

Dissecting how ideological orientations predict attributions and policy attitudes toward unhoused individuals

Jonathan Sundby¹ | Joseph Wagoner¹ | Jonathan Morgan²

¹Department of Psychology, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA

²The Center for Mind and Culture, Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Correspondence

Jonathan Sundby, Department of Psychology, University of Colorado, 1420 Austin Bluffs Pkwy, Colorado Springs, CO, 80918.

Email: jsundby@uccs.edu

Abstract

Across two cross-sectional samples (N -total = 612), we examined how people's ideological orientations related to their attributions about the causes of homelessness, and how these attributions relate to policy preferences. In both studies, we assessed eight ideological orientations, four domains of attributions about homelessness, and three domains of policy attitudes. In Study 1, we measured attributions using self-report scales, whereas in Study 2 we measured qualitative answers that were coded using a large language model (ChatGPT 4o). Across both studies, stronger right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and protestant work ethic (PWE) related to endorsing more individualistic attributions for homelessness, while stronger conservatism related to less endorsement of structural attributions. Lower endorsement of structural attributions related to less support for economic policies to address homelessness in society. Theoretical and practical applications of these findings are discussed, along with limitations and future directions.

KEYWORDS

attributions, conservatism, homelessness, ideology

Public Significance Statement

This research found that people who hold ideological beliefs around authority and tradition, as well as those who view hard work as a moral virtue, are more likely to attribute the causes of homelessness to individual characteristics. Additionally, people who blamed structural issues for homelessness were much more likely to support governmental policies aimed at increasing access to resources for people experiencing homelessness.

INTRODUCTION

The National Alliance to End Homelessness (2022) estimated that on any given night in the United States, nearly half a million people experience homelessness, nearly 40% of whom are unsheltered or not living in a temporary shelter. People who do not have housing are much more likely to contract communicable diseases, suffer from mental illness, or be victims of violence. Government agencies estimate that anywhere between 5000 and 50,000 Americans die in a state of homelessness each year, and the average life expectancy is 12 years less for individuals experiencing it (National Health Care for the Homeless Council, 2020).

The severe consequences of homelessness have spurred various responses from local and national governments. Some municipalities have used a “Housing First” model, in which residents are given housing without preconditions before being provided necessary services (Donovan & Shinseki, 2013). Other areas of the country have experimented with a variety of other responses, including increasing access to mental health services (Har & Beam, 2022), implementing employment schemes (DelasBour, 2022), and even criminalizing homelessness by making it illegal to sleep in public places (Watt, 2022).

This diversity of policy responses to the rise in homelessness is likely because the public have a myriad of ways in which they explain why homelessness occurs. However, it is unclear what differences produce these various explanations of homelessness and whether these different explanations of why homelessness occurs affect policy preferences. We conducted two studies in the U.S. examining how people’s ideological orientations relate to their attributions of homelessness and how these attributions relate to people’s support for different policy attitudes that aim to redress the issue.

IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS AND PREJUDICE TOWARD UNHOUSED PEOPLE

“Ideology” is a term that has worn several definitions by academics since the sociologist Max Weber introduced the concept over a century ago (Jost et al., 2009). Many political scientists and psychologists define an “Ideology” as a set of cognitions, beliefs, and attitudes that people hold about the proper order of society and how it can be achieved (Jost et al., 2009). Scholars often assess ideology as an individual difference, which we term “*ideological orientations*” through this

article. Although there are various conceptualizations of ideological orientations, it is unclear which of them is driving prejudice toward unhoused people.

Ideological orientations also reflect different motivations that can affect people's social cognitive tendencies; specifically, ideological orientations can reflect distinct motivations that affect people's explanations and perceptions of the world, which can fulfill their epistemic, existential, and relational motives (Jost et al., 2003). Ideological orientations are thus important vessels that help to organize people's beliefs in such a way that they can address people's deeper needs. If people's ideological orientations reflect different motivations, they can affect people's attributions of homelessness and their attitudes toward policies that address it.

Dual process model of prejudice

One model of ideological orientations that showcases different motivations and speaks to prejudice against unhoused people is the Dual Process Model (DPM) of Prejudice (Duckitt et al., 2002). The DPM posits that a combination of societal-level events and individual differences produce two distinct ideological orientations: right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO). RWA encompasses the value of tradition, submission to authority, and support for aggression toward people who deviate from traditional norms (Duckitt et al., 2010). Researchers have shown stronger RWA predicts prejudice toward unhoused people due to perceiving them as dangerous (Duckitt & Sibley, 2007) and lacking warmth (Wagoner et al., 2023).

Alternatively, social dominance orientation (SDO) is defined as an individual's "general desire to establish and maintain hierarchically structured intergroup relations" (Sidanius et al., 2017, p. 152). SDO is characterized by a person's preference for hierarchical systems and maintaining their status quo (Sidanius et al., 2004). Researchers have found that stronger SDO predicts prejudice toward unhoused people due to perceiving them as low status (Duckitt & Sibley, 2007) and having low competence (Wagoner et al., 2023). The DPM proposes that RWA is motivated by a need for security, whereas SDO is motivated by a need to maintain hierarchical structures.

System justifying ideologies

While the DPM speaks to certain predictors of prejudice toward unhoused people, other psychological theories have focused on people's motivation to uphold and justify their social system as explanations of prejudice. *System justification theory* (SJT) proposes that humans are motivated to justify the fairness of their current economic, political, and social system (Jost & Hunyady, 2003). SJT argues that people justify their current economic system to mitigate the discomfort they experience when witnessing inequality. As homelessness is a visible sign of inequality in a society, it can be inferred that system justification would influence people's attitudes toward unhoused people. Goudarzi et al. (2020) obtained evidence to support the proposition that people with stronger economic-system justification exhibit less empathy toward unhoused individuals.

Jost and Hunyady (2005) also argued that other psychological constructs, including *belief in a just world* (BJW), *protestant work ethic* (PWE), and *neoliberalism*, are system-justifying ideologies. The BJW hypothesis postulates that people are motivated to believe that people get what they deserve in life, where good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people (Furnham, 2003). Smith and Stathi (2021) found that stronger BJW predicted prejudice toward unhoused individuals beyond SDO. Since people with stronger BJW view other's current

situation as reflecting their past actions, harboring prejudice toward unhoused individuals could allow people to uphold their system and view the world as fair.

PWE is a belief system centered around valuing and moralizing hard work. Research shows that stronger PWE relates to negative attitudes toward welfare benefits (Furnham, 1982) and opposition to community housing shelters (Levy et al., 2006). Since stronger PWE relates to derogating people who are stereotyped as having a poor work ethic, it follows that stronger PWE could relate to justifying a system due to placing blame on the person.

Neoliberalism relates to the notion that people value meritocracy, individualism, and the free market (Bay-Cheng et al., 2015). Neoliberalism began as an economic theory in the mid-20th century, emphasizing the benefits of competition and entrepreneurship, but later developed into a cultural and political ideology that heralded free market principles as the basis for an ideal society (Bettache & Chiu, 2019). Scholars have shown that neoliberalism relates to prejudice toward people experiencing unemployment (Groß, 2016). If people with stronger neoliberalism believe that capitalism is morally justified, it can follow that they would justify the system and blame people who are not thriving within it.

Religiosity and conservatism

We further speculate that people's religiosity could relate to their attitudes about homelessness. Religiosity often relates to how people internalize a religious belief system and exhibit attachment to a religious identity, community, or higher power. Jost et al. (2014) postulated that belief in God can act as a system-justifying belief, which would lead one to speculate that religiosity relates to prejudice toward unhoused individuals. In support of this proposition, Dhanani (2010) found that religious participants were more likely to report that people should be afraid of unhoused people, anti-homelessness programs cost taxpayers too much, and panhandling was a problem in their local area. However, some researchers have indicated the process is more complex. Malka et al. (2012) found that stronger religiosity predicted negative attitudes toward welfare policies through stronger Republican identity but positive attitudes toward these policies through empathy. Lee et al. (1990) further found that religiosity did not predict attitudes toward people experiencing homelessness beyond political conservatism.

All the ideological orientations mentioned positively correlate with conservatism, often defined by a resistance to social change and an acceptance of inequality (Jost et al., 2009). Conservatism in the U.S. is also defined by adherence to certain policy stances, cultural convictions, and party affiliation (Everett, 2013). Pellegrini et al. (1997) found that stronger conservatism related to less support for government-funded programs to help unhoused individuals.

Shades of ideologies

Although numerous studies have investigated how these ideological orientations predict people's attitudes toward unhoused individuals and related policies, few researchers have accounted for how these variables operate while controlling for each other. Instead, researchers often use one ideological variable (e.g., SDO) for proxy variables of other constructs (e.g., SJT; Oldmeadow & Fiske, 2007). Many theorists also view the aforementioned ideological orientations as dimensions or proxies of conservatism (Jost & Hunyady, 2003). However, if these ideological orientations reflect different motivations that all result in a similar outcome of being attracted to political

conservatism, substituting one ideological orientation makes it unclear which of these motivations is the driving factor in predicting attitudes toward unhoused individuals.

Because people's ideological orientations are tied to their belief about the proper order of society and how it can be achieved, we speculate that ideological orientations would affect people's attributions for social issues, such as why people are unhoused.

ATTRIBUTIONS AS A LINK BETWEEN IDEOLOGY AND PREJUDICE

Across all domains of life, people make attributions about why a behavior or situation occurred. Heider (1958) originally noted that people use *internal attributions* when they use others' internal characteristics or dispositions as explanations, while people use *external attributions* when using situational factors as explanations. Weiner (1985) expanded attribution theory by accounting for factors of *stability* and *controllability*. Stability relates to the temporal nature of the attribution, whereas controllability relates to whether the person's behavior was under their own control.

Some scholars have noted how people's perception of controllability is tightly linked to their internal attributions (e.g., Genschow & Lange, 2022). However, Weiner (1985, 2011) has noted that the locus of causality and controllability work together to create four distinct domains of attributions. Specifically, people attribute other's behavior to internal or external factors while simultaneously evaluating whether this internal or external factor had agency and the ability to control outcomes. Weiner (1985, 2011) has further noted that controllability, not only locus of causality, is pivotal to assigning responsibility to others.

This distinction between controllability and causality in interpersonal attributions has been used to investigate people's treatment of marginalized groups. Weiner and colleagues (1988) found that people attributed physical conditions (e.g., Alzheimer's disease) to be less controllable than mental health or substances issues, which impacted their willingness to help. Ruybal and Siegel (2021) similarly found that people are less willing to help women experiencing postpartum depression when viewing the condition as controllable (vs. uncontrollable). A meta-analysis further found that people's controllability attributions predicted helping behavior toward others through pity but aggressive behavior through more anger (Rudolph et al., 2004). These findings suggest that people's attributions of causality and controllability are distinct dimensions, and that people's attributions impact how they respond to others under distress or in need of assistance.

Attributions and prejudice toward homelessness

Researchers have applied attribution frameworks to understanding people's views of homelessness. Pellegrini et al. (1997) found that U.S. participants conceptualized the causes of homelessness as ranging from internal causes (e.g., character flaw) to external causes (e.g., unfortunate life circumstances), with Republicans endorsing more internal attributions than external attributions. Some scholars have similarly examined attributions on a single continuum ranging from external to internal when focusing on whether people blame individuals or society for homelessness (e.g., Lee et al., 1992; Markowitz & Syverson, 2021).

Other scholars have moved beyond this traditional external-internal approach to attributions to provide more nuance to understanding how people view the causes of homelessness. For instance, Ljubotina et al. (2022) found that Croatians saw the causes of homelessness among five dimensions (personal failure, life circumstances, structural factors, family factors, and fate).

Comparatively, Vázquez et al. (2017) found that Spaniards experiencing homelessness viewed the causes of homelessness among the dimensions of internal factors, structural factors, and fate.

Of particular importance to this article, Tsai and colleagues (2019) found that U.S. participants ascribed various factors to the cause of homelessness, including structural factors (e.g., “shortage of affordable housing”), intrinsic factors (e.g., “laziness on the part of the homeless themselves”), and health factors (e.g., “mental illness”). Tsai et al. (2019) also investigated people’s policy preferences for alleviating homelessness, including punitive policies (e.g., “cutting welfare benefits”), economic policies (e.g., “increasing minimum wage”), and health policies (e.g., “making alcohol and drug treatment programs free”).

Tausen and Fossum (2024) built on these findings to investigate how attributions about the causes of homelessness affected people’s attitudes toward helping and punishing people experiencing homelessness. Using a similar distinction to Tsai et al. (2019), they found that attributions to structural and intrinsic factors were associated with stronger intentions to engage in helping and harming behaviors, respectively. They also found that health attributions were associated with dispositional attributions but unrelated to either type of policy attitude.

Srivastava et al. (2025) similarly found that Californians viewed the causes of homelessness among four factors: discrimination, a lack of ambition, financial issues, and mental illness. Furthermore, their findings showed that people who made external attributions for homelessness (e.g., discrimination or structural factors) had more positive attitudes toward financial assistance and providing mental health resources and had stronger intentions to help unhoused individuals. Comparatively, people who attributed a lack of ambition had negative attitudes toward financial assistance but positive attitudes toward cutting off welfare benefits.

These recent findings suggest a traditional internal-external approach to understanding people’s attributions to homelessness could miss the nuanced beliefs that people harbor about the causes of homelessness.

Attributions, ideologies, and poverty

Researchers have provided mixed evidence on how people’s ideologies impact their attributions. Bobbio and colleagues (2010) found that stronger economic conservatism (but not RWA or SDO) related to more endorsement of internal attributions toward the causes of poverty. Their study also showed that economic conservatism and SDO were negatively related to structural attributions. Zucker and Weiner (1993) also found stronger conservatism related to more endorsement of internal attributions for poverty and less endorsement of structural (external) attributions, which mediated their intentions to help people experiencing poverty. These scholars also found a third factor of attributions, *fate attributions*, which focused on how poverty was due to chance and bad luck.

In a review of the literature on poverty, ideology, and attributions, Weiner et al. (2011) found that conservatives ascribed more personally controllable attributions to poverty, while liberals attributed poverty to social causes, which impacted their emotions of anger and sympathy toward people in poverty, respectively. Osborne & Weiner (2015) conducted a latent profile analysis (LPA) that showed higher conservatism and system-justification related to blaming people for being in poverty, which predicted more anger, less sympathy, and lower helping intentions. Finally, both Tsai et al. (2019) and Srivastava et al. (2025) found that conservatives (vs. liberals) endorsed more internal attributions for homelessness and fewer external attributions for homelessness, which

impacted their policy attitudes. However, of notice, neither study found that people's ideology related to their frequency of mental health attributions.

Although researchers have shown that political ideology can relate differently to internal or external attributions based on the value system being targeted (see Morgan et al., 2010 for ideology attribution effect), it is clear that stronger conservatism will relate to blaming the people, not the system, in the context of homelessness. However, it is unclear which motivation associated with conservatism is driving these attributions and policy attitudes.

THE CURRENT STUDIES

We conducted two preregistered studies to dissect how different ideological orientations predict people's attributions of homelessness and how these attributions relate to people's attitudes toward policy responses. In both studies, we assessed eight ideological orientations (RWA, SDO, SJ, BJW, PWE, neoliberalism, religiosity, and conservatism). We also focused on four domains of attributions across both studies. Like recent scholars (e.g., Tausen & Fossum, 2024; Tsai et al., 2019), we accounted for the three factors of structural, individualistic, and health attributions for homelessness. However, we additionally accounted for "fate" attributions as a fourth domain of attributions. We made this decision based on past findings that have shown fate attributions are distinct from structural or individualistic attributions (e.g., Furnham, 1996; Ljubotina et al., 2022; Vázquez et al., 2017; Weiner et al., 2011). Furthermore, Norenzayan and Lee (2010) found that stronger religiosity and just-world beliefs independently predict more endorsement of fate attributions. Finally, we feel that accounting for fate attributions in addition to the three aforementioned domains of attributions fits with Weiner's (1985, 2011) theorizing that attributions can be dissected into locus of causality and controllability. Specifically, it can be argued that structural attributions fit the external-controllable domain, individualistic attributions fit the internal-controllable domain, health attributions fit the internal-uncontrollable domain, and fate attributions fit the external-uncontrollable attributions.

Finally, both studies assessed people's attitudes toward different policies that address homelessness. Based on Tsai et al.'s (2019) work, we examined three domains of policy attitudes: economic policies, health policies, and punitive policies. The only difference between our two studies is that, in Study 1, participants completed a self-report questionnaire to measure their attributions of homelessness. Comparatively, in Study 2, participants completed a free-response question in which they wrote about what they thought was the main cause of homelessness in the U.S.

Hypotheses

Based on past findings, we hypothesized that most of these ideological orientations (RWA, SDO, system justification, BJW, PWE, neoliberal beliefs, and conservatism) would predict stronger endorsement of individualistic attributions (H1a) and weaker endorsement of structural attributions about homelessness (H1b). Based on BJW's relationship to beliefs to an almost karmic-like system, we also hypothesized that BJW would predict more fate attributions (H1c).

We predicted that after accounting for the aforementioned ideological orientations, stronger religiosity would relate to stronger endorsement of fate and structural attributions but fewer individualistic attributions (H1d). The hypotheses for structural attributions rest on the assumption that stripping religiosity from its correlation with conservative ideologies will result in a factor

TABLE 1 Demographic and sampling information (both studies).

Demographic variables	Study 1 (<i>N</i> = 328)	Study 2 (<i>N</i> = 284)
Age (<i>M</i> and <i>SD</i>)	38.53 (10.60)	40.35 (11.40)
Gender identity		
Male	59.5%	57.7%
Female	39.0%	41.5%
Non-binary gender	1.5%	.7%
Ethnic identity		
East Asian/East Asian American	4.3%	3.5%
South Asian/South Asian American	.6%	1.4%
Black/African American	11.9%	13.4%
Latinx/Hispanic American	5.8%	6.0%
White/European American	74.4%	73.9%
Multiple ethnic identities	1.2%	1.4%
Other ethnic identity	1.8%	.4%
Experienced homelessness		
Yes	18.9%	15.8%
No	81.1%	84.2%
Sampling information		
Location	Amazon's MTurk	Amazon's MTurk
Time frame	September 2022	May 2023
Compensation	1.00 USD	1.00 USD
Median duration	6 min, 43 s	8 min, 35 s

akin to a “quest” religious orientation, which has been shown to promote compassion and tolerance (Batson et al., 2001). The hypothesis for fate attributions is based on past research focusing on this topic (Norenzayan & Lee, 2010).

We also had hypotheses regarding how attributions relate to policy attitudes. We hypothesized that stronger endorsement of individualistic attributions would relate to a greater preference for punitive policies and less support for economic policies (H2a). Comparatively, we hypothesized that stronger endorsement of structural attributions would relate to greater support for economic policies and less support for punitive policies (H2b). We further hypothesized that stronger endorsement of health attributions would relate to stronger support of health policies (H2c).

Finally, we hypothesized that RWA, SDO, system justification, BJW, PWE, neoliberalism, and conservatism would indirectly relate to support for punitive policies through individualistic attributions (H3a). We additionally hypothesized that these ideologies would indirectly relate to support for economic policies through structural attributions (H3b).

See Table 1 for demographics and sampling information for both studies. Both studies were preregistered. See OSF link for preregistrations, material, data, and R code: https://osf.io/tz6k8/?view_only=a0afe129c1264c71816d6194c5dd9608

STUDY 1

Participants

We recruited 345 U.S. residents through Amazon's Mechanical Turk. A sample size of 314 participants was recommended based on a G*Power analysis for a single regression coefficient with the following parameters: Power = .95, $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed), $k = 15$. We sought an extra 10% of the sample ($n = 31$) to account for potential poor-quality data. Per our preregistration, only MTurk users who had completed at least 100 tasks with at least 95% completion rate were eligible to participate. A total of 343 people clicked the survey, with 338 people completing the entire survey.

Procedures and materials

The survey was advertised as "Perceptions of Community Issues" on MTurk. People interested in taking this survey clicked on the Qualtrics-hosted link before being directed to a consent form. After consenting, participants completed the scales measuring their ideological orientations in a counterbalanced fashion. Specifically, participants completed (1) the six-item Very Short Authoritarianism scale to measure RWA (e.g., "The facts on crime show we have to crack down harder on troublemakers if we are going to preserve law and order"; Bizumic & Duckitt, 2018), the eight-item SDO_{7(S)} scale (e.g., "It is unjust to try to make groups equal"; Ho et al., 2015), the five-item Centrality of Religiosity Scale (e.g., "How often do you think about religious issues?"; Huber & Huber, 2012), the eight-item system-justification scale (e.g., "In general, I find society to be fair"; Kay & Jost, 2003), and the seven-item Just World Belief scale (e.g., "People usually receive the outcomes that they deserve"; Reich & Wang, 2015).

Participants also completed eight-item abbreviated versions of the Neoliberal Belief Inventory (e.g., "Being competitive is part of human nature"; Bay-Cheng et al., 2015) and Protestant Work Ethic scale (e.g., "People who fail at a job have usually not tried hard enough"; McHoskey, 1994). Participants reported their conservatism on the 12-item Social and Economic Conservatism Scale (SECS), which assess people's attitudes toward various topics (e.g., abortion, welfare benefits, gun ownership; Everett, 2013). All scales, except the CRS and SECS, were answered on a 7-point Likert-scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). The CRS was a 7-point scale but had response anchors unique to each item. The SECS was answered on a slider scale with response anchors between 0 (*very negative*) and 100 (*very positive*).

Participants then reported about their attributions about the causes of homelessness. We assessed four types of attributions, including four-items measuring individualistic attributions (e.g., "laziness on the part of the homeless themselves"), six-items measuring structural attributions (e.g., "an economic system that favors the rich over the poor"), three-items measuring health attributions (e.g., "physical illness and handicaps") and three-items measuring fate attributions (e.g., "unpredictable events"). We adapted the first three domains of attribution from Tsai et al. (2019). Comparatively, we created the items used to represent fate attributions (e.g., "bad luck"). Participants were asked how much each factor contributed to the cause of homelessness on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all*, to 7 = *extremely*).

Participants then reported their attitudes toward various governmental policies addressing homelessness. We assessed three different policy types based on Tsai et al. (2019): six-items assessing support of economic policies (e.g., "building more low-income housing"), four-items assessing support of health policies (e.g., "making alcohol and drug treatment programs free"), and four-

items assessing support of punitive policies (e.g., “cutting welfare benefits”). Participants indicate how effective they thought each policy would be at solving homelessness on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all effective*, 7 = *extremely effective*).

Participants lastly reported their demographics before being debriefed and compensated for their time. See [Supplementary Materials](#) for specific materials used.

RESULTS

Scale construction and data exclusion

First, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the lavaan package (Rosseel et al., 2020) in R (Version 4.1) to see if our ideological orientations were eight separate constructs. We examined the CFA on three fit indices. The comparative fit index (CFI) compares the fit of the observed model to the null model of independence, with values of .95 and .90 being viewed as benchmarks for good and acceptable model fits (Hoyle, 2011). The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) assesses the absolute lack of fit for the observed model and penalizes models with too many degrees of freedom, with values of .06 and .08 being viewed as benchmarks for good and acceptable fits (Hoyle, 2011). The standardized root mean squared-residual (SRMR) assesses fit by comparing the observed and predicted correlation matrixes, with values of .08 and .10 being viewed as benchmarks for good and acceptable (Hoyle, 2011). Results showed that the model with eight ideological orientations had acceptable RMSEA and SRMR but poor CFI, χ^2 ($df = 1,862$) = 5,744.46, $p < .001$, CFI = .809, SRMR = .079, RMSEA = .079, 90% CI for RMSEA [.077, .081]. A poor CFI in this context suggests there were poor item loadings, cross-loadings, or unaccounted for correlations between error variances. We removed seven items that did not load onto their hypothesized factor above .50 to help distinguish these correlated factors. We continued to obtain acceptable RMSEA and SRMR but poor CFI, χ^2 ($df = 1,456$) = 4,403.98, $p < .001$, CFI = .837, SRMR = .075, RMSEA = .079, 90% CI for RMSEA [.077, .082]. Due to acceptable values for two of the three fit indices and for comparison with past literature, we constructed variables that mean-aggregated these ideological orientations but omitted poor loading items.

Per our preregistration, we planned on conducting exploratory factor analyses (EFA) with oblimin rotation on our attribution and policy attitudes rather than a CFA. For each EFA, we retained items that loaded onto one distinct factor above .40 and did not cross-load onto any factors above .30, per Howard (2016). Although we had theorized factor structures for attributions and policy attitudes, we chose to implement an EFA over CFA to allow the items to freely load onto a factor and to have our data analysis more aligned with other researchers who have used EFAs focused on attributions to homelessness (e.g., Furnham, 1996; Srivastava et al., 2025; Tsai et al., 2019). Using an EFA also allows us to integrate factors that have been separately investigated from each other. For instance, while some scholars have emphasized the three factors of structural, intrinsic, and health attributions (e.g., Tsai et al., 2019), other scholars have accounted for fate attributions when examining unhoused individuals (e.g., Furnham, 1996; Ljubotina et al., 2022). Furthermore, some scholars have lumped structural and fate attributions together, while other scholars have lumped individualistic and health attributions together (e.g., Osborne & Weiner, 2015). Overall, due to the inconsistent theorizing about the number of factors underlying attributions toward homelessness, we used an EFA.

The first EFA with oblimin rotation was conducted on the 16-attribution items. Results of the EFA produced four Eigenvalues greater than 1.00, suggesting there were four factors in the data.

TABLE 2 Item loadings and communality scores for exploratory factor analysis on attributions of homelessness (Study 1).

	Loadings				Communality
	1	2	3	4	
Laziness on the part of the homeless themselves	.94	.04	.01	-.07	.86
Irresponsible behavior on the part of the homeless themselves	.79	-.15	.08	.04	.77
An inability to organize the finances on the part of the homeless themselves.	.79	-.03	.04	-.02	.65
A lack of intelligence on the part of the homeless themselves.	.78	-.01	-.01	-.01	.61
Shortage of government aid for poor people	-.03	.85	-.06	.01	.73
Shortage of affordable housing.	.00	.73	.04	.02	.55
An economic system that favors the rich over the poor	-.12	.71	-.10	.07	.62
Failure of society to provide good schools for many people in this country	.05	.71	.06	-.02	.48
Mental illness	-.04	-.04	.92	.01	.84
Drug and alcohol addiction	.12	-.08	.74	.05	.61
Physical illness and handicaps	.10	.31	.52	.11	.49
The release of mental hospital patients into the community	.16	.10	.45	.00	.27
Unpredictable events	-.01	.00	.03	.83	.71
Bad luck and misfortune	-.05	.00	.04	.66	.44
Lack of community mental health resources	-.11	.49	.44	.02	.54
Fate and destiny	.57	.12	-.21	.29	.41
Eigenvalues	4.55	3.70	1.77	1.08	—
Percentage of variance explained	20.22	17.33	13.88	8.24	—

The four factors reflected our theorized domains of attributions: structural, individualistic, health, and fate. See Table 2 for Eigenvalues, the percentage of variance explained by each factor, and the factor loadings.¹

We conducted a second EFA with oblimin rotation on the 15-items assessing policy attitudes. Results of the second EFA produced three Eigenvalues greater than 1.00, suggesting there were three factors in the data. The three factors reflected our theorized policy attitudes: economic, punitive, and health. See Table 3 for Eigenvalues, the percentage of variance explained by each factor, and the factor loadings.²

We further followed our pre-registered analysis to address poor-quality data. We planned on removing people who took less than two seconds to complete each survey item (Curran, 2016);

¹Based on the results of the first EFA, we removed one item (“Lack of community mental health resources”) due to cross-loading on the structural and health factors (.47 and .55, respectively). We also removed the item “Fate and Destiny” due to loading on individualistic, which goes against how fate attributions are treated.

²Based on the second EFA, we removed one item that did not load above .40 on any policy factor (“More money given to charities and religious organizations to help”). We also removed the item “Work programs” due to loading on health policy but does not assess health policies.

TABLE 3 Item loadings and commonality scores for exploratory factor analysis on policy attitudes (Study 1).

	Loadings			Communality
	1	2	3	
Giving rent subsidies	.93	.01	-.04	.82
More temporary and emergency housing	.87	.00	.02	.77
Building more low-income housing	.82	-.01	.01	.68
Increasing minimum wage	.74	-.04	-.07	.52
Helping homeless people get welfare benefits	.72	-.14	.07	.65
Repeal zoning laws to allow for denser and more affordable housing development	.71	.11	-.02	.45
Strictly enforce laws against loitering, panhandling and camping in public areas	-.01	.93	-.04	.87
Cutting welfare benefits	.04	.76	-.05	.55
Crack down on drug and alcohol use in homeless encampments	-.04	.74	.19	.63
Committing people with serious mental health issues to mental health treatment	-.14	.06	.81	.61
Requiring patients in mental hospitals to have places to live before release	.03	.06	.75	.59
Making alcohol and drug treatment programs free	.39	-.14	.50	.60
Offer free psychotherapy	.38	-.04	.49	.54
Create more work programs to employ homeless individuals	.37	-.09	.39	.43
More money given to charities and religious organizations to help solve the problem	.35	.32	.16	.23
Eigenvalue	5.99	2.75	1.34	—
Percentage of variance explained	30.80	14.59	14.13	—

however, we did not remove anyone based on this criterion. We next calculated Mahalanobis distance scores to examine multivariate outliers. We considered participants multivariate outliers if they had a Mahalanobis distance score of $p < .001$ based on a chi-square where $df = k - 1$, where k represents the number of calculated variables. We removed nine multivariate outliers, resulting in a sample size of 328 participants to test our hypotheses.³ See Table 4 for descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients, and Pearson's r correlations.

Focal test of hypotheses

We conducted mediation analyses using a saturated path analysis in R using the “lavaan” package. The measured ideologies (RWA, SDO, system justification, BJW, PWE, neoliberalism, conservatism, and religiosity) were the predictor variables. The four attributional domains (individualistic, health, structural, and fate) were the mediating variables. People's attitudes toward policies (economic, punitive, and health) were the outcome variables.

Results partially supported our hypotheses. In support of H1a, stronger neoliberalism, RWA, and PWE related to more endorsement of individualistic attributions. The other ideological ori-

³ We conducted all factor analyses before removing multivariate outliers.

TABLE 4 Descriptive statistics, internal consistencies, and Pearson’s *r* correlations (Study 1).

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. RWA	—											
2. SDO	.64***	—										
3. SJ	.57***	.51***	—									
4. BJW	.52***	.52***	.85***	—								
5. PWE	.61***	.58***	.79***	.81***	—							
6. Neoliberal	.62***	.68***	.65***	.64***	.80***	—						
7. Religiosity	.65***	.45***	.51***	.44***	.45***	.42***	—					
8. SECS	.69***	.60***	.68***	.61***	.73***	.80***	.51***	—				
9. Individual	.56***	.53***	.56***	.57***	.70***	.67***	.36***	.61***	—			
10. Structural	-.49***	-.59***	-.51***	-.46***	-.56***	-.61***	-.19***	-.66***	-.37***	—		
11. Health	-.03	-.03	.00	-.01	.08	.15**	-.01	.06	.24***	.14**	—	
12. Fate	.15**	.09	.03	.05	.02	.07	.23***	.01	.28***	.23***	.24***	—
<i>M</i>	3.05	2.36	3.57	3.85	3.79	3.99	3.06	50.48	3.84	5.33	5.22	4.16
<i>SD</i>	1.48	1.47	1.55	1.51	1.60	1.54	1.96	22.39	1.57	1.44	1.20	1.24
ω or r_s	.854	.933	.923	.972	.902	.901	.948	.914	.908	.849	.766	.542

Note: McDonald’s Omega (ω) assessed the internal consistency of all scales that had more than two-items. Spearman’s correlation (r_s) was used for the two-item scale focusing on “fate attributions.”

Abbreviations: BJW, just world beliefs; PWE, protestant work ethic; RWA, right-wing authoritarianism; SDO, social dominance orientation; SECS, social-economic conservatism scale; SJ, system justification.

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

entations did not predict people’s endorsement of individualistic attributions. In support of H1b, stronger SDO, system-justification, and conservatism related to weaker endorsement of structural attributions. The other ideological orientations did not predict people’s endorsement of structural attributions. Results partially supported H1d; specifically, stronger religiosity predicted more endorsement of structural and fate attributions but did not relate to people’s endorsement of individualistic attributions. Counter to our predictions (H1c), BJW did not relate to people’s endorsement of fate attributions. Unexpectedly, stronger neoliberalism related to stronger endorsement of fate attributions.

Regarding our hypotheses on how attributions related to policy preferences, results showed that stronger endorsement of individualistic attributions predicted stronger support for punitive policies and weaker support for economic policies (H2a). We also found that stronger structural attributions predicted more support for economic policies (H2b). Finally, results supported H2c that stronger endorsement of health attributions related to stronger support for health policies (H2c). Unexpectedly, stronger fate attributions predicted more support for economic policies. No other relationships between attributions and policy preferences were significant at our pre-determined alpha level.

Our mediation analyses showed that neoliberalism, PWE, and RWA all indirectly related to support for punitive policies through the endorsement of individualistic attributions (H3a). Because these variables directly predicted support for punitive policies when controlling for attributions, it suggests attributions only partially mediated the relationship between ideological orientations and punitive policy attitudes.

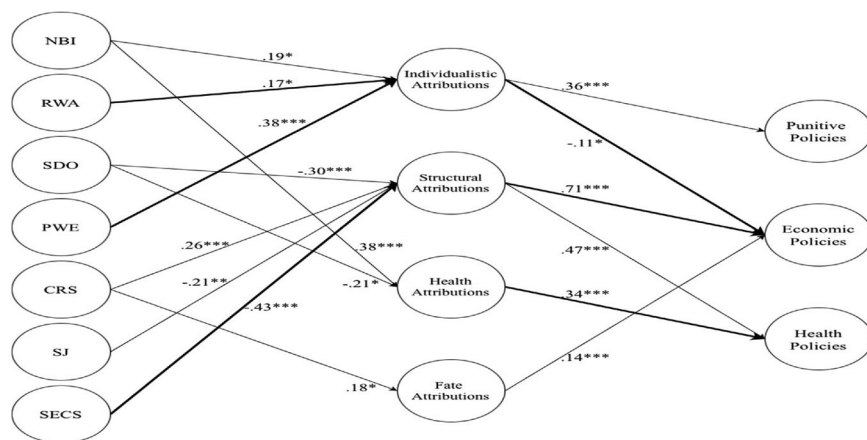


FIGURE 1 Standardized coefficients for significant paths from path analysis (Study 1)

Note: Non-significant paths are not visually represented. Covariances for each level of the model (predictors, mediators, outcomes) are also not visually shown. See Tables 5 in paper for statistics for all paths from model. See Table S1 for indirect effects from model and Table S2 for covariances from model.

Results also showed that stronger SDO, SJ, and conservatism indirectly related to opposition to economic policies through reduced structural attributions (H3b). Finally, results showed stronger religiosity related to support for economic and health policies through the endorsement of structural attributions. See Table 5 for statistics from path analysis. See Figure 1 for visualization of significant paths. See [Supplementary Materials](#) for findings of indirect effects and covariances from the model.

DISCUSSION

The results from Study 1 partially supported our hypotheses. Stronger neoliberalism, PWE, and RWA were all related to endorsing individualistic attributions, while stronger SDO, system-justification and conservatism related to less endorsement of structural attributions. Religiosity also led to greater structural and fate attributions. People's attributions related to their views on how to redress the issue, with individualistic attributions predicting support for punitive policies, structural attributions leading to a stronger preference for economic policies, and health attributions predicting support for health policies. The meditation analyses revealed that some of these ideologies indirectly related to policy attitudes through attributions.

STUDY 2

In Study 2, we aimed to replicate the results of Study 1 but allowed respondents to provide qualitative answers for their attributions around the causes of homelessness. This methodological adjustment was made to better assess how people typically explain why people might be unhoused. To connect these free-responses with Study 1's linkages among ideology, attributions, and policy support, we used ChatGPT 4o (OpenAI, 2024) to code the presence of each attri-

TABLE 5 Structural coefficient estimates, standard errors, z-scores, p-values, and 95% confidence intervals for saturated path analysis (Study 1).

Variables in model	<i>b</i> *	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CIs for <i>B</i>
Outcome: Individualistic attribution						
Neoliberal	.19	.19	.08	2.34	.019	[.03, .35]
RWA	.16	.17	.07	2.47	.013	[.03, .30]
SDO	.06	.07	.06	1.09	.274	[−.05, .18]
PWE	.42	.41	.08	4.89	<.001	[.25, .57]
Religiosity	−.05	−.04	.04	−.91	.365	[−.12, .04]
BJW	−.01	−.01	.09	−.15	.878	[−.18, .15]
SJ	−.02	−.02	.08	−.20	.842	[−.18, .14]
SECS	.06	.00	.01	.84	.402	[−.01, .01]
Outcome: Structural attribution						
Neoliberal	.03	.03	.07	.39	.694	[−.11, .17]
RWA	−.07	−.07	.06	−1.20	.228	[−.19, .05]
SDO	−.34	−.34	.05	−6.42	<.001	[−.44, −.24]
PWE	−.11	−.10	.07	−1.36	.172	[−.25, .04]
Religiosity	.30	.23	.04	6.16	<.001	[.16, .30]
BJW	.14	.14	.08	1.82	.069	[−.01, .29]
SJ	−.21	−.20	.07	−2.73	.006	[−.34, −.06]
SECS	−.45	−.03	.00	−6.51	<.001	[−.04, −.02]
Outcome: Health attribution						
Neoliberal	.42	.33	.09	3.74	<.001	[.16, .50]
RWA	−.12	−.10	.07	−1.34	.180	[−.24, .05]
SDO	−.19	−.16	.06	−2.41	.016	[−.28, −.03]
PWE	.12	.09	.09	.99	.324	[−.09, .27]
Religiosity	.06	.04	.04	.90	.369	[−.05, .13]
BJW	−.17	−.14	.09	−1.50	.134	[−.32, .04]
SJ	−.03	−.02	.09	−.28	.779	[−.20, .15]
SECS	−.06	.00	.01	−.63	.530	[−.01, .01]
Outcome: Fate attribution						
Neoliberal	.25	.22	.10	2.25	.025	[.03, .42]
RWA	.03	.03	.08	.33	.741	[−.13, .19]
SDO	−.09	−.09	.07	−1.19	.235	[−.23, .06]
PWE	−.24	−.20	.10	−1.96	.050	[−.40, .00]
Religiosity	.18	.13	.05	2.54	.011	[.03, .23]
BJW	.01	.01	.11	.07	.945	[−.20, .21]
SJ	−.12	−.11	.10	−1.08	.278	[−.30, .09]
SECS	−.16	−.01	.01	−1.54	.123	[−.02, .00]

(Continues)

TABLE 5 (Continued)

Variables in model	<i>b</i> *	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CIs for <i>B</i>
Outcome: Punitive policies						
Individualistic attribution	.35	.40	.06	6.71	<.001	[.28, .52]
Structural attribution	.11	.13	.07	1.95	.051	[.00, .27]
Health attribution	.03	.05	.06	.84	.399	[−.06, .16]
Fate attribution	−.03	−.04	.05	−.85	.397	[−.14, .06]
Neoliberal	.11	.13	.08	1.56	.118	[−.03, .29]
RWA	.33	.41	.07	5.97	<.001	[.28, .55]
SDO	.03	.04	.06	−.63	.527	[−.09, .17]
PWE	.12	.13	.09	1.47	.141	[−.04, .31]
Religiosity	.11	.10	.04	2.25	.024	[.01, .19]
BJW	.06	.07	.09	−.82	.414	[−.10, .24]
SJ	.05	.06	.08	−.75	.451	[−.10, .23]
SECS	−.12	−.01	.01	−1.81	.070	[−.02, .00]
Outcome: Economic policies						
Individualistic attribution	−.09	−.08	.04	−2.07	.038	[−.16, .00]
Structural attribution	.71	.69	.05	15.09	<.001	[.60, .78]
Health attribution	−.02	−.02	.04	−.57	.570	[−.10, .05]
Fate attribution	.14	.14	.03	4.22	<.001	[.08, .21]
Neoliberal	−.15	−.14	.06	−2.41	.016	[−.25, −.03]
RWA	−.01	−.01	.05	−.24	.810	[−.10, .08]
SDO	−.17	−.17	.04	−3.84	<.001	[−.25, −.08]
PWE	.12	.10	.06	1.70	.089	[−.02, .22]
Religiosity	−.02	−.01	.03	−.40	.691	[−.07, .05]
BJW	.03	.03	.06	.49	.627	[−.09, .15]
SJ	.15	.14	.06	2.42	.015	[.03, .25]
SECS	.01	.00	.00	.14	.885	[−.01, .01]
Outcome: Health policies						
Individualistic attribution	−.04	−.03	.06	−.59	.555	[−.14, .08]
Structural attribution	.49	.45	.06	7.06	<.001	[.32, .57]
Health attribution	.34	.37	.05	7.08	<.001	[.27, .48]
Fate attribution	.04	.04	.05	.77	.439	[−.06, .13]
Neoliberal	−.11	−.09	.08	−1.19	.235	[−.25, .06]
RWA	.14	.12	.06	1.89	.058	[.00, .25]
SDO	−.21	−.19	.06	−3.18	.001	[−.31, −.07]
PWE	.22	.18	.08	2.16	.031	[.02, .35]
Religiosity	−.01	.00	.04	−.12	.906	[−.09, .08]
BJW	.02	.02	.08	.22	.823	[−.14, .18]
SJ	−.01	−.01	.08	−.12	.908	[−.16, .14]
SECS	.17	.01	.01	1.98	.048	[.00, .02]

Note: The reported standard errors (*SE*), *z*-tests, *p*-values, and 95% CI's reflect unstandardized coefficients. Bolded *p*-values are significant at pre-determined alpha ($\alpha = .050$).

TABLE 6 Descriptive statistics, internal consistencies, and Pearson’s *r* correlations with ChatGPT coding (Study 2).

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. RWA	—											
2. SDO	.47***	—										
3. SJ	.50***	.50***	—									
4. BJW	.49***	.49***	.86***	—								
5. PWE	.57***	.58***	.76***	.77***	—							
6. Neoliberal	.60***	.65***	.60***	.61***	.74***	—						
7. Religiosity	.67***	.33***	.42***	.36***	.41***	.42***	—					
8. SECS	.73***	.58***	.67***	.60***	.69***	.77***	.56***	—				
9. Ind. Atr.	.24***	.20**	.23***	.21***	.29***	.17**	−.02	.24***	—			
10. Str. Atr	−.11	−.15*	−.10	−.09	−.24***	−.21***	−.02	−.21***	−.30***	—		
11. Health Atr.	−.02	.03	−.01	−.03	.05	.08	.02	.07	−.16**	−.42***	—	
12. Fate Atr.	−.01	−.04	.03	−.01	−.11	−.12*	.08	−.10	−.34***	.24***	.25***	—
<i>M</i>	3.35	2.53	3.82	4.18	4.11	4.26	3.40	54.95	1.45	4.79	4.51	4.06
<i>SD</i>	1.49	1.44	1.50	1.52	1.54	1.41	1.99	21.87	1.11	2.09	2.32	1.57
ω or ICC	.793	.906	.882	.972	.798	.899	.946	.902	.678	.762	.853	.376

p* < .05 *p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

bution in participant responses. We further sought to replicate our findings due to the high multicollinearity among our variables, as multicollinearity is associated with unreliable estimates.

Participants

We used similar parameters from Study 1 when estimating our sample size for Study 2, resulting in a desired sample size of 345 participants.

Procedure and materials

The survey was advertised as “Attitudes about Social Issues” on MTurk. People interested in this study clicked on the Qualtrics-hosted survey before being redirected to the consent form. After consenting, participants were exposed to the same eight measures of ideological orientations from Study 1 in a counterbalanced fashion. Afterward, participants responded to an open-ended question that asked what they thought was the primary cause of homelessness in the United States. Participants were asked to write at least two sentences explaining their thoughts about the causes of homelessness in the U.S.

Participants then reported their policy attitudes on the same scales from Study 1. Finally, participants reported their demographics before being debriefed and compensated for their time. See Table 6 for descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients, and Pearson’s *r* correlations. See [Supplementary Materials](#) for the specific materials used in the study.

RESULTS

Qualitative analysis

Following our pre-registration, the free-responses were initially analyzed by Contextualized Construct Representation (CCR), a new program that blends large language models and natural language processing to apply existing psychological measures to textual data (Atari et al., 2023). This novel approach, however, rated responses in a way that lacked face-validity. For example, the response “*The biggest factor is the cost of owning or renting a home. There is a massive lack of affordable housing*” would expect to be given high structural due to focusing on structural issues that could be controlled by the government (housing). However, CCR rated this answer with high scores on fate, individualistic, and health, but not structural. Given the inconsistent scoring of CCR in this domain and the radically increasing capacities of generative AI models, we choose to use ChatGPT 4o to score the responses.

Increasingly, researchers are turning to large language models like ChatGPT to aide in qualitative research (see Morgan, 2023). These models seem to be particularly useful and reliable when asked to identify well-defined descriptive themes (Wachinger et al., 2025). This study extends these innovative methods into the theoretically well-established terrain of attributions.

Using a modified version of Ghimire’s (2023) code in R (version 4.3.2), we prompted ChatGPT 4o to rate each statement from 1 (“not at all”) to 7 (“extremely”) on each of the four attributions. Each attribution was described in terms that mirror the scale items used in Study 1 (see [supplemental materials](#) for the full prompt used). In order to control for some variance in ChatGPT 4o’s responses, we used the same prompt to generate three separate scores for each attribution and took the average of these scores.

We tested ChatGPT’s reliability by comparing its scores to those of three human coders. Human coders were given the same instructions as ChatGPT, rating each statement from 1 (“not at all”) to 7 (“extremely”) on each of the four attributions. Intraclass correlation coefficients (ICCs) were then calculated for each of the different attribution types: $ICC_{\text{Individualistic}} = .67$, $ICC_{\text{Structural}} = .56$, $ICC_{\text{Health}} = .86$, $ICC_{\text{Fate}} = .38$. The first three intraclass correlation coefficients were considered “good” to “excellent,” whereas the fate factor was considered “poor” due to the ICC being below .40 (Cicchetti & Sparrow, 1981). Due to the fate attribution’s poor ICC score, we excluded it from our main analyses (see [Supplemental Materials](#) for full analysis).⁴

Scale construction

We conducted two CFAs: the first on the eight ideological orientations, with the second on the three policy attitudes. We used the same indices from Study 1 when assessing the model fit. Results showed that the model with eight ideological orientations had acceptable RMSEA and SRMR but poor CFI, $\chi^2 (df = 1,402) = 5,128.21$, $p < .001$, CFI = .793, SRMR = .093, RMSEA = .088, 90% CI for RMSEA [.086, .092]. Results showed that the model with three policy attitudes had acceptable to

⁴ After obtaining good-to-excellent IRR scores for the other three attributions, we decided to re-conduct the analysis of fate attributions with updated guidelines to increase the validity and reliability of ChatGPT’s ratings for this attribution. However, a follow-up analysis showed that these adjustments did not improve the IRR scores for the fate attribution to acceptable levels. Consequently, we did not include it in our main analysis.

good fit indices, $\chi^2 (df = 62) = 213.07, p < .001, CFI = .928, SRMR = .072, RMSEA = .085, 90\% CI$ for RMSEA [.072, .097]. We thus replicated the scale construction process from Study 1 for these predictor and outcome variables.

Data exclusion

We removed 10 people who took less than 168 seconds before removing people who had duplicate written responses ($n = 24$), gave responses that were not coded by ChatGPT ($n = 33$), or did not complete the written prompt or all the scales ($n = 9$). No individuals were removed for being multivariate outliers, resulting in a final sample size of 284.

Focal analyses

Similar to Study 1, we conducted a saturated path analysis using the lavaan package in R. The eight ideologies (RWA, SDO, SJ, BJW, PWE, neoliberalism, conservatism, religiosity) were our predictor variables. ChatGPT's scoring of the qualitative answers for attributions around homelessness were our mediators (individualistic, structural, health). People's attitudes toward the policy preferences (economic, health, punitive) were our outcome variables.

The results partially supported our hypotheses. Similar to Study 1, stronger RWA and PWE both related to greater usage of individualistic attributions. However, contrary to H1a and the findings from Study 1, stronger neoliberalism was related to *lower* usage of individualistic attributions. In support of H1b, stronger conservatism and PWE were related to low usage of structural attributions. Results were mixed for H1d, in that religiosity did not significantly relate to structural attributions but was associated with less individualistic attributions. None of the ideological orientations were related to people's usage of health attributions.

We also partially supported our hypotheses regarding how attributions related to policy preferences. Unlike Study 1, results showed that no attributions people made about the causes of homelessness were significantly related to preferences for punitive policies (H2a; H2b). However, results indicated that using individualistic attributions related to less support for economic policies (H2a). Comparatively, using structural attributions to explain why people are homeless was related to greater support for economic policies (H2b). Also, similar to Study 1, using health attributions related to greater support for health policies (H2c). Finally, results showed that using individualistic attributions related to less support for health policies.

Results of the mediation analysis showed there were no significant pathways between any of the ideologies and support for punitive policies (H3a). There were significant pathways between PWE and conservatism and less support for economic policies through less structural attributions (H3b), but these were the only hypothesized mediational pathways that achieved significance. See Table 7 for statistics from path analysis. See Figure 2 for visualization of significant paths. See [Supplementary Materials](#) for results of indirect effects and covariances from the model.

TABLE 7 Structural coefficient estimates, standard errors, z-scores, *p*-values, and 95% confidence intervals for saturated path analysis with ChatGPT coding (Study 2).

Variables in model	<i>b</i> *	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CIs for <i>B</i>
Outcome: Individualistic attribution						
Neoliberal	-.24	-.19	.08	-2.29	.022	[-.35, -.03]
RWA	.27	.20	.07	2.95	.003	[.07, .34]
SDO	.06	.04	.06	.76	.449	[-.07, .15]
PWE	.28	.28	.09	2.99	.003	[.10, .46]
Religiosity	-.36	-.20	.04	-4.85	< .001	[-.28, -.12]
BJW	-.06	-.04	.08	-.54	.591	[-.20, .12]
SJ	.12	.09	.08	1.10	.270	[-.07, .26]
SECS	.17	.01	.01	1.54	.124	[.00, .02]
Outcome: Structural Attribution						
Neoliberal	-.02	-.04	.16	-.22	.824	[-.35, .28]
RWA	.11	.15	.14	1.10	.272	[-.12, .42]
SDO	.02	.03	.11	.32	.751	[-.18, .25]
PWE	-.33	-.63	.18	-3.41	.001	[-.99, -.27]
Religiosity	.14	.14	.08	1.77	.077	[-.02, .30]
BJW	.16	.22	.16	1.41	.158	[-.09, .53]
SJ	.06	.09	.16	.53	.598	[-.24, .41]
SECS	-.27	-.03	.01	-2.35	.019	[-.05, .00]
Outcome: Health Attribution						
Neoliberal	.11	.18	.19	.95	.344	[-.19, .54]
RWA	-.19	-.30	.16	-1.93	.054	[-.61, .01]
SDO	-.04	-.06	.13	-.45	.654	[-.30, .19]
PWE	.15	.31	.21	1.47	.141	[-.10, .73]
Religiosity	.07	.08	.09	.82	.415	[-.11, .26]
BJW	-.15	-.23	.18	-1.26	.206	[-.59, .13]
SJ	-.06	-.10	.19	-.54	.590	[-.47, .27]
SECS	.14	.01	.01	1.13	.259	[-.01, .04]
Outcome: Punitive Policies						
Individualistic attribution	.02	.04	.08	.51	.610	[-.11, .19]
Structural attribution	-.03	-.03	.04	-.66	.509	[-.11, .06]
Health attribution	.00	.00	.04	.08	.936	[-.07, .07]
Neoliberal	.30	.37	.10	3.69	< .001	[.17, .57]
RWA	.28	.33	.09	3.92	< .001	[.17, .50]
SDO	.08	.10	.07	1.53	.127	[-.03, .24]
PWE	-.05	-.08	.12	-.68	.497	[-.31, .15]
Religiosity	.06	.06	.05	1.12	.263	[-.04, .16]
BJW	.11	.13	.10	1.32	.187	[-.06, .32]
SJ	.09	.11	.10	1.07	.283	[-.09, .31]
SECS	.01	.00	.01	.10	.917	[-.01, .01]

(Continues)

TABLE 7 (Continued)

Variables in model	<i>b</i> *	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CIs for <i>B</i>
Outcome: Economic Policies						
Individualistic attribution	−.16	−.21	.07	−2.99	.003	[−.34, −.07]
Structural attribution	.31	.22	.04	5.71	< .001	[.14, .29]
Health attribution	.01	.00	.03	.11	.912	[−.06, .07]
Neoliberal	−.21	−.22	.09	−2.42	.016	[−.40, −.04]
RWA	.03	.03	.08	.34	.733	[−.12, .18]
SDO	−.15	−.16	.06	−2.57	.010	[−.27, −.04]
PWE	.00	.00	.10	−.03	.972	[−.21, .20]
Religiosity	.16	.12	.05	2.54	.011	[.03, .21]
BJW	.27	.26	.09	2.93	.003	[.09, .43]
SJ	−.07	−.08	.09	−.84	.401	[−.25, .10]
SECS	−.32	−.02	.01	−3.52	< .001	[−.03, −.01]
Outcome: Health Policies						
Individualistic attribution	−.20	−.23	.07	−3.10	.002	[−.37, −.08]
Structural attribution	−.07	−.04	.04	−1.05	.294	[−.12, .04]
Health attribution	.15	.08	.03	2.26	.024	[.01, .15]
Neoliberal	.09	.08	.10	.87	.385	[−.10, .27]
RWA	−.01	−.01	.08	−.11	.911	[−.17, .15]
SDO	−.25	−.22	.06	−3.44	.001	[−.35, −.09]
PWE	.07	.08	.11	.75	.453	[−.13, .30]
Religiosity	.08	.05	.05	1.00	.320	[−.05, .15]
BJW	.24	.19	.09	2.08	.038	[.01, .38]
SJ	−.20	−.18	.10	−1.84	.065	[−.37, .01]
SECS	−.13	−.01	.01	−1.11	.265	[−.02, .01]

Note. The reported standard errors (*SE*), *z*-tests, *p*-values, and 95% CIs reflect unstandardized coefficients. Bolded *p*-values are significant at pre-determined alpha ($\alpha = .050$). Please see Table S7 in the supplementary analysis to see results from the human-coded path analysis.

DISCUSSION

The results of Study 2 partially supported our hypotheses. Stronger PWE related to using more individualistic attributions and fewer structural attributions to explain homelessness. Stronger RWA was also related to using more individualistic attributions, whereas stronger conservatism was related to using fewer structural attributions. Stronger religiosity was related to less usage of individualistic attributions. We found that using fewer individualistic and more structural attributions related to support for economic policies. Health attributions predicted greater support for health policies. Counter to our hypotheses, people’s attributions of homelessness did not predict their attitudes toward punitive policies. Finally, results of mediation analyses showed that PWE and conservatism indirectly related to attitudes toward economic policies through less structural attributions.

We also conducted an additional exploratory path analysis using the human coded attributions rather than the ChatGPT coded attributions. None of the core findings for structural or

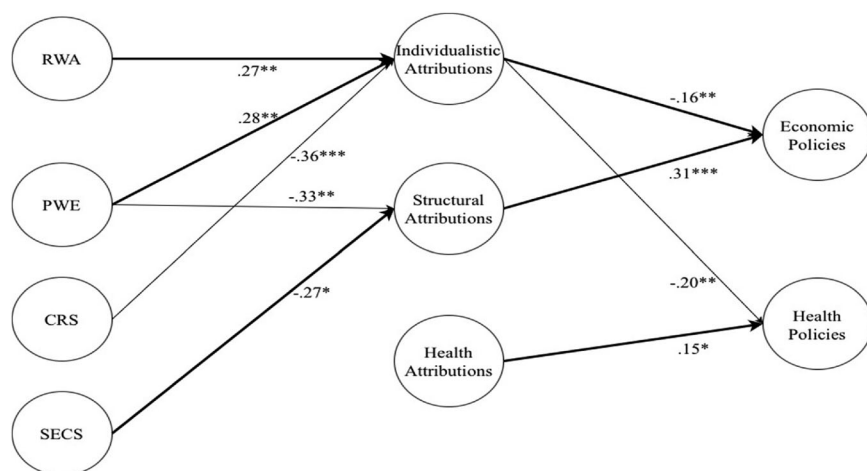


FIGURE 2 Standardized coefficients for significant paths from path analysis with ChatGPT coding (Study 2)
Note: Non-significant paths are not visually represented. Covariances for each level of the model (predictors, mediators, outcomes) are also not visually shown. See Tables 7 in article for statistics for all paths from model. See Table S3 for indirect effects from model and Table S4 for covariances from model.

health attributions changed when using the human coded variables, highlighting the consistency of the findings. However, when focusing on the human coded version of individualistic attributions, many of the relationships with this variable became non-significant, highlighting how the methodology affected the replicability of these findings. Please see Table S7 in the Supplementary Materials for a full description of the findings from the human-coded path analysis.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

People are increasingly experiencing homelessness in the United States, which is forcing local and state governments to respond to this issue. However, the community responses to unhoused people vary from economic support to policing and restrictions. Across two studies, we explored how various types of ideological orientations related to attributions of why people are unhoused and their attitudes toward policies to redress it. We also incorporated ChatGPT in Study 2 to demonstrate an emerging method for analyzing large sets of qualitative responses.

Across both studies, we found that fewer structural attributions and more individualistic attributions related to less support for economic policies to redress the issue of homelessness. Results of both studies also showed that stronger conservatism related to less support of economic policies through structural attributions. Furthermore, we found that the ideologies of PWE and RWA predicted greater usage of individualistic attributions for why people are unhoused. These findings suggest that, in the context of homelessness in the U.S., PWE, RWA, and conservatism are system-justifying ideologies due to their lack of systemic blame for homelessness and their lack of support for economic policies to redress it.

However, there were some inconsistencies across the studies. For instance, while using more individualistic attributions related to more support for punitive policies in Study 1, none of the

attributions related to punitive policies in Study 2. We believe that this may have been due to ChatGPT's failure to pick up on certain subtle and nuanced phrases as indicative of individualistic attributions in the free-response section. Additionally, while stronger neoliberalism related to more individualistic attributions in Study 1, it related to fewer individualistic attributions in Study 2. Neoliberalism was strongly linked to PWE and conservatism across both studies. It is thus possible that neoliberalism was an unreliable predictor of people's attributions due to its strong multicollinearity with PWE and other variables.

These inconsistent findings may also result from methodological differences in how we assessed individualistic attributions. Attributions in Study 1 were assessed on a Likert-scale, while in Study 2 they were derived from free-response essays, which were then coded by ChatGPT. Thus, in Study 2, people's scores for individualistic attributions often reflective a lack of individualistic attributions used. For instance, the average coding score for individualistic attributions was a 1.45 on a 7-point scale, whereas mean of the self-reported Likert scale in Study 1 was a 3.84. These inconsistencies suggest that relationships obtained from agreement with close-ended response items could be inflated compared to the relationships obtained used free-responses.

On this note, though, the high ICC scores between human coders and ChatGPT 4o suggests that ChatGPT was able to reliably rate the responses in a similar way to a human researcher. We believe that the low ICC score for fate ratings was due to theoretical ambiguities of this construct applied to this domain rather than a defect in ChatGPT.⁵ As mentioned in the introduction, there has been debate in the literature about the proper attributional factor structure to use when assessing the causes of homelessness (e.g., Markowitz & Syverson, 2021; Tsai et al., 2019). Although we ended up using a three-factor model in Study 2, we encourage future researchers to investigate several different factor structures when studying attributions for homelessness. Additionally, an exploratory path analysis using the human-coded values resulted in substantial differences in our findings, with several the connections between ideology and individualistic attributions becoming non-significant. As artificial intelligence (AI) and large language models (LLMs) become more ubiquitous in our society, their adoption in psychological and social science research is likely to grow (Morgan, 2023). Our study illuminates some of the benefits and pitfalls of using AI and LLMs in similar research and reiterates the importance of using these tools as support for the analytical process rather than a full replacement.

Implications

These findings have theoretical and practical implications. On a theoretical level, the findings speak to how ideological orientations can predict attitudes toward unhoused individuals. A torrent of research over the past 20 years has focused on how ideologies predict attitudes and prejudice toward marginalized and low status groups (e.g., Smith & Stathi, 2021). Because people can hold several different but overlapping ideologies simultaneously, we sought to answer which ideologies were primarily driving these attitudes and if people's attributions impact these attitudes. While our findings yielded mixed results across the studies, we consistently found that stronger PWE and RWA were connected to individualistic attributions,⁶ and weaker structural attributions was related to lack of support for economic policies.

⁵ For instance, a response of "poor economic conditions" could reflect a structural attribution if emphasizing how businesses and governments can affect the economy or a fate attribution if emphasizing how individual citizens cannot control the overall economy.

⁶ It should be noted that these findings did not hold during the human-coded exploratory analysis.

We further saw that religiosity, a variable often associated with stronger conservatism, related to using more structural and fate attributions, along with greater support for economic policies, in Study 1. These findings fit with past findings showing that religiosity predicts support for welfare policies when controlling for conservatism (Malka et al., 2012).

On a practical level, we hope that our findings can inform public messaging aimed at discussing homelessness. Because people's ideological orientations make them susceptible to message framing, highlighting the link between ideology and attributions could help develop more effective narratives for advocates and public officials to use when speaking to the public on issues of homelessness. For instance, highlighting the fact that 40%–50% of people experiencing homelessness are employed (Meyer et al., 2021) and that an area's cost of living index (COLI) is one of the greatest predictors of homelessness (Heston, 2023), could counter the rhetoric that people are homeless due to intrinsic factors and could potentially increase positive sentiment toward unhoused people among people high in PWE and other system-justifying ideologies.

Limitations and future directions

While these studies have theoretical and practical applications, there were some limitations to our research designs. First, both studies were cross-sectional, self-report, and correlational in nature. Because we did not manipulate people's ideologies or attributions to why people are unhoused, we cannot speak to the causal process of our model. Additionally, our study measured policy preferences through self-report scales. While this is a common practice in the literature (e.g., Duckitt & Sibley, 2007), it may not reflect how people engage with policies, such as voting intentions or neighborhood activism. We further did not capture people's subjective sense of the importance of homelessness as a personal, political, societal issue, which likely also influences their willingness to engage and participate in these real-world behaviors.

Second, we used abbreviated scales to assess ideological orientations rather than full, unabbreviated measures. We made the decision to use abbreviated measures to reduce the cognitive load for participants and the attrition rate. Furthermore, some of these abbreviated scales have been validated, including RWA (Bizumic & Duckitt, 2018) and SDO (Ho et al., 2015). For scales where we constructed abbreviated versions (e.g., using eight items of the NBI rather than the full 15-items), we only included items that loaded onto their respective factor at .50 or above. A CFA showed that the eight-factor approach to this ideological orientation was an appropriate fit of the data. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that certain scales used abbreviated versions that have not gone through appropriate validation studies. We recommend researchers being cognizant about using abbreviated scales that have not been appropriately vetted in future studies.

Third, we only focused on U.S. residents who used Amazon's MTurk. While samples collected from online surveys tend to produce data that is similar in quality to data collected from undergraduate samples, their demographics still tend to differ from census data in that they are younger, more educated and have less income than the average American (Behrend et al., 2011). Additionally, since we only focused on U.S. residents, we cannot speak to whether these findings would replicate outside the U.S.

Finally, our studies cannot speak to how other social cognitive mechanisms underlying prejudice relate to people's policy attitudes. Research on motivated social cognition suggests that there are often deeper epistemological and existential motives that drive people toward conservative ideologies, but we did not measure these elements in this study. Additionally, there are other types of social cognitive tendencies (e.g., emotional reactions, stereotypes) that were not accounted for

but may affect people's attributions of unhoused individuals (Cuddy et al., 2008). For instance, Tausen and Fossum (2024) found that empathy for people experiencing homelessness partially explained the link between structural attributions and helping behaviors, and dehumanization did the same for the association between dispositional attributions and harming behaviors.

We hope that future researchers will build off our work and address the limitations of our paper by conducting experimental studies that can speak to causal mechanisms, investigating attributions around homelessness in other countries and with diverse populations, and looking at emotions and cognitive mechanisms as mediating factors. Nonetheless, we provided evidence that a broad swath of ideologies is related to beliefs about homelessness and policy preferences. These findings underscore the importance of both ideology and attributions as predictive factors of people's perceptions of homelessness and the solutions our communities use to address it.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank our mentor Tom Pyszczynski, within who's lab we wrote this paper. Thank you for giving us the support and academic freedom necessary to pursue this research.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data from this study is available on Open Science Foundation (OSF) at https://osf.io/tz6k8/?view_only=a0afe129c1264c71816d6194c5dd9608

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. IRB Protocol #: 2023-016.

REFERENCES

- Atari, M., Omrani, A., & Dehghani, M. (2023). *Contextualized construct representation: Leveraging psychometric scales to advance theory-driven text analysis*. <https://psyarxiv.com/m93pd/download?format=pdf>
- Batson, C. D., Eidelman, S. H., Higley, S. L., & Russell, S. A. (2001). "And who is my neighbor?" II: Quest religion as a source of universal compassion. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 40, 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0021-8294.00036>
- Bay-Cheng, L. Y., Fitz, C. C., Alizaga, N. M., & Zucker, A. N. (2015). Tracking homo oeconomicus: Development of the neoliberal beliefs inventory. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 3(1), e4837. <https://doi.org/10.5964/jssp.v3i1.366>
- Behrend, T. S., Sharek, D. J., Meade, A. W., & Wiebe, E. N. (2011). The viability of crowdsourcing for survey research. *Behavior Research Methods*, 43, 800–813. <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13428-011-0081-0>
- Bettache, K., & Chiu, C. Y. (2019). The invisible hand is an ideology: Toward a social psychology of neoliberalism. *Journal of Social Issues*, 75, 8–19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12308>
- Bizumic, B., & Duckitt, J. (2018). Investigating right wing authoritarianism with a very short authoritarianism scale. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 6(1), e5047. <https://doi.org/10.5964/jssp.v6i1.835>
- Bobbio, A., Canova, L., & Manganelli, A. M. (2010). Conservative ideology, economic conservatism, and causal attributions for poverty and wealth. *Current Psychology*, 29, 222–234. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-010-9086-6>
- Cicchetti, D. V., & Sparrow, S. A. (1981). Developing criteria for establishing interrater reliability of specific items: Applications to assessment of adaptive behavior. *American Journal of Mental Deficiency*, 86, 127–137.
- Cuddy, A. J., Fiske, S. T., & Glick, P. (2008). Warmth and competence as universal dimensions of social perception: The stereotype content model and the BIAS map. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 40, 61–149. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(07\)00002-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(07)00002-0)

- Curran, P. G. (2016). Methods for the detection of carelessly invalid responses in survey data. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 66, 4–19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2015.07.006>
- DelasBour, L., (2022, September 20). Kansas City launches 'Clean Up KC' to create jobs for people experiencing homelessness. *Yahoo! News*. <https://www.yahoo.com/news/kansas-city-launches-clean-kc-010930856.html>
- Dhanani, L. (2010). How religiosity affects perceptions of the homeless. *The Pegasus Review: UCF Undergraduate Research Journal*, 4(2), 52–61. <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/urj/vol4/iss2/1>
- Donovan, S., & Shinseki, E. K. (2013). Homelessness is a public health issue. *American Journal of Public Health*, 103(S2), S180–S180. <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2013.301727>
- Duckitt, J., Bizumic, B., Krauss, S. W., & Heled, E. (2010). A tripartite approach to right-wing authoritarianism: The authoritarianism-conservatism-traditionalism model. *Political Psychology*, 31, 685–715. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2010.00781.x>
- Duckitt, J., & Sibley, C. G. (2007). Right wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation and the dimensions of generalized prejudice. *European Journal of Personality*, 21, 113–130. <https://doi.org/10.1002/per.614>
- Duckitt, J., Wagner, C., Du Plessis, I., & Birum, I. (2002). The psychological bases of ideology and prejudice: Testing a dual process model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83, 75–93. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-3514.83.1.75>
- Everett, J. A. (2013). The 12-item social and economic conservatism scale (SECS). *PLoS One*, 8(12), e82131. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0082131>
- Furnham, A. (1982). The Protestant work ethic and attitudes towards unemployment. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 55, 277–285. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8325.1982.tb00101.x>
- Furnham, A. (1996). Attributions for the increase in urban homelessness. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 11, 189–200. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1996-03051-014>
- Furnham, A. (2003). Belief in a just world: Research progress over the past decade. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 34, 795–817. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(02\)00072-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(02)00072-7)
- Genschow, O., & Lange, J. (2022). Belief in free will is related to internal attribution in self-perception. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 13, 1259–1268. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19485506211057711>
- Ghimire, N. (2023). Integrating ChatGPT in R and testing its limits. *RPubs*. https://rpubs.com/nirmal/setting_chat_gpt_R
- Goudarzi, S., Pliskin, R., Jost, J. T., & Knowles, E. D. (2020). Economic system justification predicts muted emotional responses to inequality. *Nature Communications*, 11, 383. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-019-14193-z>
- Groß, E. (2016). The enterprising self and prejudices toward unemployed persons: Analyses of intergroup-mechanisms that substantiate neoliberal inequalities. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 45(3), 162–180. <https://doi.org/10.1515/zfsoz-2015-1010>
- Har, J., & Beam, A., (2022, August 31). *CA lawmakers approve mental health care plan for homeless*. Associated Press. <https://apnews.com/article/health-california-gavin-newsom-mental-government-and-politics-c52069d7e48de92adf09b783b36bbaee>
- Heider, F. (1958). *The psychology of interpersonal relations*. John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Heston, T. F. (2023). The cost of living index as a primary driver of homelessness in the United States: A cross-state analysis. *Cureus*, 15(10), e46975.
- Ho, A. K., Sidanius, J., Kteily, N., Sheehy-Skeffington, J., Pratto, F., Henkel, K. E., Foels, R., & Stewart, A. L. (2015). The nature of social dominance orientation: Theorizing and measuring preferences for intergroup inequality using the new SDO₇ scale. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 109, 1003–1028. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000033>
- Howard, M. C. (2016). A review of exploratory factor analysis decisions and overview of current practices: What we are doing and how can we improve? *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 32, 51–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2015.1087664>
- Hoyle, R. K. (2011). *Structural equation modeling for social and personality psychology*. Sage.
- Huber, S., & Huber, O. W. (2012). The centrality of religiosity scale (CRS). *Religions*, 3, 710–724. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel3030710>
- Jost, J., & Hunyady, O. (2003). The psychology of system justification and the palliative function of ideology. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 13(1), 111–153. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10463280240000046>
- Jost, J. T., Federico, C. M., & Napier, J. L. (2009). Political ideology: Its structure, functions, and elective affinities. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 60, 307–337. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163600>

- Jost, J. T., Glaser, J., Sulloway, F. J., & Kruglanski, A. W. (2003). Political conservatism as motivated social cognition. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129, 339–375. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.129.3.339>
- Jost, J. T., Hawkins, C. B., Nosek, B. A., Hennes, E. P., Stern, C., Gosling, S. D., & Graham, J. (2014). Belief in a just God (and a just society): A system justification perspective on religious ideology. *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, 34, 56–81. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033220>
- Jost, J. T., & Hunyady, O. (2005). Antecedents and consequences of system-justifying ideologies. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14, 260–265. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0963-7214.2005.00377.x>
- Kay, A. C., & Jost, J. T. (2003). Complementary justice: Effects of “poor but happy” and “poor but honest” stereotype exemplars on system justification and implicit activation of the justice motive. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85, 823–837. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.85.5.823>
- Lee, B. A., Jones, S. H., & Lewis, D. W. (1990). Public beliefs about the causes of homelessness. *Social Forces*, 69(1), 253–265.
- Lee, B. A., Lewis, D. W., & Jones, S. H. (1992). Are the homeless to blame? A test of two theories. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 33, 535–552. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.1992.tb00142.x>
- Levy, S. R., West, T. L., Ramirez, L., & Karafantis, D. M. (2006). The Protestant work ethic: A lay theory with dual intergroup implications. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 9, 95–115. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430206059874>
- Ljubotina, D. O., Radovic, M. K., & Ogresta, J. (2022). Determinants of causal attributions of homelessness in Croatia. *Revija za socijalnu politiku*, 29, 163–190. <https://doi.org/10.3935/rsp.v29i2.1972>
- Malka, A., Lelkes, Y., Srivastava, S., Cohen, A. B., & Miller, D. T. (2012). The association of religiosity and political conservatism: The role of political engagement. *Political Psychology*, 33, 275–299. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2012.00875.x>
- Markowitz, F. E., & Syverson, J. (2021). Race, gender, and homelessness stigma: Effects of perceived blameworthiness and dangerousness. *Deviant Behavior*, 42, 919–931. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2019.1706140>
- McHoskey, J. W. (1994). Factor structure of the Protestant work ethic scale. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 17, 49–52. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869\(94\)90260-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869(94)90260-7)
- Meyer, B. D., Wyse, A., Grunwaldt, A., Medalia, C., & Wu, D. (2021). *Learning about homelessness using linked survey and administrative data* (Working paper no. w28861). National Bureau of Economic Research. <https://doi.org/10.3386/w28861>
- Morgan, D. L. (2023). Exploring the use of artificial intelligence for qualitative data analysis: The case of ChatGPT. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22, 16094069231211248. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231211248>
- Morgan, G. S., Mullen, E., & Skitka, L. J. (2010). When values and attributions collide: Liberals’ and conservatives’ values motivate attributions for alleged misdeeds. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 36, 1241–1254. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167210380605>
- National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2022). *State of Homelessness: 2021 edition*. <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-2021/>
- National Health Care for the Homeless Council. (2020). *National Homeless Mortality Overview*. <https://nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Section-1-Toolkit.pdf>
- Norenzayan, A., & Lee, A. (2010). It was meant to happen: Explaining cultural variations in fate attributions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 98, 702–720. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0019141>
- Oldmeadow, J., & Fiske, S. T. (2007). System-justifying ideologies moderate status = competence stereotypes: Roles for belief in a just world and social dominance orientation. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 37, 1135–1148. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.428>
- OpenAI. (2024). *ChatGPT* (model GPT-4o) [Large language model]. <https://openai.com/chatgpt/>
- Osborne, D., & Weiner, B. (2015). A latent profile analysis of attributions for poverty: Identifying response patterns underlying people’s willingness to help the poor. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 85, 149–154. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.05.007>
- Pellegrini, R. J., Queirolo, S. S., Monarrez, V. E., & Valenzuela, D. M. (1997). Political identification and perceptions of homelessness: Attributed causality and attitudes on public policy. *Psychological Reports*, 80, 1139–1148. <https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1997.80.3c.1139>
- Reich, B., & Wang, X. (2015). And justice for all: Revisiting the global belief in a just world scale. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 78, 68–76. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.01.031>

- Rosseel, Y., Jorgensen, T. D., Rockwood, N., Oberski, D., Byrnes, J., Vanbrabant, L., Savalei, V., Merkle, E., Hallquist, M., Rhemtulla, M., Katsikatsou, M., Barendse, M., & Scharf, F. (2020). lavaan: Latent variable analysis. R package Version .6-7. <https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/lavaan/index.html>
- Rudolph, U., Roesch, S., Greitemeyer, T., & Weiner, B. (2004). A meta-analytic review of help giving and aggression from an attributional perspective: Contributions to a general theory of motivation. *Cognition and Emotion*, 18, 815–848. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699930341000248>
- Ruybal, A. L., & Siegel, J. T. (2021). Increasing social support for women with postpartum depression through attribution theory guided vignettes and video messages: The understudied role of effort. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 97, 104197. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2021.104197>
- Sidanius, J., Cotterill, S., Sheehy-Skeffington, J., Kteily, N., & Carvacho, H. (2017). Social dominance theory: Explorations in the psychology of oppression. In C. G. Sibley, & F. K. Barlow, (Eds.) *The Cambridge handbook of the psychology of prejudice* (pp. 149–187). Cambridge University Press.
- Sidanius, J., Pratto, F., Van Laar, C., & Levin, S. (2004). Social dominance theory: Its agenda and method. *Political Psychology*, 25, 845–880. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2004.00401.x>
- Smith, R., & Stathi, S. (2021). Social dominance orientation, belief in a just world and intergroup contact as predictors of homeless stigmatisation. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 162, 770–780. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2021.1963204>
- Srivastava, S. G., Rosenberg, B. D., & Berardi, V. (2025). Californians' perceptions of the causes of homelessness and potential policy solutions. *Journal of Social Distress and Homelessness*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10530789.2025.2485684>
- Tausen, B. M., & Fossum, J. (2024). Empathy helps, dehumanization harms: Beliefs about the causes of homelessness are (in) directly related to intentions to help and harm those who are unhoused. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 54(7), 416–427.
- Tsai, J., Lee, C. Y., Shen, J., Southwick, S. M., & Pietrzak, R. H. (2019). Public exposure and attitudes about homelessness. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 47, 76–92. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22100>
- Vázquez, J. J., Panadero, S., & Zúñiga, C. (2017). Actors, observers, and causal attributions of homelessness: Differences in attribution for the causes of homelessness among domiciled and homeless people in Madrid (Spain). *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 87, 15–22. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/ort0000130>
- Wachinger, J., Bärnighausen, K., Schäfer, L. N., Scott, K., & McMahon, S. A. (2025). Prompts, pearls, imperfections: Comparing ChatGPT and a human researcher in qualitative data analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 35(9), 951–966. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10497323241244669>
- Wagoner, J. A., Lomeli, B., & Sundby, J. (2023). Ideological orientations, intergroup stereotypes, and opposition to permanent supportive housing. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 23(2), 282–307. <https://doi.org/10.1111/asap.12346>
- Watt, N., (2022, August 9). In Nashville, it's against the law to live in a tent on public land. Is that the best way to deal with homelessness?. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/09/us/homelessness-in-nashville/index.html>
- Weiner, B. (1985). An attributional theory of achievement motivation and emotion. *Psychological Review*, 92, 548–573. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.92.4.548>
- Weiner, B., Osborne, D., & Rudolph, U. (2011). An attributional analysis of reactions to poverty: The political ideology of the giver and the perceived morality of the receiver. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 15(2), 199–213.
- Weiner, B., Perry, R. P., & Magnusson, J. (1988). An attributional analysis of reactions to stigmas. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 55, 738–748. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-3514.55.5.738>
- Zucker, G. S., & Weiner, B. (1993). Conservatism and perceptions of poverty: An attributional analysis. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 23, 925–943. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1993.tb01014.x>

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

How to cite this article: Sundby, J., Wagoner, J., & Morgan, J. (2026). Dissecting how ideological orientations predict attributions and policy attitudes toward unhoused individuals. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 26, e70062.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/asap.70062>

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Jonathan Sundby, M.A. is a doctoral student in Clinical Geropsychology at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs (UCCS). His research explores homelessness, existential issues, aging, and adult development. In his clinical work, Jonathan works as a psychotherapist with older adults and caregivers in the Colorado Springs community.

Joseph A. Wagoner, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Social Psychology at UCCS. His research examines how people's identities and beliefs impact how they view themselves and others, and how they respond to societal issues. He is the principal investigator of the Identity, Beliefs, and Culture Lab at UCCS.

Jonathan Morgan, Ph.D. is a research associate with the Center for Mind and Culture in Boston, Massachusetts. His work is in qualitative social psychology, with a particular interest in using natural language processing techniques to better understand the relationship between social networks and belief networks.