberal" as a policy preference and "liberal" as a symbol. Democrats have long known that the latter is unpopular and so they have divorced themselves from it. While "liberal" is deeply unpopular, the Party of liberalism is thriving. Its symbols are more positive than negative and it wins elections.[1] Because Democrats do not attach themselves to the symbol "liberal," it remains possible that the party and its candidates do well while its symbol pleases only a small minority of voters.

Having largely ruled out the obvious, that the considerations of "liberalism" in the minds of citizens are the substance of liberalism, I now have a vacuum to be filled. If not policy and not the sorts of people who advocate that policy, what *are* the considerations that Americans bring to the term. That question motivates my search for such considerations in the public dialogue about politics. I will ask, when Americans encounter the term "liberal" what other symbols are they likely to encounter with it? In particular, because I believe that the symbol changes connotations over time and from the prominent events of politics, I shall search for those other symbols in media coverage of politics. I think about the flow of symbols and images over time, and I try to reconstruct that flow by observing what citizens might have seen linked to liberalism if they were reading the daily newspaper over a long span of time.

0.3 Research Design

I begin with the knowledge that the connotation of "liberal" has grown over the years and that it acquired associations with various groups (e.g., blacks, poor people, people on welfare, labor unions) as it grew. So what "liberal" means to the typical survey respondent of the last two or three decades is quite dramatically changed from our image of liberals and liberalism from the periods of the New Deal, Fair Deal, and New Frontier.[2] I believe that the changes were produced by the crucial political events beginning with the civil rights movement of the 1960s and in particular in the way such events were packaged for public consumption in the news.

My problem is to observe the framing of liberalism over a seventy year span of media coverage

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[1]Indeed it is the party of conservatism that is engaged in soul searching about its unpopular ideological image as I write.

[2]I develop the evidence of these changed associations in Section 2 below.

in order to explain why public perceptions of the term have become infused with strong group associations. It is helpful to admit at the outset that I am not up to the task.

Observing framing in text is a subtle and nuanced business, far more demanding that I could hope to achieve with human reading and human coding. Seventy years and some 30,000 stories are the text in question. That is more than I could do at all. And then there would be questions of quality.

It remains a matter of dispute whether automated coding of framing is within reach. For me that is an interesting debate. What I know for sure is that it is not within *my* reach. Thus though "frame" is the concept in question, I will proceed with the much easier task of counting words instead. I shall count the usage of words like "black" or "poor people" or "labor union" in stories that include reference to liberalism and make the very strong assumption that the counts will be a crude proxy for frames. If "black" appears in a story that mentions liberals, for example, I am assuming that there is some probability that the story might frame the growing support for blacks by liberals (or the growing support of liberals by blacks) or some similar idea.[3] I count on the power of aggregation of very large numbers of error-prone classifications to get the main dimensions of the issue right even while some individual errors are inevitable.

Ultimately my question is causal. I know from the group associations of the survey response to "liberals" that the group associations of "liberal" changed. My question is can I explain that change from the flow of inferred frames in media coverage of politics. The question for each group is multivariate. Can I explain the growing correlation, for example between "liberals" and "blacks" with media frames connecting liberal and black? That is my goal.

0.3.1 Measuring Media Frames

In order to test my theory, I operationalize the cause into the proportion of articles per year connecting group identities and the term "liberal." I use both ProQuest, which has articles available from the *The New York Times* from 1936 to 1979, and LexisNexis, which has articles available from *The New York Times* from 1980 to 2012, in order to obtain articles mentioning the term "liberal."

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[3]And my assumption will be wrong, as a critic points out, if the story is about the former liberal Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black.

In order to get a sample of articles that are most likely to be both seen and read by the population, I limit the search to only contain articles from the front page of *The New York Times*. At the end, I am left with 16,103 articles from *The New York Times* that mention "liberal" from 1936 to 2012. [4]"

I use a Python script in order to measure the connections between the term "liberal" and group identities. The script is designed to upload all of the articles downloaded from both ProQuest and LexisNexis and to search each one for mentions of certain groups contained in a political symbols dictionary that contains 37 unique groups and was modeled after questions from the American National Elections Studies' cumulative file. These groups range from "blacks" and "poor" to "church goers" and the "military." As the program parses through each article, it creates a list of all of the groups mentioned, and it simultaneously keeps track of the proportion of articles mentioning each group per available year. The resulting group proportions from each run are used as the explanatory variables in this study.

> Mr. Kennedy, the new chairman of the Senate *Labor* and Human Resources Committee, called the hearings on the state of American health care as the Democrats began seizing the initiative on issues such as health care, *labor* and education. Push for **Liberal** Agenda The hearings are central to Mr. Kennedy's renewed **liberal** manifesto, a call for fresh programs to help the *poor* and banish the *conservative* mood that he criticizes as "survival of the fittest." There is a tendency to label those without enough insurance to cover hospital costs as "loafers who are going along for the ride,"Mr. Kennedy said.

The above text shows an excerpt from an article used in the study[5]. The article, titled "U.S. Health Care Faulted in Senate," addressed the nation's concern over adequate healthcare for U.S. citizens and is used as a "liberal" article in my sample. The italicized words are group mentions that

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[4] I am not concerned with the overlap of articles that mention both conservative and liberal. When these articles are controlled for, I received the same results, so I chose to leave them in the sample. A table of these results can be found in Appendix A

[5] The full article can be found in Appendix A

appear in the text. As you can see the word "labor" appears multiple times in this excerpt alone, so this article was counted by the script file as mentioning labor groups. The groups poor and conservative were also counted. It is important to note that even though "labor" appears multiple times in this article, the article is still counted only once in the overall proportion for this group. This is because the proportion is calculated from the number of articles in a year mentioning a certain group and *not* from the total number of group mentions in a year.

(a) Liberal Word Cloud Count   (b) Conservative Word Cloud Count
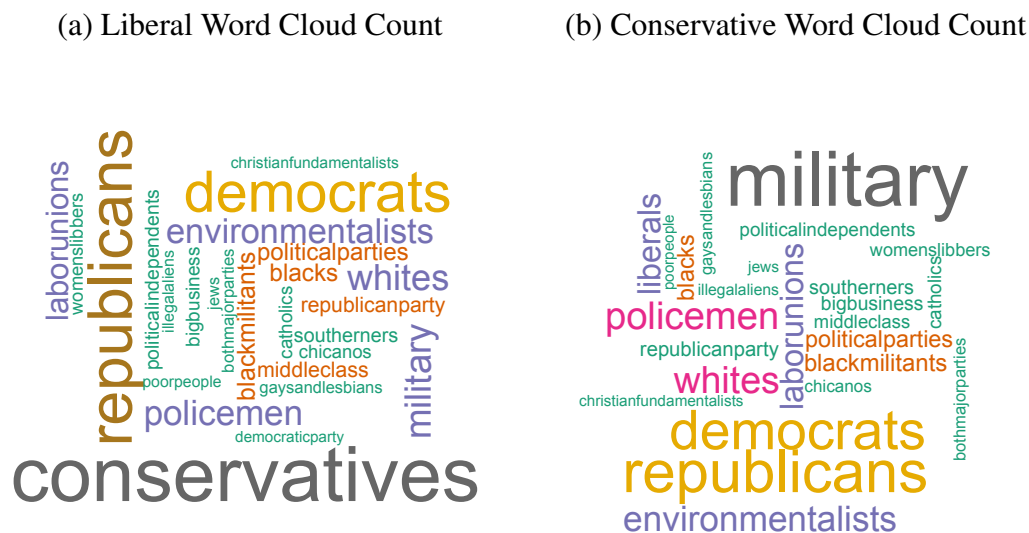
Figure 1: Group Mentions

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the average results from the content analysis. All 37 categories from the Political Symbols Dictionary can be seen sized and shaded according to their relative frequency within the articles. On the left, you can see the group mentions associated with the term "liberal." While many of the frequencies are to be expected based on the modern day associations with the term "liberal," it is interesting to note the unexpected group associations. The figure shows that symbols, such as "Republican," often appear alongside the term "liberal," and even though this particular symbol is not typically associated with the term, it still appears more often than the other 36 categories.

The second figure shows the group mentions associated with the term "conservative." Unlike

"liberal," "conservative" can be seen to be associated often with many groups with the military being associated most often with the term. It is interesting to note that while the group conservatives are the most common group associated with liberals, liberals appear to be low on the list of group being associated with conservatives. This can be expected given the negative associations that come with the term "liberal," which would cause conservatives to want to distance themselves from the word.

I believe that the substantial differences in these two figures provide support for the idea that the terms "liberal" and "conservative" are being framed differently even when associated with various groups, however I believe that, while framed differently, they are still mentioned together in articles. It is natural for "liberal" to be used as the opposite of "conservative" and vice versa. So while both terms show relationships with group mentions, I believe that when the terms from the political symbols dictionary are used in conjunction with the term "conservative" it is simply a method in which individuals are showing the opposite of "liberal," and *not* that the groups are being directly associated with the term.

0.4 Changing Associations of the Symbol "Liberal"

I begin by observing that the meaning of "liberal" may have changed in the seven decades after it first came into common usage as a description of Roosevelt's New Deal. Although it is pretty clear what policies and policy proposals were packaged with the ideological label, when I think instead of what people and groups it implicated, I have little but surmise before 1964 when the American National Election Studies began exploring more symbolic associations by means of feeling thermometers.[6]

The feeling thermometers—by inference from correlations—allow me to explore "who" people have in mind when they respond to liberals as a group. And when the thermometers become available over the 1960s and 1970s they begin to establish a portrait of the associates of liberalism in terms of racial identities (blacks, black Militants, civil rights leaders), beneficiaries (poor people

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[6]Presumably "liberal" then meant "New Dealer" and was applied to all sorts of people who supported labor rights and benefits and those who thought activist government was the solution to economic depression. But I must presume where I have no data.

and people on welfare) and then the traditional link to labor unions.

I present the data of correlations between the "liberals" feeling thermometer and those of these other groups in Figure 2. Looking first at the patterns of all of the series, we see a sharp growth of the average correlation between "liberals" and the others in the early years (.19 in 1964 to .34 in 1978) followed by an apparent steady state thereafter (with exactly the same .34 correlation in 2008 as thirty years earlier).
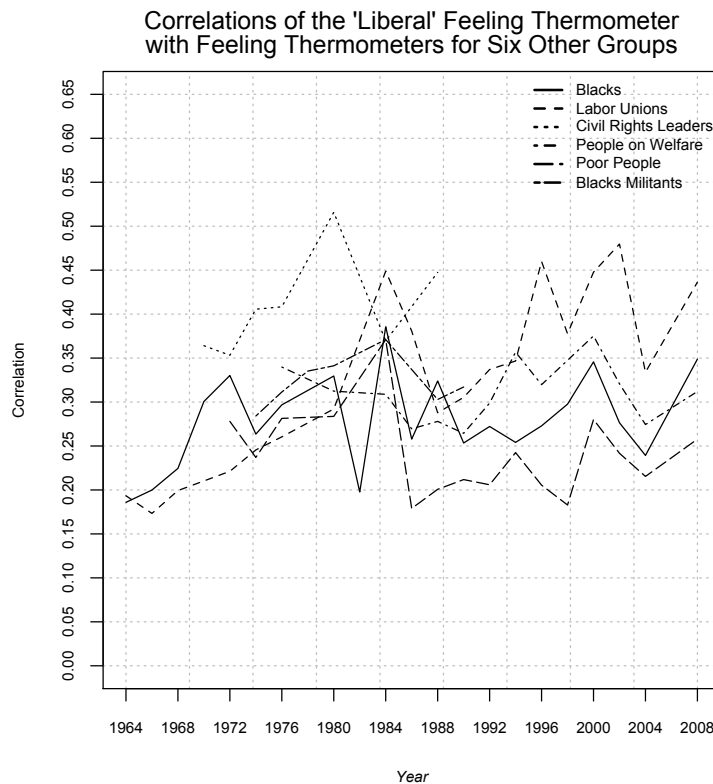
Figure 2: The Correlations of the "Liberals" Feeling Thermometer and Six Other Groups

Of the particular group associations with liberalism the most striking is race. The liberal symbol in the public mind became connected with "blacks" when first measured in 1964 and rose steadily thereafter, as is also true for the more time bound "civil rights leaders" and "black militants." (Civil rights leaders produced the highest such correlation ever recorded, .52 in 1980). From my knowledge of the history that tied civil rights protests of the early 1960s to liberalism, it seems

clear that if I had been able to observe a correlation between black and liberal as late as say 1960, it would have been effectively zero. So the growth that I can actually observe is probably only part of the larger picture.

No longer the ideology of the white working man, it seems clear that the infusion of racial images into the response to liberals and liberalism is a large part of the declining popularity of the label. If race had just been the civil rights movement in the South, it is hard to know how the long term might have played out. For the nonviolent civil rights movement played to strongly held American core beliefs about legal (at least) equality. But in the late 1960s black militants (like the Black Panther Party) and urban riots dominated the news about race, and the white response to both was very largely negative.

The Problem   How then do I explain the growing association of various groups with the symbol "liberal?" My starting point is to ask what Americans were exposed to in the media dialogue about politics. I turn to that analysis now.

0.5   Explaining the Change

The word counts (transformed into proportions) leave me with 37 times series, each of 77 years, representing how often each of the symbols in the symbols dictionary appears each year in stories that mention "liberal." I have observed the response of the electorate in the feeling thermometer correlations seen previously. The word count, which I take to be a proxy for a frame count, is my candidate stimulus to explain the response.

The question then becomes is it? Can I understand the growth of symbolic associations to be a response to a growth of stories framing those same connections.[7] I observe the beginnings of an answer in Table 1 which reports the correlation between the dependent variable, the thermometer correlations, and the independent variables, the counts. I present them for six series for which I have data on the dependent variable from voter surveys.

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[7]I am agnostic about the question of whether the effects we observe are somehow due to the media themselves or would arise from just the factual reporting of events which are themselves the causal factor. All that matters for me is that the stimulus is observed. Whom it is due to does not matter.

Table 1: Correlations of Liberal and Group Feeling Thermometers and Group Mentions

Group Mentions	Blacks	Unions	Civil Rights Leaders	Welfare	Poor People	Militants
Blacks	0.459	–	–	–	–	–
Unions	–	0.001	–	–	–	–
Civil Rights Leaders	–	–	0.235	–	–	–
Welfare	–	–	–	0.342	–	–
Poor People	–	–	–	–	-0.329	–
Militants	–	–	–	–	–	-0.551
N	20	18	5	8	14	6

The answer is mixed. For three associations I observe positive correlations, the expected direction. But with many N's on the order of 7 or 8, the deck is stacked against finding significant associations. One, the correlation between counts of black frames and feeling thermometer correlations of black and liberal is significant at $p<0.05$. For the similar correlations of civil rights leaders (0.235) and people on welfare (0.345), n's are just too small for significance. For these I have the sense that something is going on but not quite the confidence to say it.

Race To get further beneath the surface I look briefly at figures of each of these relationships. In Figure 3 I display the feeling thermometer correlations (in red dash) along with the counts of black references over time. The feeling thermometers show a gently linear trend, starting at 0.19 when first observed in 1964 (and presumably lower still when not observed earlier) rising to average around 0.30.

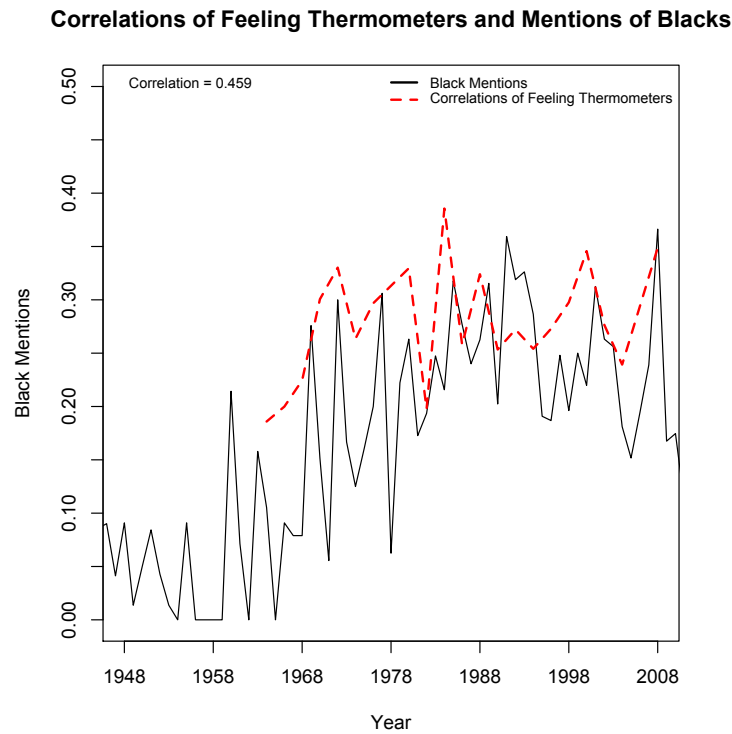**Correlations of Feeling Thermometers and Mentions of Blacks**

Figure 3: Mentions of Black and Correlations of Liberal and BlackFeeling Thermometers

The pattern of the frame counts looks more like the response to an intervention in the 1960s. It starts at essentially zero before the 1960s, rises fairly dramatically in the years that race was near the top of the American political agenda, and levels off to a near steady state after about 1980, never declining. Race came and went on the agenda of national politics. But it came and stayed in the meaning of liberalism.

Clearly the rate at which race appears in stories about liberalism, roughly 30 percent of the time, paints a pretty starkly racial picture of perceived ideology in America. I know from the dependent variable that Americans associate race with liberalism, and I know from the analysis of frames that there is good reason to do so.

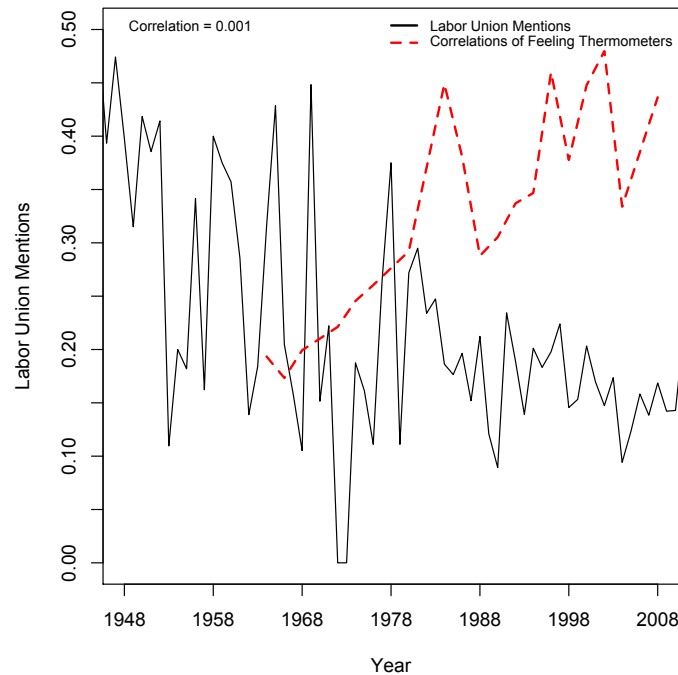**Correlations of Feeling Thermometers and Mentions of Labor Unions**

Figure 4: Mentions of Unions and Correlations of Liberal and Union Feeling Thermometers

Labor Unions   There is nothing new about the association of liberal with labor. It dates to the New Deal. Nonetheless I can see from Figure 4 that the association of liberal with labor has grown fairly substantially, particularly in recent decades. It is immediately obvious that media framing cannot explain this growth because it has occurred against a trend toward declining focus on unions in frames about liberalism.[8] But the frame counts I observe fit our experience, which is that union labor is an ever-declining part of the conflict between left and right. The correlation, at .001, is about as dramatic a way as one can imagine to deny any relationship between media frames and perception of labor as connected to liberalism.

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[8]If the analysis were extended beyond the Tea Party election of 2010, I would expect to see renewed focus on conflict involving unions after the GOP decided to openly attack unions rather than largely ignoring them as it had done since the 1950s.
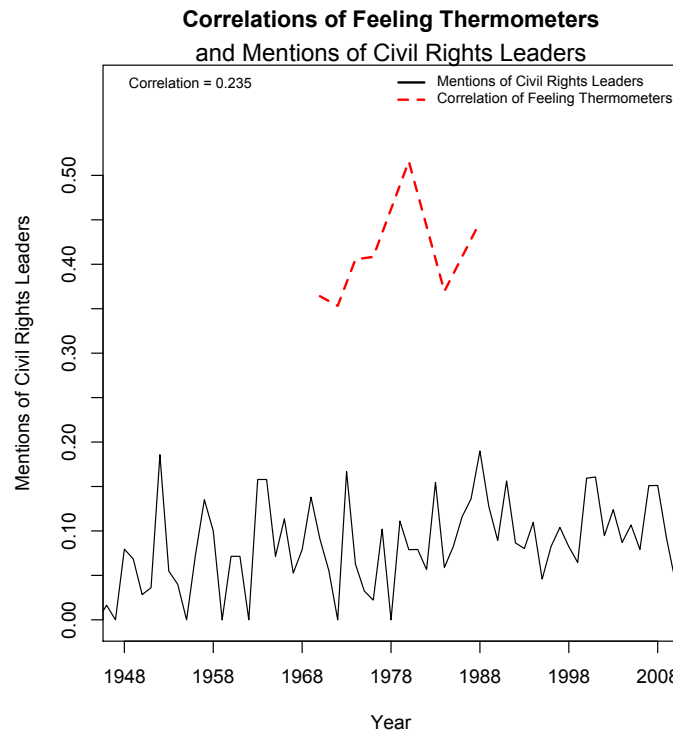
Figure 5: Correlations of Liberal and Civil Rights Leaders Feeling Thermometers

Civil Rights Leaders   Civil rights leaders were prominent players on the stage of American politics for perhaps a decade, 1962–1972. With the success of the civil rights agenda and the assassination of Marin Luther King, the most prominent exemplar, they left the stage almost as quickly as they came. Consequently I have a very limited span of evidence of their centrality. That centrality is very very high for the brief period for which I have data, but shows no particular trend. (See Figure 5.) Probably that is very largely due to missing data for the crucial period 1955 (the Montgomery bus boycott) to 1968. When I have no data is when all the action occurred.

I am left with an anomaly: civil rights leaders seemed to have left a powerful imprint—indeed the most powerful of all groups and symbols—without even figuring largely in the framing of liberalism.

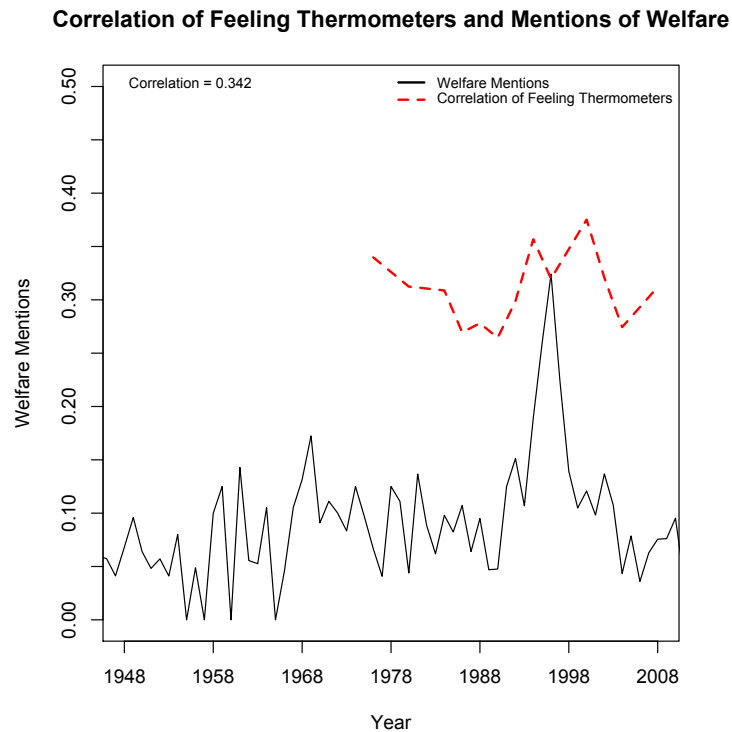**Correlation of Feeling Thermometers and Mentions of Welfare**

Figure 6: Mentions of Welfare and Correlations of Liberal and Welfare Feeling Thermometers

People on Welfare   The ideological wars of the 1950s through 1980s were often fought over the hot button word "welfare." Conservatives attacked those who did not work and drew government checks and liberals defended them, if not very effectively. And so "welfare" became part of the meaning of liberalism. Like labor unions, there is no apparent trend toward growth of welfare as a component symbol of liberalism. It just hangs in there. In the time that it was clearly on the agenda, when conservative Republicans in the House and the liberal Bill Clinton were both trying to eliminate "welfare as we know it," (but for very different motives) there is a suggestive relationship between a spike in media attention in 1996 and a smaller infusion of welfare content into the meaning of liberalism. (See Figure 6.)[9]

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[9]Conservatives, in a curious shift of ideology, changed the focus of their attacks in 2012. Always before they have focused on work and the work ethic as the defining distinction between good and evil. Beginning with Mitt Romney's famous 47% remark in 2012, they have turned increasingly to attacking "takers," by which they now mean *workers* who pay no taxes or retirees who have worked for a lifetime who are now "taking" health and retirement benefits. This must cause some consternation for those who have left welfare for work only to discover than in their virtuous new

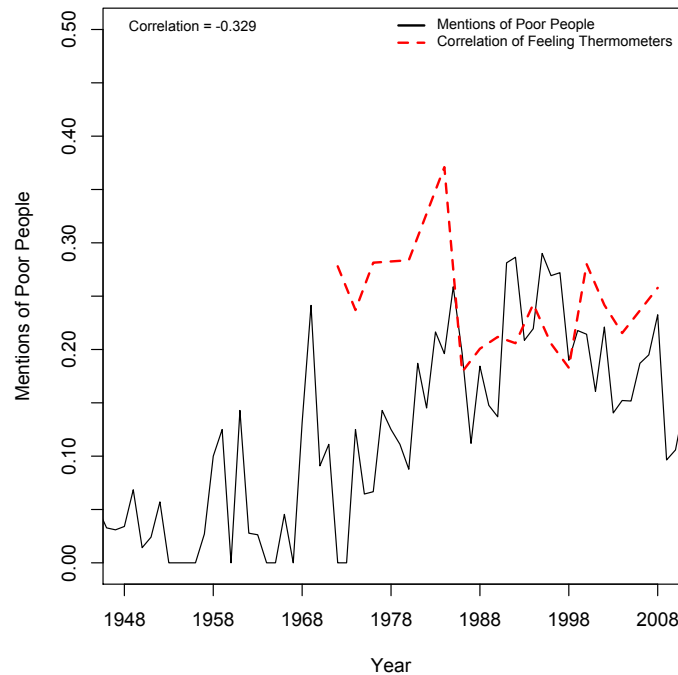**Correlation of Feeling Thermometers and Mentions of Poor People**

Figure 7: Poor People and Correlations of Liberal and Poor People Feeling Thermometers

Poor People   It would be tempting to treat poor people as just the same category as people on welfare. That temptation needs to be avoided because there are vast differences between public opinion on the despised "welfare" and the generosity shown when American are asked to evaluate programs of assistance to people who are struggling to make ends meet. Despising "welfare" does not imply harsh attitudes toward poor people (although Gilens (2000) suggests that poor people of color fare distinctly less well). So treatment of the poor is a fairly standard component of the image of liberals. In the brief period for which I have data on it, it does not appear to have substantially changed. There is an intriguing increase in the mention of the poor along with liberal (ses Figure 9.) centered curiously around the time that both liberals and conservatives were advocating welfare reform. But there is no apparent connection between media mentions and the survey image of liberals.

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identity they are now called "takers."

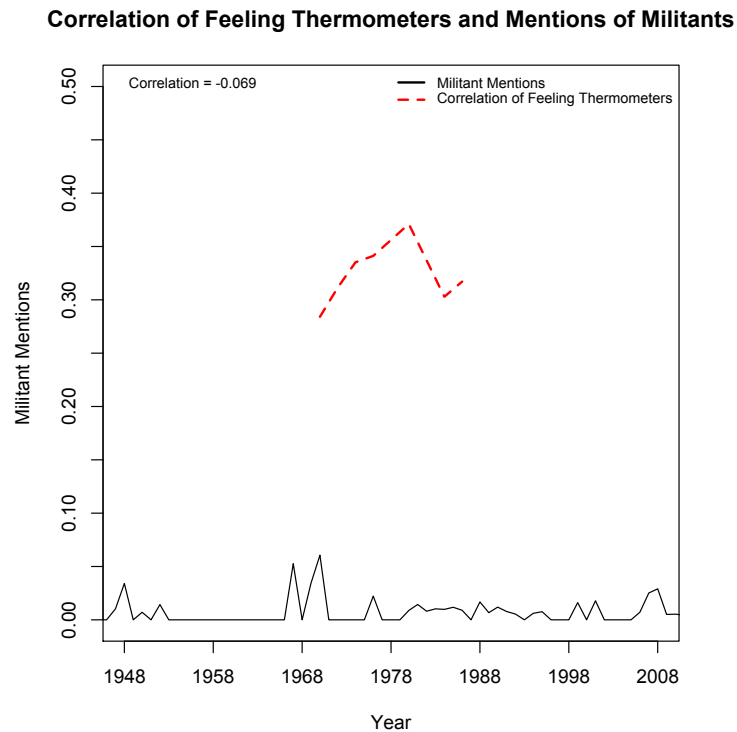**Correlation of Feeling Thermometers and Mentions of Militants**

Figure 8: Mentions of Militants and Correlations of Liberal and Militant Feeling Thermometers

Black Militants Like civil rights leaders, black militants had largely come and gone before they became an object of respondent appraisal in the ANES. So it is hard to know what to make of a relative handful of people who once made a lot of noise and got lots of attention—then evaluated many years later when no longer around. One fact is inescapable. Every symbol, every group, that has a strong connection with race is very highly associated with images of liberalism, even a decade or more after leaving the spotlight. (See Figure 10.) The evidence for the racialization of the image of liberalism is now quite compelling.

Is this a media framing story? Well one can see framing rising in the late 1960s and early 1970s, followed by a rise in the feeling thermometer correlations a decade later. But it takes a bit of imagination to see it. And if I stick by hard standards of evidence, it isn't there.

0.5.1 Statistical Model

In order to test my theory, I use an error correction model. This is best because the behavior of my dependent variables, *the Correlations of Liberal and Group Feeling Thermometers*, can be assumed to be related to the independent variable in the long run, and the short run changes in the correlations can be assumed to respond to deviations from the long run equilibrium (Hamilton 1994; De Boef and Keele 2008).

$$\Delta y_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 y_{t-1} + \beta_2 x_t + \beta_3 \Delta x_t + e \tag{1}$$

Equation 1 shows the regression formula used with *y* being equal to *the Correlations of Liberal and Group Feeling Thermometers* and *x* being the *Proportion of Articles Mentioning each Group*. It calculates the change in correlations at time *t* as a function of lagged correlations, the *Proportion of Articles Mentioning each Group* at time *t*, the change in the proportions at time *t*, and the intercept.

0.5.1.1 Framing or Something Else?

In an effort to again ask whether or not one can understand changing symbolic associations to be a response to framing, I run further statistical models on my data. These models allow me to tell more of the causal story by providing more detailed measures of the relationship between the changing levels of symbolic associations and the changing levels of stories framing those connections. The relationship begins to become clearer with the help of Table 2[10] which reports the results from single equation error correction models between the dependent variable, the thermometer correlations, and the independent variable, the counts. The results were calculated by the statistical model mentioned earlier with the coefficient on the Change in Group Mentions being equivalent to β_3 and the error correction coefficient being calculated as $\frac{\beta_2}{\beta_1}$

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[10]While some may be concerned of the causal relationship between the independent and dependent variables given the high frequencies of the term "conservative" in "liberal" articles (shown in Figure 1), I believe that this is an unnecessary concern. Table 3 (found in Appendix A) shows results from single equation error correction models between the thermometer correlations and the counts of articles that mention the term "liberal" and exclude the term "conservative." The corresponding findings are equivalent to those presented here.

Table 2: Explaining Change in the Correlations of Liberal and Group Feeling Thermometers

Change in Group Mentions	Feeling Thermometer Correlations with "Liberals"					
	Blacks	Unions	Civil Rights Leaders	Welfare	Poor People	Militants
Blacks	0.135 (0.399)	–	–	–	–	–
Unions	–	0.047 (0.794)	–	–	–	–
Civil Rights Leaders	–	–	0.959 (0.078)	–	–	–
Welfare	–	–	–	-0.081 (0.849)	–	–
Poor People	–	–	–	–	0.150 (0.339)	–
Militants	–	–	–	–	–	-0.010 (0.941)
Error Correction	-0.115 (0.000)	-0.269 (0.068)	-1.274 (0.113)	-0.309 (0.065)	-0.338 (0.000)	-0.589 (0.228)
N	20	18	5	8	14	6
Adjusted R^2	0.57	0.07	0.96	0.44	0.71	0.62

P Values in parentheses

The results are clear. For five of the six models, I observe either a statistically significant coefficient for the short-run effect or a statistically significant coefficient for the long-term multiplier. This is even more surprising given the small N's and limited degrees of freedom for three out of the six series.

Race The relationship for blacks has some of the most interesting results. The first parameter estimate shows that a Change in Mentions of Blacks has a positive but not statistically significant, at $p \leq 0.05$, effect on the Change in the Correlations of Liberal and Black Feeling Thermometers. This means that the model does not provide support that there is short-run flow of the Granger type. However, the Error Correction coefficient is correctly signed and statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$. Substantively, this means that there is evidence to believe the Correlations of Liberal and Black Feeling Thermometers have an equilibrium with long-run Blacks Mentions which is corrected when one or the other strays from target levels. This finding provides support for the

hypothesis that shifts in group affects are strongly influenced by how the media treats them.
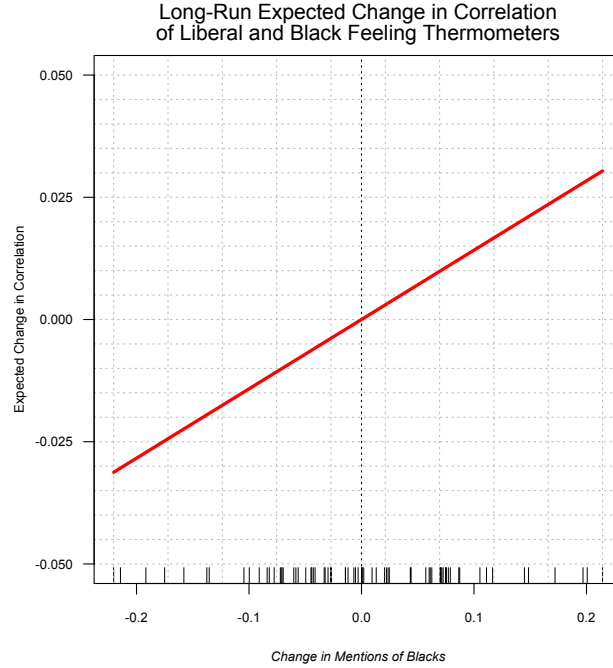

Figure 9: Expected Change in the Correlations of Liberal and Black Feeling Thermometers

A visual representation of this relationship can be seen in Figure 9 which shows the long-run effects of a Change in Black Mentions on the Correlations of Liberal and Black Feeling Thermometers. The figure shows that, while there is no immediate effect of a Change in Mentions of Blacks on the Correlations of Liberal and Black Feeling Thermometers, there is a long-term effect that occurs beginning at $t-1$. While the expected changes in correlation may appear to be small given their range from -0.0275 to 0.0275, they show that both an increase and decrease in black mentions has the ability to change the Correlation of Liberal and Black Feeling Thermometers by 0.0275 or 2.75%. Given that the correlations themselves range between 0.15 and 0.40 this can be seen as a substantial and meaningful effect.

Labor Unions   The relationship for labor unions appears to be similar to, but more subtle than, the relationship for blacks. The first parameter estimate shows that a Change in Mentions of Unions has a positive but not statistically significant, at $p \leq 0.10$, effect on the Change in the Correlations

of Liberal and Union Feeling Thermometers. This means that the model does not provide support that there is short-run flow of the Granger type. However, the Error Correction coefficient is correctly signed and statistically significant at p ≤ 0.10. This means that there is evidence to believe the Correlations of Liberal and Union Feeling Thermometers have an equilibrium with long-run Mentions of Labor Unions which is corrected when one or the other strays from target levels.
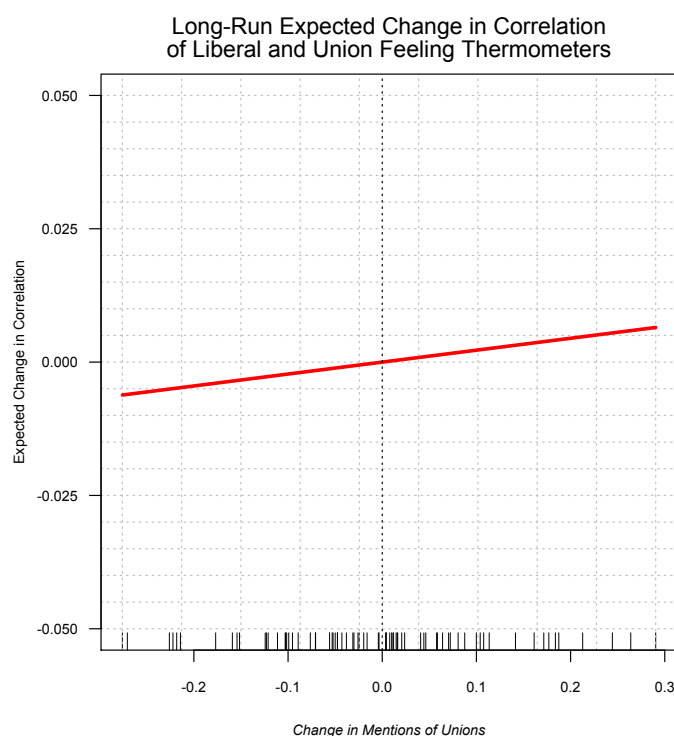

Figure 10: Expected Change in the Correlations of Liberal and Union Feeling Thermometers

Figure 10 shows the long-run effects of a Change in Mentions of Labor Unions on the Correlations of Liberal and Union Feeling Thermometers. The figure shows that, while there is no immediate effect of a Change in Mentions of Unions on the Correlations of Liberal and Union Feeling Thermometers, there is a long-term effect that occurs beginning at $t - 1$. While the expected changes are quite small, ranging from about -0.006 to 0.006, they are present and provide support for the hypothesis that shifts in group affects are strongly influenced by how the media

treats them.

Civil Rights Leaders Out of all of the modeled relationships, the relationship for civil rights leaders is unique because it is the only one that shows a short-run, immediate effect on the dependent variable. The first parameter estimate shows that a Change in Mentions of Civil Rights Leaders has a positive and statistically significant, at $p \leq 0.10$, effect on the Change in the Correlations of Liberal and Civil Rights Leaders Feeling Thermometers. This is a surprising and especially meaningful result given its finding in an N of only 5, and it provides support for the hypothesis that shifts in group affects are strongly influenced by how the media treats them. Unlike the previous two models, the Error Correction coefficient is not statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$.
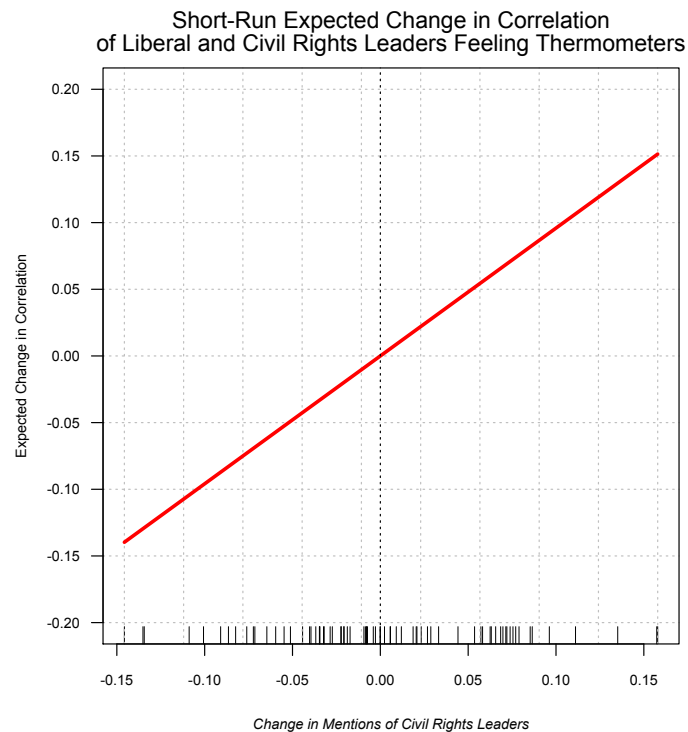

Figure 11: Expected Change in the Correlations of Liberal and Civil Rights Leaders

A visual representation of this relationship can be seen in Figure 11 which shows the short-run effects of a Change in Mentions of Civil Rights Leaders on the Correlations of Liberal and Civil Rights Leaders Feeling Thermometers. The figure shows that there is an immediate effect

of 0.959 on the Correlations of Liberal and Civil Rights Leaders Thermometer for a 1 unit change in Mentions of Civil Rights Leaders. While this may appear to be a huge effect it is actually reasonable since a Change in Mentions of Civil Rights Leaders only ranges from -0.15 to 0.15. This means that a 0.15 increase or decrease in Mentions of Civil Rights Leaders has the power to immediately change the Correlations of Liberal and Civil Rights Leaders Feeling Thermometers by about 0.14 or 14%.

People on Welfare   The relationship for welfare appears to be similar to the relationship for labor unions in that it is extremely subtle. The first parameter estimate shows that a Change in Mentions of Welfare has a negative but not statistically significant, at $p \leq 0.10$, effect on the Change in the Correlations of Liberal and Union Feeling Thermometers. This means that the model does not provide support that there is short-run flow of the Granger type. However, the Error Correction coefficient is correctly signed and statistically significant at $p \leq 0.10$. This means that there is evidence to believe the Correlations of Liberal and Welfare Feeling Thermometers have an equilibrium with long-run Mentions of People on Welfare which is corrected when one or the other strays from target levels.
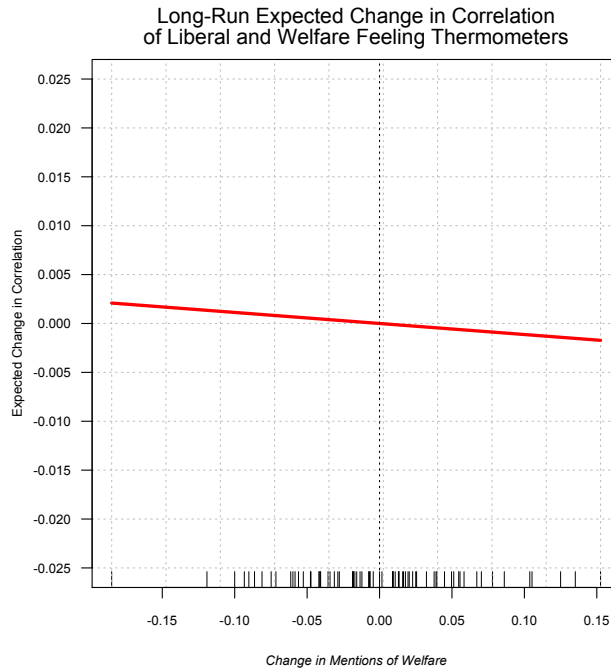
Figure 12: Expected Change in the Correlations of Liberal and Welfare Feeling Thermometers

Figure 12 shows that, while there is no immediate effect of a Change in Mentions of People on Welfare on the Correlations of Liberal and Welfare Feeling Thermometers, there is a long-term effect that occurs beginning at $t-1$. While the expected changes are quite small, ranging from about -0.002 to 0.002, they are present and provide support for the hypothesis that shifts in group affects are strongly influenced by how the media treats them.

Poor People   The relationship for poor people appears to be both strong and positive, at least in the long-term. The first parameter estimate shows that a Change in Mentions of Poor People has a positive but not statistically significant, at $p \leq 0.10$, effect on the Change in the Correlations of Liberal and Poor People Feeling Thermometers. However, the Error Correction coefficient is correctly signed and statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$. This means that there is evidence to believe the Correlations of Liberal and Poor People Feeling Thermometers have an equilibrium with long-run Mentions of Poor People which is corrected when one or the other strays from target levels. Figure 13 shows that there is a long-term effect of a Change in Mentions of Poor People

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on the Correlations of Liberal and Poor People Feeling Thermometers that occurs beginning at $t-1$. The expected changes range from about -0.045 to 0.045 and are associated with a long-term positive relationship between the two variables. The figure shows that a 0.15 increase or decrease in the Mentions of Poor People has the power to Change the Correlations of Liberal and Poor People Feeling Thermometers by about 0.035 or 3.5%. This is a sizable and meaningful effect given that the correlations range from 0.15 to 0.40.
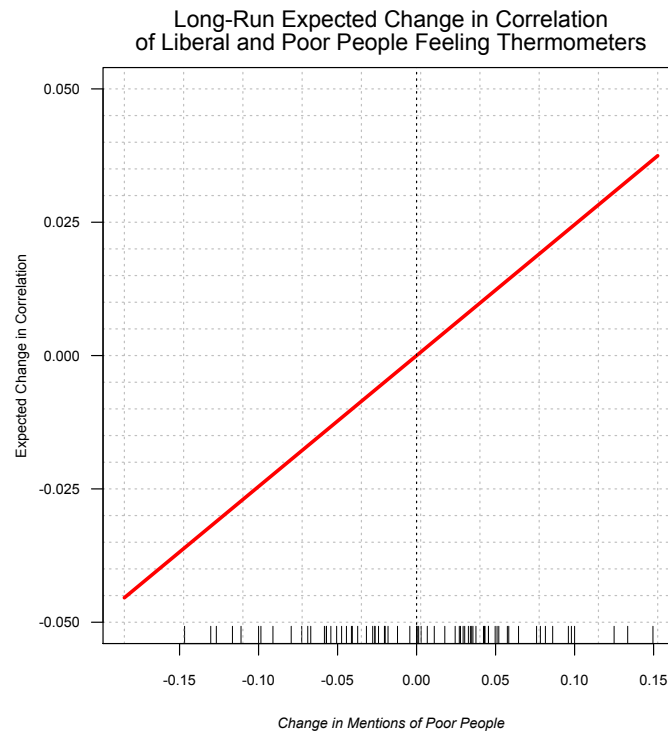
Figure 13: Expected Change in the Correlations of Liberal and Poor People Feeling Thermometers

Black Militants The model shows no relationship between Mentions of Black Militants and the Correlations of Liberal and Militant Feeling Thermometers. This is also evident in Figure 14 which shows a virtually flat line of effects. Both of these findings, along with the insignificant correlations, give us reason to believe that black militant symbols do not affect the Correlations of Liberal and Militant Feeling Thermometers.
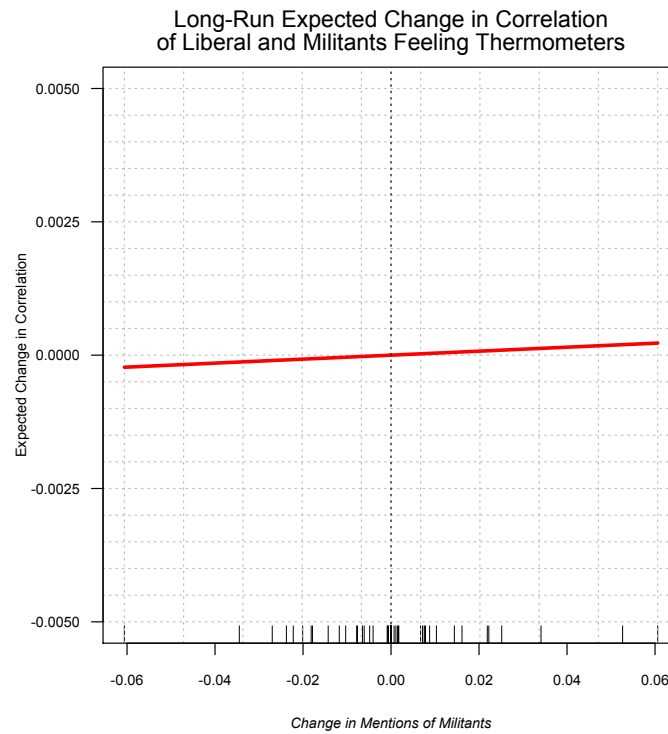
Figure 14: Expected Change in the Correlations of Liberal and Militant Feeling Thermometers

0.6   Conclusion

Is this a media framing story? Further analysis, additional data, and more advanced tools would be necessary in order to focus more specifically on frames rather than counts, but the preliminary results show support for the hypothesis. While simply looking at the correlations between "liberal" mentions and the feeling thermometers of certain groups produces an unclear result, the results from the error correction models show that mere mentions of the term "liberal" with specific groups has long and/or short term effects on the feeling thermometers of those groups. This means that individuals are connecting certain groups to their ideas of "liberal" by seeing the two paired together in a story. It will be interesting, in the future, to see how the tones and frames of the articles affect the relationships formed between "liberal" and these groups.

APPENDIX

.1 Sample Article

U.S. HEALTH CARE FAULTED IN SENATE

January 13, 1987

Testifying before a Senate Committee today, Joseph A. Califano Jr. called health care in this country "a pothole system because it damages our people and shatters their lives." "It is unprecedented in our history that as unemployment goes down, fewer people than ever are covered by insurance," said Mr. Califano, who was Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare under President Carter. Americans have increasingly turned to jobs in service-related fields, he told the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, and such jobs often come with "no health care or inadequate health care." Problems for 50 Million People "The number of uninsured jumped 30 percent between 1980 and 1985," he said. "When those with inadequate insurance are added, more than 50 million Americans each year face access problems." The hearing, called by Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, set the stage for a debate over efforts to provide insurance protection from catastrophic health care costs for the elderly and disabled. Mr. Kennedy, the new chairman of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, called the hearings on the state of American health care as the Democrats began seizing the initiative on issues such as health care, labor and education. Push for Liberal Agenda The hearings are central to Mr. Kennedy's renewed liberal manifesto, a call for fresh programs to help the poor and banish the conservative mood that he criticizes as "survival of the fittest." There is a tendency to label those without enough insurance to cover hospital costs as "loafers who are going along for the ride," Mr. Kennedy said. "They are not. They are hard-working, compassionate people who believe in the American dream and who are living in fear" about paying for sudden illnesses. The key witness, Mr. Califano, echoed Mr.

Kennedy's call for compassion. "No just society can deny the right of its citizens to the health care they need," he said. "We are the only industrial society that does." Mr. Califano said that despite the fact that the United States had the most expensive health care system in the world - costing $460 billion in 1986, almost 11 percent of the Gross National Product - there had been a dramatic jump in the number of younger Americans who were uninsured. Since 1979, he said, the number of people under 65 years of age without full-time health insurance has grown at a rate of more than a million a year, from 29 million to 37 million. Three-quarters of these 37 million people are employed or dependent on an employed person, he said, but typically they work for low wages in small businesses with fewer than 25 employees. Almost half of the uninsured are married and over 30 years old, he said, and about 60 percent are employed full time. Robert M. Ball, a former commissioner of Social Security who is now at the Center for the Study of Social Policy in Washington, seconded Mr. Califano's concerns and voiced concern about what would happen if there was another recession. Holes in 'Safety Net' He said the "safety net" of the Medicaid health program for the poor was "full of holes." "It is available to less than 50 percent of the population living below the rock-bottom level of officially defined poverty," he said, defining this as $10,989 for a family of four in 1985. Talking about the worsening gaps in protecting the elderly, Mr. Ball said: "Medicare is the dimming of bright hopes. Medicare now pays only a little more than 40 percent of the total health care costs of the elderly. But the elderly are paying as much today as they were before Medicare first came in." The costs for everyone are still rising. In 1986, Mr. Califano told the Senators, the increase in the price of medical care was six times that of the increase in the overall Consumer Price Index, which measures the price of goods and services in the economy. Mr. Califano cited a study by Prof. Uwe Reinhart of Princeton University that asserts that the United States had a higher rate of increase in health care expenditures in the last five years than at any time in the history of the nation. "The preliminary projections for 1987 are ominous," Mr. Califano, who now practices law in Washington and heads the health care committee of the Chrysler Corporation, said in his prepared statement. "At Chrysler, where we spent $58 million less than planned for health care in 1984, price inflation presents a risk of our spending

up to $31 million more than planned in 1987." Mr. Kennedy introduced a bill today that would provide catastrophic health insurance for the elderly and disabled. He said the bill "embodies" the plan that Dr. Otis R. Bowen, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, announced last Nov. 19. Debate Over Bowen Plan There has been fierce debate within the Reagan Administration over the Bowen plan, with many conservatives saying it would expand the role of government at the expense of the private insurance industry, but Mr. Kennedy regards it as an excellent approach. President Reagan is expected to offer some sort of proposal on catastrophic health insurance in his State of the Union Message on Jan. 27, but it is likely to emphasize the role of private industry more and government less than Dr. Bowen's plan. Asking that the "unfair gaps" in insurance coverage be rectified, several witnesses offered horror stories about Medicare and Medicaid, the health programs for the elderly and the poor. "Pregnant women have been turned away after being unable to pay a $3,500 deposit and fearing the debt that would be incurred in a family of four and a combined income of $5,800 per year," said David Smith, the medical director of the Brownsville Community Health Center in Texas. Death of an Infant Dr. Smith told the story of one woman who turned to a midwife for a complicated delivery rather than paying the $2,500 deposit at the hospital for "prenatal management," and went on to deliver a one and a half pound baby. "The child was transferred via cab in a plastic bag to the emergency room," Dr. Smith said in his statement to the committee. "The child died three days later." "A $3,500 deposit is just that, a deposit," Dr. Smith concluded. "I'm sorry that I did not learn the price of human life when I went to medical school. I still have not." Mr. Califano suggested that 400,000 to 500,000 hospital beds, representing half of those in the country, should be eliminated in the next decade, as a way of streamlining costs. He said that hospitals simply fold in the cost of bad debts or charity care into private costs and pass it along to private patients. "The total cost of uncompensated care is more than $8 billion, a large portion of which represents additional costs to companies that provide health benefits to their employees," he said.

.2   Results Controlling for Conservative Mentions

Table 3: Thermometers Using "Liberal" Articles That Do Not Mention "Conservative"

	Feeling Thermometer Correlations with "Liberals"					
Change in Group Mentions	Blacks	Unions	Civil Rights Leaders	Welfare	Poor People	Militants
Blacks	0.135 (0.399)	–	–	–	–	–
Unions	–	0.047 (0.794)	–	–	–	–
Civil Rights Leaders	–	–	0.959 (0.078)	–	–	–
Welfare	–	–	–	-0.081 (0.849)	–	–
Poor People	–	–	–	–	0.150 (0.339)	–
Militants	–	–	–	–	–	-0.010 (0.941)
Error Correction	-0.115 (0.000)	-0.269 (0.068)	-1.274 (0.113)	-0.309 (0.065)	-0.338 (0.000)	-0.589 (0.228)
N	20	18	5	8	14	6
Adjusted R^2	0.57	0.07	0.96	0.44	0.71	0.62

(Row group label: Liberal Articles)

P Values in parentheses

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