
Perceptions of Poverty and Neighborhood Effects in Osaka

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Keywords: Perception on Poverty, Social Exclusion, Welfare Reform, Conflict among the Poor, Neighborhood effects, Osaka

Preface

Most of the large number of field studies done on poverty and social exclusion in Osaka have been descriptive studies of specific neighborhoods or minority communities. The field research done on the minorities living in Osaka has clarified the types of discrimination, poverty and other social disadvantages they have faced. A new situation has developed, however, as unstable employment and low incomes have led to an ongoing generalization of poverty, and it is difficult to say that sufficient research and analysis have been done on such questions as where and among whom poverty exists in Osaka and what are the best approaches are to dealing with it. Along with studies helping to develop an accurate assessment of the actual nature of impoverishment in the city, we need to clarify how residents look upon poverty and what ideas or ways of thinking are emerging in regard to developing countermeasures. This is because the trends in efforts to alleviate or eliminate poverty differ according to the ways in which general citizens understand poverty and look upon the strata of the population suffering from it.

It is well known that the rate of unemployment and percentage of residents receiving social assistance (Seikatsu Hogo) is higher in Osaka than it is in most other parts of Japan. A sharp increase in welfare recipients occurred in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis, and in the following years those in need of assistance have had to struggle against unfairness and iniquities in the welfare system. In 2012, the Liberal Democratic Party defeated the Democratic Party to return to power under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. With the conservatives back in power, it became increasingly difficult for the poor to press for fairness in welfare payments, and welfare recipients came under attack from politicians and were subjected to increased “bashing” in the media. In 2013, social assistance payments for food expenses were cut back, and assistance for housing expenses was reduced starting in 2015.

Among the background conditions leading to these responses are the sharp increase in welfare spending that has strained public finances and the people being led to believe that many of the working poor feel that it is unfair for them to have to squeeze by on very low wages while welfare recipients are supported by social assistance. More than a few expert observers are pointing out that a situation in which the incomes of people earning the very lowest wages are lower than incomes from social assistance is leading to divisions and confrontations between the working poor and welfare recipients.

However, no empirical verification of actual confrontations among the poor has been provided, which is one reason this study of Osaka residents is being undertaken. We will analyze the results of our study to find answers to four questions. The first is to analyze opinions gathered to see if the view that poverty is the fault of the poor themselves is a determining factor in decisions made on anti-poverty measures. The second question requiring verification is whether or not it is true that people who have fallen into financial distress actually support cutting welfare payments. The third question we will examine is whether neighborhood effects exist in Osaka, a city with striking differences between residential neighborhoods. In other words, do the living environments in the various residential neighborhoods affect the ways in which residents think about poverty? The fourth question we will address is whether or not residents' perceptions of poverty actually have a determining effect on policies adopted to deal with it.

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is, first of all, to examine how the ways in which ordinary citizens perceive poverty affecting their tendency to support poverty countermeasures. Peoples' perceptions of poverty greatly affect their feelings about the fairness of measures taken to deal with it and their ideas on the best ways to combat poverty. It has been frequently pointed out that public opinions on poverty are subject to political manipulation, particularly by the media.¹ While the determining factors in people's opinions on poverty have been studied and analyzed, almost no research has been done on the relationship between these opinions and people's tendencies to support anti-poverty measures. Therefore, in this study, we will examine the ways in which the ideas ordinary citizens have about poverty affect their attitudes toward anti-poverty measures.

The second purpose of this study is to examine not only the attributes of different types of individuals but also the characteristics of the neighborhoods where they reside to determine how those characteristics affect their tendency to support poverty countermeasures. In other words, we will be examining what Sampson described as "neighborhood effects" (Sampson 2002; 2011a; 2011b). Tendencies to support a given policy are impacted by social conditions and the characteristics of the neighborhoods people live in — by people's interactions with those they come into frequent contact with. Concentrations of neighborhood effects can go beyond strictly individual attributes in determining responses to poverty and anti-poverty measures. We will use a social map in this study to help us describe types of neighborhoods as we analyze neighborhood effects and examine both the attributes of individuals and social characteristics of various residential districts.

In the following pages, we will use the data gathered in "A Survey of the Health and Social Life of Osaka Citizens" ("Osaka Social Life and Health Survey"), a study we conducted in the Autumn of 2011 to learn more about the perceptions of Osaka citizens of poverty, particularly to learn what classes of people might tend to blame the poor for living in poverty. We will also use this data in examining citizens' feelings about welfare reform.

2. Poverty and Welfare Reform

2.1 Definitions of poverty and perceptions of poverty

Opinions about poverty are far from unified, and definitions of poverty differ according to the various standpoints of researchers and people active in public affairs. It is, in fact, very difficult to determine how to best grasp the realities of poverty. In Europe, rather than measuring the actual conditions of poverty, researchers make the ways in which poverty is perceived by ordinary citizens the subject of study, and surveys of public opinion on poverty are conducted. Results of Eurobarometer surveys of perceptions of poverty conducted in the 1970s indicated how perceptions about poverty are affected by the existence of contextual effects at the national level and by changes in economic conditions.²

Along with the question of ordinary citizens' perceptions of poverty, there is the question of how such perceptions can affect anti-poverty measures. Studies by Lepianka, et al. indicate that perceptions of poverty and particularly perceptions of the causes of poverty held by the general public can have a significant impact on the general fairness of anti-poverty measures (Lepianka, et al. 2009; 2010). If we can accept the fact that the direction of policy can to some extent be based on changeable perceptions of poverty, we can see the possibility of governments setting out to manipulate the public's perceptions of poverty in order to justify their policies. What we have actually seen in Japan over the past several years is a set of policies on poverty coming to the fore as part of a political agenda that has apparently involved media campaigns designed to shape public perceptions of poverty. Many observers think that it is very likely that public opinion has shifted as a result of these campaigns.

It should also be noted that attention is given to public opinion rather than to the actual conditions faced by the social strata in poverty. Approaches thought to be advantageous are devised after it is learned how the poor are positioned in society or what people are thinking in regard to the question of how the poor should be treated.³ It is also thought that the direction of support for anti-poverty policies will differ depending on an important trend in public opinion — whether the public feels that poverty is the fault of the poor themselves or, rather, that society is

responsible for the existence of poverty. No matter how high the percentage of the population in poverty becomes, if people think that the poor themselves are the cause of poverty, they will be very pessimistic that countermeasures will do any good, and this can lead to the belief that anti-poverty measures are unnecessary. The road to social justice will indeed be very long if this is the general trend of public opinion — even if policy proposals based on careful definitions of poverty and a firm grasp of actual conditions are advanced by researchers and civic leaders. It is therefore essential that we study how ordinary citizens perceive poverty, and that we analyze the social position of poor people. It is important to have a clear understanding of the types of relationships existing between the impoverished strata of the population and society at large.

2.2 The idea of conflict among the poor and welfare system reform

Claims that enmity and rivalry exist among the poor are growing stronger. This comes against a background in which academic experts use diverse definitions of poverty and fail to reach unified opinions on poverty. A great deal of attention has been given to examples of the working poor with lower standards of living than people on welfare. Some observers are claiming that people in the low-income strata feel the situation is completely unfair and that they “envy” those receiving social assistance.

Michio Goto, who writes on social policy, says that the “bashing” of welfare recipients is becoming severe as the ranks of the working poor continue to swell. He says “From the standpoint of working families who cannot rise even to the lowest subsistence level no matter how much they try, it is easy to think that welfare recipient families who don’t work are living in luxury” (Goto 2011:132). His point is that workers with very low incomes are bound to feel victimized and think that giving social assistance to people who do not work is unjustified.

According to Goto, it is the social isolation of the poor that gives rise to the idea that the poor themselves are to blame for their poverty (Goto 2011:133). At the same time, he says, they have developed feelings of resentment and envy toward welfare recipients. He says the poor whose level of income is below the level of welfare payments think the system is unfair, and at the same time, they feel isolated from mainstream society that they have no social influence in society. This in turn leads them to blame themselves for their situation. “The powerful impact of the theory that ‘one is responsible for one’s own fate’ is a clear sign of the utter powerlessness of people living in poverty, or people who potentially could become impoverished (Goto 2011:133).

In Goto’s opinion, the government is making use of divisions and rivalry among the poor to justify its efforts to reduce welfare programs and its neglect of the working poor. Experts on the social welfare system share this perception of divisions and conflicts among the poor. Sugiura has stated that, “Two classes of the poor coexist. They are equally poor in terms of income and consumption levels, but under the current system, those on welfare receive various services as well as cash payments for social assistance. On the other hand, workers with very low incomes cannot and do not receive welfare support of any kind, whether in cash or in goods. This is leading to sharp contradictions and conflict between these two classes of the poor” (Sugiura 2008). He points out that, just as in the past, welfare offices receive a large number of letters attacking welfare recipients, and that most of this type of mail is from low-income people. He adds, “These letters promote a broadening of the stigma attached to being poor and stronger prejudice against welfare recipients. These types of feelings result in people shunning welfare recipients, and this contributes to their isolation” (Sugiura 2008:56). In this way, he says, welfare recipients and people in the low-income strata are placed in a confrontational or adversarial relationship, and this leads to Japanese citizens becoming less concerned about anti-poverty measures or about doing something to help the working poor.

To mitigate conflict among people in the low-income strata Goto and Sugiura each present proposals to raise minimum wages and improve the welfare system. We must note, however, that proposals that are diametrically opposed to proposals such as theirs are also based on the same notion that conflicts among poor people are a problem. For example, Suzuki says, “It is quite surprising to find that many of the people who criticize social assistance (Seikatsu Hogo) are poor people. This tells me that poor people are holding back other poor people, impeding efforts to improve their lives.”⁴ It seems as though almost every type of proposal for dealing with poverty comes against the background of conflict among the poor being a problem — whether it is a proposal to raise minimum wages, to improve welfare, to make it obligatory for welfare recipients to work, or to cut welfare spending.

However, even if “imbalances” exist in the system of treatment or in standards of living between the working poor and welfare recipients, isn’t it likely that most people living on low incomes don’t particularly resent the fact that some people are receiving welfare or don’t necessarily support cutting welfare spending? Isn’t it incumbent on us to make a careful distinction between the question of imbalances in the welfare system, including imbalances in living standards among the impoverished strata of the population, and the question of divisions and conflict among those in the ranks of the poor, including any feelings of resentment and envy on the part of the working poor toward welfare recipients?

First of all, is it actually the case that conflict is taking place among poor people in Osaka? What perceptions of poor people do the citizens of Osaka have? How do they think poor people should be treated?

2.3 Contextual effects on perceptions of poverty

How does society position people living in poverty? In other words, how do we define poverty and what do we consider the causes of poverty to be? The answers to these questions will change as social and historical conditions change. Geremek and Castel have clarified how perceptions of the poor and their treatment have changed historically (Geremek 1989; Castel 1995). Based on data from World Value Survey and Eurobarometer surveys, Van Oorschot has shown how the perceptions of poverty differ from country to country in Europe, depending on the type of welfare regime in place (Van Oorschot, et al. 2000; Larsen 2006). In addition, Paugam has linked changes in economic and employment conditions with people’s perceptions of poverty (Paugam 2005a; 2005b).⁵ This research strongly suggests that the way general society positions poverty, in other words the public’s perceptions of poverty, is greatly affected by social and historical conditions. It can also be assumed that an interaction is involved and that public opinion is a determining factor in the direction of welfare policies and anti-poverty measures.

Macro-contexts not only have an impact at the national level, as the research on welfare regimes at might suggest. They also are apparent at the district and neighborhood level. Impoverished districts or communities are formed in an historical context, and their residents suffer from combined and cumulative disadvantages. A number of studies have identified these concentrated disadvantages that can outweigh individual residents’ attributes and abilities. For example, residents in districts where poor people are concentrated can face discrimination simply because of where they live, or their district may be far from labor markets (Wilson 1985).

There is a clear tendency for social classes to become concentrated in specific districts, and this tendency applies not only to the poor but to the wealthiest classes as well. Sassen discusses how social and spatial polarization phenomena occur in global cities. Giddens describes how relatively small numbers of people in the most privileged strata are able to leverage their wealth, influence and social networks to prevent the integration of members of different classes into important decision-making organizations affecting the social system. He describes this negative selection process as social exclusion practiced by the most privileged class. The wealthiest citizens, he says, use various means to avoid social and financial responsibilities as they retreat to their closed off, private domains. The effects of exclusion steadily erode social cohesion and unity, while isolating the poorest and the wealthiest classes (Giddens 2006:386).

Studies of Japanese society have indicated that the transfer of wealth from generation to generation is more important in terms of social exclusion than poverty being passed on from generation to generation (Sato, Yoshida 2007).⁶ Social exclusion on the part of the wealthiest class operates on the neighborhood level and takes the form of wealthy families’ residences being clustered in specific districts. Rather than examining how the poorest social strata live in specific districts, studies of urban residential segregation in recent years have focused on the degree to which the wealthy are concentrated in specific areas (Massey 1996). French economist Eric Maurin discusses the formation of “wealthy ghettos” to describe the result of social separatism practiced by the rich who seek to perpetuate their social position and reproduce their wealth (Maurin 2004). It has been frequently pointed out that this includes efforts to recreate “inner circles” of power and privilege (Donzelot 2006; Pincon and Pincon-Charlot 2007). Generally, networks formed by residents of a city are not directly related to residential areas. Network formation is broader than that. Networks could be expected to provide expanded opportunities for members of various social classes to interact, but when the tendency is for close friendships and other relationships to be formed only with a

given residential area, then the interaction and mutual influence of neighbors (those living in a similar environment) becomes stronger.⁷

Do these types of residential segregation and neighborhood effects come into play in Osaka, which is the subject of our study? Using a social map and a classification of residential districts, in the following pages we will examine actual tendencies toward residential segregation.

3. An Osaka Social Map and Types of Areas

In developing a social map for this study, we first of all developed area types based on 2005 national census data on small districts (*cho cho-me*) in the city. We adopted the methodology applied by E. Prêteville to create the types of areas used (Prêteville 2003).⁸ Thirty-four variables related to occupation were used for analysis, along with 10 related to dwellings, for a total of 44. Table 1 shows some of the variables used in the data analysis to obtain the 12 areas of Osaka for our study.⁹ In addition, as shown in Figure 1, social mapping of the 12 areas was performed.

Table 1. Area types

Occupational classes (%)										
	Professional self-employed	Middle class	Blue collar	Unemployed men and women	Irregular work men	Own home	Rent public housing	Rent private housing	Row house	Percent of population (2005)
Professional, self-employed	17.54	66.44	12.95	3.27	14.85	65.89	0.00	18.52	4.97	0.13
Professional, manager	25.63	57.97	13.39	6.57	12.17	47.09	0.39	45.52	1.10	6.77
Professional, manager, own home	20.57	54.4	22.13	9.30	13.55	52.1	0.18	44.22	11.45	7.23
Professional, manager, rent home	18.17	64.02	13.33	8.11	14.20	22.46	0.26	73.75	1.30	2.54
Professional, middle class	15.56	50.31	31.24	9.94	10.90	55.44	0.35	40.72	5.94	10.33
Middle class	14.58	50.18	32.71	10.66	13.16	59.11	1.08	37.49	14.61	12.66
Middle class, own home	13.98	45.88	37.78	8.67	11.95	77.14	0.20	18.99	12.18	2.26
Middle class, public housing	15.27	51.19	30.52	11.08	12.82	42.44	15.30	38.58	6.55	14.05
Blue collar class, row house or apt.	12.26	48.54	36.43	12.56	14.86	59.94	0.13	37.43	29.47	6.32
Blue collar, public housing	12.09	47.27	36.94	13.88	13.77	23.76	55.61	18.63	4.00	18.65
Blue collar, Unemployed	11.53	48.15	37.13	14.26	14.82	37.86	0.77	59.32	17.43	5.70
Unemployed, irregular work	15.44	53.5	27.13	15.62	15.00	27.33	0.48	69.39	5.56	13.36

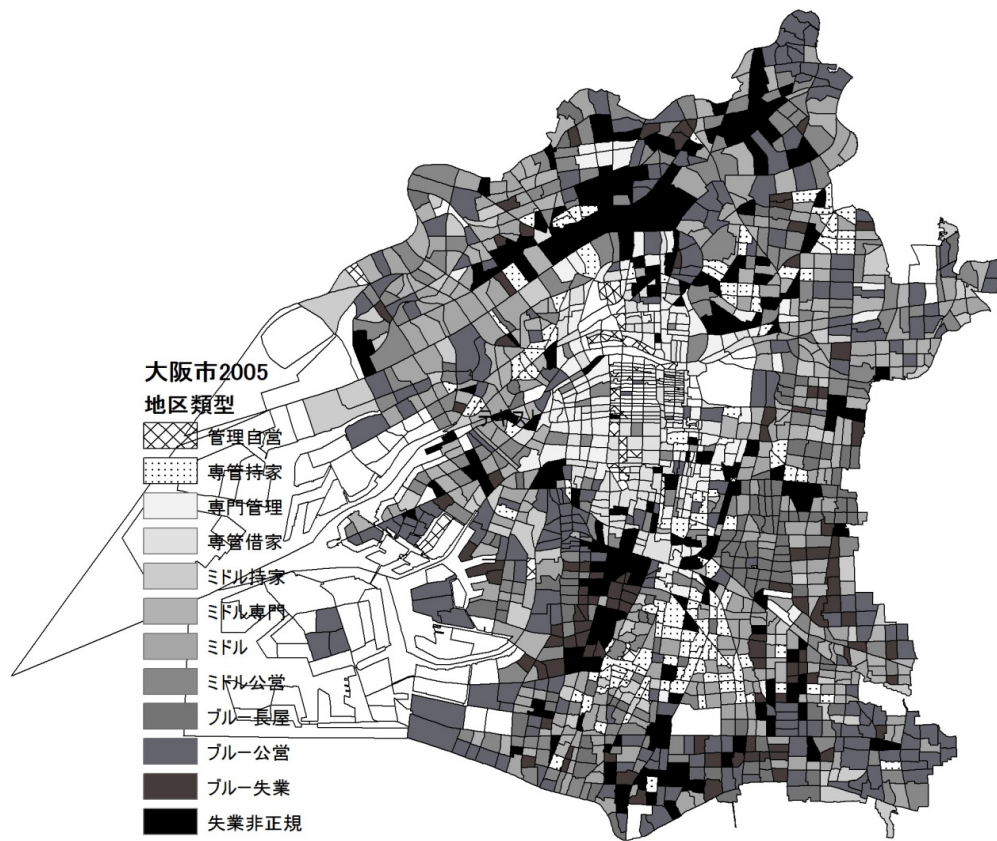


Figure 1. Osaka social map (types of areas)

As seen in Figure 1, Osaka areas characterized by a high percentage of professionals or managers among its residents tend to be concentrated in the center of the city. In contrast, areas with residents primarily in the blue collar, unemployed and irregularly employed categories tend to be in outer, peripheral locations of the city. Historically, the central part of Osaka existed in feudal times. The urban districts expanded when industrialization began in the Meiji period (latter part of the nineteenth century), and industrial zones in which dwellings and factories were intermingled were formed. This helps account for the fact that, to this day, the upper strata of society, including professionals and company managers tend to live in the central part of the city, and working class residents, particularly blue collar workers tend to live in the peripheral areas.

Based on the gathered data, the social map presents a view of the ecological differentiation in the city. At the descriptive level it provides a good overview of the distribution of residents in different economic or occupational categories. To analyze neighborhood effects on residents' consciousness, however, we had to use microdata to consider neighborhood effects at the individual level and area level at the same time. Using data from the Osaka Social Health Survey, in the following pages we will analyze neighborhood effects on Osaka citizens' perceptions of poverty and the degree to which citizens tend to support anti-poverty measures. The survey subjects were men and women, aged 25 to 64, with Japanese citizenship and residing in Osaka as of August 1, 2011. Double sampling for stratification was used to extract samples in this survey, and as was the case in creating the social map, census tract data from the 2005 national census pertaining to the city's smallest districts (*cho cho-me*) were used in the stratification steps to create types of areas (neighborhoods).

4. Data and Variables

4.1 Data

The data used in this analysis is from the Survey of the Social Life and Health of Osaka Citizens, which was

conducted in 2011 (*Osaka shimin no shakai seikatsu to kenko ni kansuru chosa*). The survey subjects were men and women, aged 25 to 64, with Japanese citizenship and residing in Osaka as of August 1, 2011. Double sampling for stratification was used in this study, and as was the case in creating the social map, census tract data from the 2005 national census pertaining to the city's smallest districts (*cho cho-me*) were used in the stratification steps to create types of areas (neighborhoods). Then, as a characteristic of this study, the primary units used in sampling at each of 100 points (locations) were individuals. The 100 points selected for sampling were extracted from among 12 area types in proportion to population density. One of the 12, the area type where residents were predominantly in the managerial or self-employed class, accounted for only 0.1% of the population, which was too small to warrant sampling. Therefore, the points for sampling were from 11 clusters. The units used in the second step in the sampling were individual residents, approximately 63 from each of the 100 points. The government's basic resident register was used in the selection of the 6,298 individuals sent questionnaires by mail. In addition to the returned questionnaires, supplementary collection was conducted by researchers making individual visits to residents who did not return a questionnaire. The two-month survey period was from September through October 2011. A total of 3,245 questionnaires were gathered from participants, for an effective collection rate of 52.4%.¹⁰

4.2 Subjects of the analysis and dependent variables

The Osaka Social Life and Health Survey used the same questions about the causes of poverty as those used for the Eurobarometer. As one of the ways to discover people's perceptions of poverty, in this study, we used as a variable responses to the question, "Why in your opinion are there people who live in need?" The respondents were asked to select one of the following answers: (1) Because there is much injustice in our society; (2) Because of laziness and lack of willpower; (3) Because they have been unlucky; and (4) It's an inevitable part of progress.

In the analysis of Osaka citizens' perceptions of poverty, we used the idea that poor people themselves are responsible for their poverty as a determining factor. Among the answers that could be selected for the question on the cause of poverty, the answer "Poor people are not sufficiently motivated, and they do not make sufficient efforts to succeed" was assigned a "1," and the other answer categories were set up as a dependent variable, an alternative dummy variable with a value of "0." This approach should verify whether or not the working poor, people who face economic difficulty and have a low level of satisfaction with their lives, feel socially isolated and whether this becomes a cause of acceptance of the idea that poverty is the fault of the poor.

Next, to examine the validity of the idea of "Conflict among poor people," we asked questions designed to see if there was a tendency to support cutting welfare spending among poor people other than those receiving social assistance. We also investigated support for cutting welfare spending by neighborhood to determine possible effects of a neighborhood context.¹¹ The respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed with the opinion that "Social assistance payments should be further reduced." They were asked to select one out of five choices, ranging from (1) Agree to (4) Oppose. The last choice, (5) "I don't know," was disregarded in the analysis.

4.3 Independent variables

We classified occupations as follows: we placed "Specialists and engineers" in the Professional and Management class; "Clerical and sales," and "Service" work in the Administrative and Sales class; "Point of production work and skilled work," and "Transportation and public security work" in the "Manual" class; "Other" was excluded from the analysis. A dummy variable for irregular work was used, assigning "1" for "Temporary employment" and "Dispatch worker." All the rest were assigned a "0." A dummy variable was used for the unemployed, assigning "Seeking work," and "Not working due to illness or injury," a "1" and all the others a "0."

A dummy variable for incomes below the poverty line was set by calculating equivalent incomes and assigning a "1" for those at a level below one-half the median. Other income levels were set as a dummy variable assigned a "0." In addition, home ownership was used as a variable, as one not including income, to indicate social status. A dummy variable assigned a "1" was used for individuals who "Own a home or a condominium"; others are represented by a dummy variable assigned a "0." We did not directly ask respondents if they were receiving welfare payments for social assistance. Instead we asked, among questions about health insurance, if they were "Receiving

medical assistance” as part of social assistance. Those who indicated they were receiving such assistance were represented by dummy variable assigned a “1”; others were represented by a dummy variable assigned a “0.” Other control variables used included dummy variables for “Female”, for “Have a spouse,” “Have a child,” “Education level,” and “Annual household income.”

Next, we developed and applied variables to represent subjective attitudes. For the feeling of being in financial distress we used questions on “Your current circumstances,” with answers that could be selected ranging from “(1) Extremely difficult,” to the direct opposite response “(5) Quite well off.” In regard to their perception of their own socioeconomic status we asked the respondents, “Compared to the average level among Osaka citizens, where do you think your standard of living stands?” The responses that could be selected ranged from “(1) Extremely poor” to “(5) Very affluent.” We also asked the respondents to rate their overall level of satisfaction with their livelihood and lifestyle to obtain a measure of degree of satisfaction — if they were satisfied, and to what extent they were satisfied. The responses that could be selected included: “(1) I am satisfied”; “(2) To say one or the other, I am satisfied”; “(3)

Table 2. Area types

	Lowest	Mean	S.D.	Highest
Individual level				
Female(dummy)	0.00	0.55		1.00
Age	25.00	44.52		64.00
Have spouse(dummy)	0.00	0.59		1.00
Have children(dummy)	0.00	0.59		1.00
Years of education	9.00	13.51		16.00
Occupation				
Professional, manager	0.00	0.23		1.00
Administration, sales	0.00	0.37		1.00
Manual	0.00	0.14		1.00
Household income	0.00	510.10	361.56	1440.00
Own home(dummy)	0.00	0.54		1.00
Irregular	0.00	0.28		1.00
Life insurance(dummy)	0.00	0.04		1.00
No occupation(dummy)	0.00	0.09		1.00
Below poverty line(dummy)	0.00	0.12		1.00
Poverty is fault of poor(dummy)	0.00	0.29		1.00
Level of satisfaction with livelihood	1.00	2.91	0.84	4.00
Perception of social economic Status	1.00	2.88	0.78	5.00
Financial distress	1.00	3.29	1.05	
Feeling of isolation	1.00	2.36	0.86	4.00
Supports cutting livelihood Assistance	1.00	3.00	0.96	4.00
Has friends in neighborhood	0.00	0.47	0.96	1.00
Area level				
Area type				
Professional, manager class, owns home	0.00	0.08	0.27	1.00
Professional, manager class, rents home	0.00	0.02	0.15	1.00
Middle class, professional	0.00	0.11	0.31	1.00
Middle class	0.00	0.14	0.34	1.00
Middle class, owns home	0.00	0.02	0.15	1.00
Middle class, public housing	0.00	0.14	0.35	1.00
Blue collar class, row house or Apartment	0.00	0.05	0.23	1.00
Blue collar, public housing	0.00	0.18	0.39	1.00
Blue collar class, unemployed	0.00	0.06	0.23	1.00
Unemployed, irregular work	0.00	0.12	0.33	1.00

To say one or the other, I'm dissatisfied"; and the direct opposite feeling compared to (1), "(4) I am not satisfied." To get a reading on the subjects' feelings in regard to being isolated we asked, "Do you currently feel isolated?" The choices were "(1) I always feel isolated"; "(2) I sometimes feel isolated"; "(3) I do not feel like I am particularly isolated"; and the direct opposite feeling compared to (1), "(4) I do not at all feel isolated."

We also asked the subjects about close friends in their neighborhood. First we asked whether or not they had any close friends. Then, in regard to where their friends lived, we asked those saying they had close friends and how many lived in the same neighborhood (same elementary school district) that they did. The response selections were "(1) Most of them (half or more)"; "(2) Several of them do (less than half)"; and "(3) None live in my neighborhood." One of the purposes of this study was to determine what the impact was of close friendships being confined to area of residence. Accordingly, in our analysis of the sample who said they had close friends, we set the case of those who said close friends lived in their residential neighborhood as a dummy variable with a value of "1." The case of those who said none of their close friends lived in their residential neighborhood was set as a dummy variable with a value of "0."

In addition to area averages for individual-level variables, we used area-type variables to measure area-level context. In addition, to analyze how close relations of friendship in neighborhoods impacts tendencies to support (or not support) cutting welfare spending, we created items to clarify the interrelationship between area type and the presence or absence of close friendships in neighborhoods. The descriptive statistics used in this analysis are presented below in Table 2.

5. Analysis

5.1 Determining factors in the belief that "Poverty is the fault of the poor"

What types of factors influence people to believe that poor people themselves are responsible for the poverty that exists in Osaka? First of all, we studied area-level effects, and variances by residential area did not appear in regard to tendencies among residents to hold this opinion that could be attributed to area of residence. Therefore, we conducted regular logistic regression analysis using dependent variables linked to the opinion that poor people are responsible for their poverty. Model 1 in Table 3 shows the result of the analysis when we used dummy variables for "Female," "Have spouse," "Have child," "Years of education," "Occupation," "Irregular work," "Unemployed," "Own home," "Receive social assistance," "Household income," and "Below poverty line." We found negative effects for the "Female" and "Years of education" dummy variables, and a positive effect for the "Have spouse" dummy variable and for "Household income of 7.2 million yen or above."

In Model 2, we used the subjects' feelings of being in financial distress, their perception of their socioeconomic status, and "levels of satisfaction with their livelihood" as variables. We found a negative effect for the subjects' "feeling of being in financial distress" and a positive effect for higher "levels of satisfaction with their livelihood."

In Model 3, in which we used variables for subjects' feelings of being isolated, the coefficient for level of satisfaction with livelihood dropped from 0.143 to 0.076, indicating a negative effect from feelings of being isolated. Accordingly it can be concluded that the level of subjects' satisfaction with their livelihood rose when feelings of being isolated fell, which was shown by the drop to slightly less than half of any correspondence between higher level of livelihood satisfaction and higher level of feeling of isolation.

The above results indicate that classes feeling financial distress, low levels of satisfaction with their livelihood, and with low incomes tend to feel isolated, and a causal linkage with the opinion that the poor are responsible for their own poverty cannot be concluded. Conversely, the higher the level of feeling of isolation, the stronger the tendency to deny that the poor are responsible for their own poverty. We can also conclude that the tendency to blame the poor for their own poverty grows stronger among people with higher levels of satisfaction with their livelihood and greater economic stability in their lives.

Table 3. Logistic regression analysis of dependent variables for opinion that poverty is the fault of the poor themselves

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	coeff.	S.E.	coeff.	S.E.	coeff.	S.E.
Intercept	0.267	0.483	0.473	0.672	0.972	0.695
Female(dummy)	-0.265*	0.112	-0.297**	0.113	-0.286*	0.114
age	-0.003	0.005	-0.003	0.005	-0.002	0.005
Have spouse(dummy)	0.305*	0.129	0.333*	0.132	0.393**	0.133
Have child(dummy)	0.167	0.127	0.206	0.128	0.204	0.128
Years of Education	-0.091***	0.028	-0.093***	0.028	-0.090**	0.028
Occupation Ref. = manual						
Professional/ Management	0.086	0.162	0.037	0.163	0.047	0.163
Clerical/ Sales	0.130	0.145	0.109	0.146	0.112	0.147
Irregular(dummy)	-0.224	0.126	-0.191	0.127	-0.198	0.127
Unemployed(dummy)	-0.337	0.218	-0.237	0.220	-0.233	0.220
Household income						
Ref.=less than 3 million yen						
3–4.8	0.086	0.149	0.042	0.151	0.041	0.151
4.8–7.2	0.107	0.158	0.000	0.163	0.013	0.163
Over 7.20	0.453**	0.168	0.265	0.184	0.283	0.184
Receive Social Aid(dummy)	-0.291	0.367	-0.282	0.369	-0.237	0.369
Below poverty line(dummy)	-0.116	0.184	-0.044	0.186	-0.070	0.187
Own home(dummy)	-0.056	0.106	-0.099	0.107	-0.105	0.107
Financial distress			-0.153*	0.065	-0.142*	0.065
Feeling of social economic status			-0.022	0.091	-0.021	0.091
Degree of Satisfaction with livelihood			0.143*	0.070	0.076	0.074
Feeling of isolation					-0.185**	0.064
Nagelkerke R-sq.	0.025		0.036		0.041	
Log-likelihood	-1299.891		-1291.483		-1287.285	
De viance	2599.782		2582.966		2574.570	
N	2217		2217		2217	

Note, ***:p<.001 **:p<.01 *:p<.05

5.2 Multi-level analysis of support for cutting social assistance

Next we conducted a multi-level analysis using support for cutting spending on social assistance as a dependent variable (Luke 2003). At 0.1%, the variance between residential areas was significant, which meant that we were able to confirm differences at the area level in rate of support for cutting this form of welfare spending. In Model 1, we found that variables at the individual level area average centered on area averages, and when input neither the “Below the poverty line” dummy variable, the “Household income” variable, nor the “Irregular work” dummy variable proved to be statistically significant. A negative effect of 0.1% appeared for the “Unemployed” dummy variable.¹²

In Model 2, we again used dummy variables to determine links with the idea that “Poor people are responsible for their poverty.” In addition to variables for respondents’ perception of their own socioeconomic status, degree of satisfaction with their livelihood, feeling of being isolated, and feeling of being in financial distress, we input data on responses to the question of whether or not they had close friends living in the same district. These had a strong positive effect on holding the opinion that poor people are responsible for their poverty. A negative effect from the feeling of being in poverty or financial distress appeared. None of the other variables had statistical significance.

For Model 3, for links with each variable, we input area averages and area-type variables as Level 2 variables, and input items to determine an interaction between type of area and whether or not the respondents had close friends living in the same district. The results indicated a simple main effect for “unemployed” at the type of area level — the higher the percentage of unemployed, the greater the negative effect. A reciprocal or interactive effect appeared between variables related to area type and existence of close friends in residential district. A positive link

Table 4. Multilevel analysis using support for cutting spending on social aid as a dependent variable

	Null Model		Model1		Model2		Model3	
	coeff.	S.E.	coeff.	S.E.	coeff.	S.E.	coeff.	S.E.
Fixedeffect								
Intercept	3.069***	0.027	3.069***	0.027	3.069***	0.027	3.994**	1.501
Individual level								
Below poverty line			-0.046	0.091	-0.005	0.090	0.003	0.090
House hold income			0.000	0.000	-0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Irregular work(dummy)			-0.032	0.063	0.023	0.062	0.018	0.062
Unemployed(dummy)			-0.291**	0.113	-0.264*	0.111	-0.263*	0.111
Poor people are responsible for their poverty(dummy)					0.361***	0.052	0.371***	0.052
Feeling of social economic status					-0.006	0.045	-0.007	0.045
Degree of satisfaction with livelihood					0.028	0.037	0.032	0.037
Feeling of isolation					-0.019	0.032	-0.014	0.032
Financial distress					-0.074*	0.033	-0.067*	0.033
Friends in neighborhood					-0.064	0.051	-0.304**	0.115
Area level								
Type of arearef.=Blue collar, public housing								
Professional, manager class							0.033	0.134
Professional, manager class, own home							0.028	0.128
Professional, manager class, rent home							0.205	0.213
Professional, manager class							0.016	0.128
Middle class							0.041	0.116
Middle class, own home							-0.001	0.207
Middle class, public housing							-0.141	0.103
Blue collar class, row house or Apartment							-0.118	0.154
Blue collar class, unemployed							-0.262	0.147
Unemployed, irregular work							-0.045	0.111
Unemployment rate							-1.515**	0.587

Table 5. Multilevel analysis (continued)

	Null Model		Model1		Model2		Model3	
	coeff.	S.E.	coeff.	S.E.	coeff.	S.E.	coeff.	S.E.
Area x Individual level								
Type of area x Friends in neighborhood (centered)								
ref. = Blue collar, public housing								
Professional, manager class							0.543*	0.216
Professional, manager class, own home							0.536**	0.198
Professional, manager class, rent home							0.092	0.382
Professional, manager class							0.243	0.184
Middle class							0.164	0.175
Middle class, own home							0.600	0.317
Middle class, public housing							0.221	0.168
Blue collar class, row house or Apartment							0.316	0.255
Blue collar class, unemployed							0.155	0.251
Unemployed, irregular work							0.273	0.180
Random effect								
Variance between areas		0.015***		0.016***		0.018***		0.014***
Variance between individuals		0.790		0.785		0.751		0.750
Log-likelihood		-1894.669		-1917.749		-1898.801		-1917.551
Deviance		3783.931		3763.417		3696.987		3651.167
N		1445		1445		1445		1445

Note: ***,p<.001 **p<.01 *p<.05

Note: All individual-level variables are centered at the area mean

Note: Such variables as the female dummy, have spouse dummy, years of education, occupation, and own home were left out because they were

Note: The area-level variables were left out because they were statistically insignificant.

to the opinion that “Poor people are responsible for their poverty” appeared in areas where high percentages of professionals and company managers lived and where professionals and managers who owned their own homes lived.¹³

Accordingly, it is not the case that persons in the lower income strata, the unemployed and those in poverty or financial distress, have negative attitudes toward social assistance. On the other hand, the results show that subjects whose perceptions of poverty include the idea that the poor are responsible for their poverty will also support cutting spending on social assistance. This supports the hypothesis that such perceptions influence or give direction to people’s tendencies in regard to supporting policies on poverty. The results also indicate that people living in areas where residents are mainly in the professional and managerial class will tend to support cutting spending on social assistance to the extent that they have close friends in their neighborhoods. From this we can surmise that negative attitudes toward social assistance are formed in social interactions in upper class neighborhoods, to the extent that close friendships are restricted to those living in the same district.

7 [6]. Considerations

Four points can be made based on the analysis conducted so far. The first is in regard to the determining factors in people coming to believe that the poor have only themselves to blame for being in poverty. Amid the current moves toward welfare reform, many advocates of reform, particularly those in favor of cutting social assistance, share and put forward the idea that serious conflict exists among different strata among the poor, as exemplified, they say, by the resentment that the working poor have of those receiving social assistance. However, based on the data gathered in Osaka City, analysis of the factors determining how people come to the opinion that “Poor people are responsible for their poverty” indicates that social isolation is not a factor. Social isolation does not appear to cause people to believe that poor people are responsible for their own poverty. Rather what we do see is that the less that people feel isolated, the more likely they are to feel satisfied with their livelihood. Lower feelings of isolation has a mediate effect increasing feelings of satisfaction with one’s livelihood. We also see that people with higher levels of satisfaction with their livelihood tend to believe that “Poor people are responsible for their poverty” — the higher the level of satisfaction, the stronger the tendency to share this belief. As for the effect of people’s economic situation, our analysis indicates that the working poor who are in financial distress do not tend to believe that poor people have themselves to blame for their plight. This contradicts the claims of those who insist that serious conflict exists among different groups of poor people. The data indicate that it is the people with stable livelihoods who show a strong tendency to think that poor people themselves are responsible for their poverty.

The second point that can be made is in regard to support for cutting spending on social assistance. Those in poverty or financial distress do not think that social assistance spending should be cut. (Opinions of those receiving this form of social assistance were not considered.) The data indicate that the opposite is the case. The impoverished tend to oppose such proposals. Also, more than the poor, it is the people who are in relatively stable economic situations who support the notion that poor people themselves are to blame for poverty. What we find is that it is the classes with high levels of livelihood satisfaction and with highly stable financial situation that tend to hold the opinion that the impoverished are responsible for poverty, and people in these strata tend to support cutting welfare spending. Accordingly, no matter what types of concrete welfare reform measures may be proposed, it is not correct to assert that confrontation among the impoverished strata is a reason to adopt one reform measure or another.

The third point is in regard to citizens living in areas where the upper classes live such as those where mainly people in the professional and manager occupational category reside. The data indicates that, the more it is the case that individuals residing in these areas only have close friends who live in the same districts or neighborhoods, the more likely it is that they will support reducing social assistance spending. The tendency toward differentiation among Osaka’s residential areas can be seen in the distribution of areas in the social map we use in this study. Our results suggest that a neighborhood effect operates within this type of ecological differentiation. Namely, negative attitudes toward poverty countermeasures tend to appear among the people living in the upper-class districts to the extent that their close friends are confined to “inner circles” of residents in their districts.

The fourth point that can be made from the results is that the opinion that “Poor people are responsible for their poverty” exerts an independent and strong effect leading to a tendency to support reducing welfare spending

on social assistance. It appears to be an example of how the direction of people's tendency to support anti-poverty measures is determined by how they perceive poverty. Previous research has suggested this, but more research and analysis is needed to verify this hypothesis.

Of course it is necessary to be aware of the fact that the ways people perceive poverty and their tendencies to support poverty-related measures can easily change. The survey used in this analysis was conducted in the fall of 2011. Subsequently, the media and conservative politicians mounted a vigorous campaign against social assistance, which resulted in an even greater stigma being attached to receiving this form of social assistance. One result was that social assistance spending was actually cut. This truly was a case in which the media greatly affected the way in which poverty is perceived, and this was an important factor in policy decisions. One can certainly say that reforms made in the social assistance system were largely based on the formation of perceptions of poverty.

A special word of thanks

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to all who contributed to this research project: to Taro Maruhiro (Kyoto University) and Akaeda Naoki (Osaka University) who provided valuable comments to help in the preparation of this paper; and, along with the members of the Osaka City Social Health Investigative Research Group, to Fukuhara Hirosachi, Fukushima Wakabayashi, Matsunaga Ichiro (Osaka City University), and Tabuchi Kita (Osaka Prefecture Adult Diseases Center) who all provided important assistance in the field work. We also very much appreciate the research funds received from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, and Osaka City University, which assisted greatly with focused research in key areas.

Notes

1. For example, see Lepianka, D., et al. 2009.
2. See Commission of the European Communities, 1990; 2007; and Gallie and Paugam 2002.
3. In their sociological studies of poverty, Simmel (1908) and Paugam (2008) provide examples of an approach that, rather than coming to grips with actual conditions among the poor, focuses on the relationship between the impoverished and society as a whole. This paper also addresses the question of how society at large positions the poor. We are examining opinions on how the poor should be treated along with people's perceptions of poverty and the poor.
4. "It's Not Right to Give Money to People Who Don't Work Even Though They Can Work." (*"Hatarakeru no ni hatrakanai hito ni, okane o agete wa ikemasen"*), Nikkei Business Online July 19, 2012, (<http://business.nikkeibp.co.jp/article/interview/20120712/234420/?P=6&rt=ocnt>)
5. The series of surveys conducted by Aoki et al. provide an example of research on perceptions of poverty done in Japan (Aoki 2010). Their survey, which used the same items in its questions as the Eurobarometer, yielded results that strongly support the idea that social factors are important determining factors in people's opinions in Japan (Aoki 2010:174-176). They interpreted their results as being a reflection of political conditions in the Hokkaido region. However, random sampling was not used in the survey. The fact that its main subjects were district social workers, students attending social welfare courses, and labor union members makes the results extremely biased, and it would be risky to derive any general conclusions from them. On the other hand, this work can be considered valuable as material derived from interviews in which the subjects explain their thinking on the subjects discussed.
6. Sato and Yoshida insist that "One cannot correctly understand how poverty continues in Japan without grasping the movements from generation to generation among all income levels" (Sato and Yoshida 2007:82). Other research efforts using a different definition of poverty focused in advance on recipients of social assistance and gathered different information and different results (Michinaka 2009; Komamura, Michinaka, Maruyama 2010). Sato and Yoshida defined the impoverished as those with incomes in the lowest quartile. The subjects of the latter study based on a different definition of poverty were restricted to families with children receiving social assistance.
7. Contemporary urban communities are being redefined by some researchers as networks, as distinguished from neighborhoods, and the influence of the idea of networks has had a strong influence on urban sociology (Wellman 1979; Wellman and Leighton 1979). Other researchers studying how neighborhoods take on the form of stratified ecological differentiation are emphasizing independent neighborhood effects (Sampson 1999; 2011b).
8. In France's SIRS Project (a study of health and inequality, and social disruption in metropolitan areas), which served as a reference for the design of the Osaka Social Life and Health Survey, area types created by E. Pr teville were used as locations serving as primary extraction units in the study of the Paris Metropolitan Area (Pr teville 2003). In this study, we attempt to be as faithful as possible to the methodology applied to create the types of areas used by (Pr teville 2003). However, exactly the same types of variables could not be used in the analysis because of differences in the items studied in each country's national census.
9. Although the percentage of blue-collar families owning a home is high, we used "Middle class, own home" as a type because of the relatively low rate of unemployment in areas with high percentages of home-owners.
10. In calculating the effective collection rate, we did not count questionnaires given to persons who moved their residence or were ill. See Kawano (2012) for a summary and an analysis of the effective collection rate.
11. In the analysis, participants receiving social assistance were excluded from the sample.
12. Due to space limitations in the table, variables without significance, including input control variables such as gender, age, "Have spouse" (dummy), "Have child" (dummy), "Years of education" (dummy), and "Own home (dummy) were not shown.
13. Other insignificant variables were omitted due to space limitations in the table.

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