

Poverty Attribution in the Developing World: A Critical Discussion on Aspects of Split Consciousness among Low Income Urban Slum Dwellers in Lagos

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ABSTRACT Studies of poverty attribution, using the Causes of Poverty Scale, preponderantly reported that respondents often used more than one attribution concurrently when explaining poverty. Studies further reported that this phenomenon called 'split consciousness' is more prevalent among disadvantaged groups and ethnic minorities. While scholars have shown how attributions explain willingness to assist the poor and sundry pro-poor attitudes among the middle classes, there has been less attention to the effects of split consciousness on the predisposition of the disadvantaged to take action to ameliorate their situation. This study applied a modified index on a sample (n=383) from Badia, a low income community in Lagos, Nigeria. The results from the study showed that respondents heavily layered structural attributions upon fatalistic attributions. These results therefore significantly contradict findings from studies in the global north that reported a preponderant combination of individual and structural attributions among disadvantaged groups. The results also indicate that the fatalistic explanations are a valid explanation of failure of the disadvantaged to adopt non normative responses to injustice and inequality. Furthermore the findings of this study revealed that attribution could be linked to 'perception of powerlessness' (opposite of efficacy/empowerment) which has been widely accepted in Social Identity Theory (SIT)-inspired research as an impediment to collective action

INTRODUCTION

Increased economic inequality is often considered a threat to the stability of the social order (Castillo 2007: 1). However, studies of inequality legitimization showed that extreme economic inequalities and political stability often exist side-by-side. This phenomenon has confounded many analysts and thinkers. There have therefore been arguments related to the role of ideologies in the legitimation of even seemingly unjust systems (Kluegel et al.1995; Gijsberts 1999; Aalberg 2003). Other scholars have explored the role of existential (meritocratic individualism) and utopian (egalitarianism) justice ideologies (Rawls 1971; Della Fave 1980; Kluegel and Smith 1986; Shepelak 1987) in stifling reaction to inequality. These propositions are

situated around the historic roles of justifications and rationalizations (Giddens 1976). Justifications of stratification inequality are common in human history. Rationalization was often couched in terms of religious doctrines as origins of social ranking (Lloyd 1974). In feudal society, the aristocracy used 'birthright' and 'the divine right of kings' to justify privileges and wealth. During slavery, the idea of 'innate superiority' was used to justify ownership of humans by other humans. In India, the idea of 'reincarnation' was used to justify a caste system (McNamee and Miller 2004). In African societies, quite often, inequality is believed to be caused or ordained by God, unseen spirits or an immutable destiny (Smith 2001). In post industrial society however, a new form of stratification emerged based on individual personal wealth.

Inequality and Legitimization

Studies linking poverty attribution to inequality legitimization correlate legitimization to the acceptance of a 'logic of opportunity syllogism' (Kluegel and Smith 1986), linked to Americans' acceptance of a system of inequality based

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on a preponderant belief that poverty is the consequence of individual character deficiency (Feagin 1972; Kluegel and Smith 1981; Robinson 2009). Studies of inequality have shown how disadvantaged and advantaged persons or groups come to accept 'legitimizing myths' (Sidanius and Prato 1999), 'legitimizing ideology' (Major et al. 2002) or what Robinson (2009) termed 'institutional logics', embedded in 'beliefs in a just world' (Lerner 1980) or forms of meritocracy, legitimizing status differences. A 'false consciousness' (reminiscent of Marx) develops whereby disadvantaged classes come to believe that the political and economic structures that exist also represent their interests and are therefore legitimate. This proposition is analogous to Gramsci's (1971) notion of ideological hegemony that proposes that the dominant ideas in the major institutions of the capitalist state, transmitted through socialization, promote the acceptance of ideas and beliefs that benefit the ruling classes (Henry and Saul 2006). Jost et al. (2004) hypothesized that disadvantaged people are more likely to justify existing social systems, and that system justification is more severe in societies with more extreme social and economic inequalities. Feagin (1972) found that nationally, Americans believe in a 'meritocratic' philosophy and that this formed the basis for 'unbridled individualism', a finding that has been confirmed by many studies on American attitudes to poverty (Huber and Form, 1973; Kluegel and Smith 1986; Smith and Stone 1989; Guimond et al. 1989; Cozzarelli et al. 2001), and to a lesser degree in studies conducted in other western countries (Lepianka et al. 2009). Hunt (1996) however showed that individualistic philosophies are not all encompassing because Americans differ in attitudes according to race and geographical locations (see also Wilson 1996). Robinson (2009) demonstrated how American beliefs could be understood on the basis of an individualist-structural continuum on which attributions and legitimization could be located. In studies of transitory economies of Western

Europe, a similar pattern is emerging as people's acceptance of egalitarian distribution gives way to individualism as an overriding ideology (Matijù 1996). This thesis has however been challenged by scholars who argued that the context in which explanations are made are just as important.

While this 'dominant ideology' thesis (Kluegel and Smith 1986) has dominated much think-

ing about attributions, recent attribution studies have shown that context matters. The dominant ideology thesis, it has been argued, merely serves to maintain structures of social dominance thereby perpetuating individualistic explanations of poverty (Robinson 2009: 495). At the other end of these 'institutional logics' (Robinson 2009) is placed the structural attributions or 'competing institutional logics' (Robinson 2009: 494) which side-by-side the individualistic philosophy structure American beliefs in a continuum, with individual attributions linked to conservatism and structural attributions to social liberalism (Zucker and Weiner 1993: 939; Robinson 2009: 494). While most attribution studies have attempted to place the beliefs of individuals and groups within this continuum, research has however shown that context matters. Wilson (1996) showed that attributions could be better explained in terms of a 'public arena' paradigm which explains beliefs about causes of poverty taking into context the type of poverty in question, as well as the effects of exposure to media images of the poor and personal experiences with the poor (Inyenger 1990). Wilson indicated also that perceptions varied according to the definition of poverty. Recent studies have confirmed these hypotheses. Wichosky (2007) found that the kind of poverty in one's neighbourhood as well as stereotypes and interracial contacts predict attributions (see also Cozzarelli et al. 2001; Bullock 2006). While the foregoing has been conceptualized about the nature of beliefs in western countries, it is less so for developing countries. As most attribution and justice studies have been done in the developed world (Shek 2003; Seekings 2005), plausibility of generalizing these findings across cultures become limited (Bolitho et al. 2008). Given the paucity of these studies in the developing world, the validity of the individual-structural continuum as an explanatory construct for poverty among the disadvantaged requires further empirical investigations. While to some extent there have been poverty attribution studies entailing cross cultural attribution analyses between samples from developed and developing countries (Hine and Montiel 1999; Bolitho et al. 2008), the inclusion of a preponderance of middle class respondents (usually university students or anti-poverty activists) to the detriment of the views of the actual poor makes general-

zations regarding the pattern of attribution among the disadvantaged difficult.

Poverty Attribution

Nasser (2007: 197) categorized attributions based on Heider's (1958) pioneering work into four broad dimensions; individual, structural, fatalistic and cultural attribution. However, in general, scholars classify attributions in an external-internal distinction, based on perceived locus of causality. While internal attributions explain phenomena as caused by factors within the individual, external attributions locate causality within the environment (Fisk and Taylor 1991). This distinction is perhaps better understood in terms of a 'person blame – structure blame' dichotomy, analogous to the difference between individual character and the social structure (Kluegel and Smith 1986; Hollander and Howard 2000). Robinson (2009: 490) linked the collective cognition tradition within Social Psychology with the understanding of social inequalities within their social context. Modes of casual attribution, it has therefore been argued, have emerged as complex products of the socialization process (Stephenson 2000). Poverty attribution studies have shown that while perception of causes of poverty begins in childhood (Chafel 1997). These attributions change over time and are often moderated through learning and interventions (Lopez et al. 1998). In addition, Kluegel and Smith (1986) showed how people initially adopt individual attributions but at a second level of reasoning, non-personal attributions are adduced. This process described as 'motivated correction' (Skitka et al. 2002) is often influenced by the extent to which people are exposed to countervailing narratives, political socialization and media imaging (Inyenger 1990). Therefore, attributions are not just based on age, gender, political preference or any other individual factor, but are social, political and ideological (Harper 2003: 188).

Recent attribution studies have however used the causes of poverty index developed by Feagin (1972: 101-129) who typified explanations into the following:

1. *Individualistic*: Attributing responsibility for poverty to the poor themselves, including lack of thrift and effort and loose morals.

2. *Structural*: Encompassing the external and economic forces, including wages, access to good education, lack of jobs and discrimination.
3. *Fatalistic*: Entailing forces beyond the individual's control, including bad luck and illness.

However, these studies have seldom dealt with the issue split/dual consciousness which the article turns to below.

The Fundamental Attribution Error: Split/ Dual Consciousness

Ross (1977) argued that people make 'fundamental attribution errors' when they over-attribute phenomena to character inadequacy in the poor themselves, whilst at the same time under-attributing forces beyond the poor's control. Attribution error has been adduced to a dearth of knowledge of other people's circumstances and the pervasiveness of individualism that emphasize agency (Augoustinos and Walker 1995). Attribution studies found that levels of access to wealth and opportunity positively co-varies with extent of blaming the poor, and negatively co-varies with system blaming (Carr 1996). In a cross-cultural study, Bolitho et al. (2007: 14) reported that Australians (privileged 'observers') blamed the poor for poverty more than economically poorer Malawians (underprivileged actors). Similarly, Hine and Montiel (1999) reported that Filipinos blamed the poor for poverty less than their Canadian counterparts. 'Observers' or the non-poor tend to attribute poverty to individual lack of ability or lack of effort while 'actors' or the poor are more likely to aduce poverty to external factors or 'blame the system'. This is consistent with Hine and Montiel's (1999) notion of 'cultural variation' that proposes that individuals, resident in western countries, tend to attribute poverty to internal factors while non-Westerners in the global south attribute poverty to external factors (see also

Carr and MacLachan 1998). Similar studies in poorer countries produced predominantly structural results (Turkey- Morçöl 1997; Lebanon- Abouchedid and Nasser 2001; Nasser et al. 2002; Lebanon and South Africa- Nasser et al. 2002; Chinese people- Shek 2003; Iran- Hayati and Karami 2005; India- Nasser et al. 2005). The fundamental attribution error is analogous to Jones and Nisbett's (1972) 'actor-observer ef-

fect' which posits that actors will perceive reality differently from observers, and the 'underdog' thesis (Robinson and Bell 1978) which purports that disadvantaged groups will attribute poverty to factors outside of self regardless of individual socio-economic status. In within country studies, results show that individuals attribute their own outcomes to situational factors but the outcomes of others' to personal causes (Ross 1977). People therefore overlook contextual and power-based dimensions of these patterns (Harper 1996). The fact that those who hold more social power attribute poverty to individual rather than structural factors has implications for the ideologies and beliefs that perpetuate inequality (Hunt 1996). Ryan (1971) argued that attributions reconcile self/group interests with prevailing inequality. Favoured groups tend to ignore structural causes of poverty, while less opportune groups are sensitive to structural situations that lead to deprivation. For example, women are more likely to emphasize structural factors while men are more amenable to individualistic explanations like intelligence and ambition (Fox and Ferri 1992). In the same vein, higher rates of structural attribution are found among black as compared to white Americans, and among lower as contrasted with higher socio-economic groups and among unemployed people than the employed (Gurin et al. 1980).

While attribution errors account for varying explanations on the basis of status, people often combine the explanations rendering categorizations confusing. Harper (2003) noted that individual and structural attributions which are supposed to be orthogonal factors were often found to be correlated. This sort of layering or compromise explanations, termed often 'split/dual consciousness', has been found to be the basis for the acceptance of the status quo among the disadvantaged (Bobo 1991). Iyengar (1990: 20) quoted Lane (1962) to have stated that '*ordinary people express considerable uncertainty, and stress, when describing their political views and they often offer what appear to be contradictory positions on related issues*'. Past researchers uncovered a linkage between ideology and attributions (Zucker and Weiner 1993: 939) with individualistic attributions strongly connected to conservatism and structural ones to liberalism (Griffin and Oheneba-Saky 1993; Cozzarelli et al. 2001). However, single causal

attributions were used by only 7% of respondents (Verkuyten 1998). Research consistently showed that people concurrently adopt multiple explanations for poverty often giving both individualistic and structural accounts at the same time. In line with this empirical reality, Hunt (1996) argued that contrary to arguments that ideologies exist in opposing individual-rightist against structural-leftist perspectives, individual and structural explanations are often combined in cases where individuals perceive that while structural barriers cause poverty, if people work hard, they can overcome it, in which case contradictory beliefs are combined in compromise explanations (Kluegel and Smith 1986). In this way, individualistic and structural beliefs may not be ideological alternatives, but may be layered to form compromise beliefs about poverty (Bobo 1991). This seeming value inconsistency, or ideological ambivalence, now often referred to as 'split consciousness' (or dual consciousness) is the basis for social cohesion. A lack of consensus on system challenging values among the poor and excluded is the source of social stability (Mann 1970; Bobo 1991; Matijù 1996). The split consciousness thesis proposes that the dominant ideology (individualism) and the challenging ideology (structuralism) coexist without conflict, both norms jointly occupying different 'segments' of an individual's consciousness (Hunt 1996; Morçöl 1997). While advantaged groups are predominantly individual in their attribution, studies found that dual consciousness is more prevalent among minorities and disadvantaged persons and groups (Hunt 1996). Bobo (1991) reported that while minority group members reported more structural explanations than the advantaged group members, interestingly, the disadvantaged minorities were more likely than the advantaged to hold the poor responsible for their plight. This dual consciousness has been reported in a plethora of studies (Hunt 1996; Hine and Montiel 1999; Bolith et al. 2007). Bobo (1991: 87) argued that the oppressed in America are likely to combine structural with the predominant individualist attributions. Thus while individualism retains its appearance as the dominant hegemonic value, there is the existence of a structuralist social responsibility upon which oppressed groups draw to counter the dominant individualism. Bobo therefore asserted that these views are not ideological alternatives but often combined in a form of dual con-

sciousness. Hunt (1996: 296) concluded that *'this dual consciousness will be more prevalent among disadvantaged groups such as racial/ethnic minorities'*. Although disadvantaged people have been found to exhibit dual consciousness, a preponderance of studies supported the proposition that attributions support the dominant ideology thesis (Kluegel and Smith 1986).

Objectives of the Study

Attribution studies in developed countries have reported that disadvantaged people are likely to combine structural and individual attributions in compromise explanations (Mann 1970; Bobo 1991; Hunt 1996; Mateju 1996). Similarly, cross-cultural studies of samples from both developed and developing countries reported similar findings. However, as Bolitho et al. (2007) argued, the possibility of extending these findings across cultural contexts is problematic, given the paucity of data from developing nations (Shek 2003). The inclusion of middle class respondents in these samples creates a void in which the true attribution matrix of the poor is lacking. The main objective of the study therefore was to investigate empirically if the individual-structural continuum has any basis as an explanatory construct for poverty among the truly poor in the developing world. The secondary objective was to determine if this attribution matrix has any relationship to the 'perception of powerlessness', a known impediment to collective action.

METHODOLOGY

Data was derived from questionnaires administered on residents of Badia community. All Badia residents who have attained the age of 18 years at the time of the survey were eligible to be included in the sample. Badia was chosen for this study because of its proximity to the neighbourhoods of the middle and upper classes (*Surulere* and *Apapa* Government Reserve Area (GRA)). The rationale for the choice of the setting was based on the expectation that respondents were to have developed attitudes and feelings derived from differences in educational and other opportunities as well as differences in government attention to infrastructure provision in separate communities. Sample size was deter-

mined using *Raosoft* sample size calculator online, based at a standard error margin of 5%, a confidence level of 95%, and a 50% response distribution, a sample size of 383 was electronically calculated. The total sample for the study was therefore 383 respondents (n=383). An enhanced sample size of 383 overcame deficiencies of earlier studies. Low sample sizes of many previous studies diminished the statistical power and dependability of results, thereby creating doubts about their conclusions. Shek (2003) noted that where sample sizes were too small, factorial validity of statistical assessment tools is hampered. In the same vein, where sample sizes are too large, statistical assessment tools are likely to accept minor correlations as significant (Field 2005). Owing to the fact that a comprehensive list of households is not available thus the much needed sampling frame for random sampling was missing. In addition, in Badia, numbering of houses and naming of streets where they exist is haphazard and therefore presented a huge challenge for sampling. However, it was assumed that the socio-economic characteristics of the population of the communities will be similar (Graham 1987) and therefore a multi-stage cluster sampling was adopted. In each area, a 10% simple random sampling of dwellings was conducted. In Badia east, 192 people were interviewed, including 64 persons in each of the sub-communities. Furthermore in Badia west sub-communities, a total of 191 people were interviewed. Houses in Badia were built in the popular 'face-me-I-face you' style common in Lagos and other Nigerian cities. Hence the occupant of the first room to the right in every building selected was adopted systematically into the sample. This was repeated systematically house after house until the 383 respondents mark was attained. 25% of original sample was replaced because of error in sampling as in many cases occupants of systematically selected rooms were unavailable. Refusal amounted to less than 0.5%. However, only men and women above 18 years of age were selected. In each household, the head or the spouse was selected but preference was given to the first wife in a polygamous household where the household head was unavailable. In order to ensure fair representation of women and men in the survey, interviews were conducted in an alternate manner as the survey proceeded. However, the interviews were based on one household per dwelling.

The factor analytical approach was used for the poverty attribution dimension despite recent criticisms (Harper 2003; Lepianka et al. 2009), as alternative instrumentations where applied have not shown greater ability to decipher respondents' causal maps. Lepianka et al. (2009: 433) concluded that the 'forced choice question' approach which they recommended were unable to determine the 'actual' poverty attributions of the sample. Similarly, Harper's (2003) proposed 'discursive analysis' has only received a mention in the literature (Lepianka et al. 2009: 435) but hardly any following given that recent studies overwhelmingly continued to use the factor analytical approach (Nasser 2007; Bolitho et al. 2007; Wollie 2009). Robinson (2009) used a combined index that entailed a factor analytical strategy. The instrument used to elicit data for this study was therefore a questionnaire. However, even though the questionnaire was administered, data was gathered in an interview format where the researcher asked questions from respondents and entered responses into appropriate boxes in the questionnaire. This was necessary given the low literacy level of the respondents (Olanrewau 2001). Section A of the questionnaire required respondents (n= 383) to rate 38 items on causes of poverty on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 (where 1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree), using Feagin's (1972) original Causes of Poverty Scale (CPS). While Feagin's (1972, 1975) test was used, variables were adapted to fit an African setting, as variables have been noted to have different meanings in different cultures (Shek 2003). Some of Feagin's questions were considered inappropriate to be asked of Africans. For example, item 8 on Feagin's index 'prejudice and discrimination against Negroes' was removed as the setting for the present study consisted of black people. Nasser et al. (2002: 105) similarly removed this item from their cross-cultural index. The questionnaire further elicited responses on perception of powerlessness to change conditions of poverty and inequality. The last section of the questionnaire contained questions on social demographic variables as well as those on living conditions in the households (family size, dwelling type). The standard five - level Likert scale was adopted rather than the more complicated ten or seven step scales because of the expected low education level of respondents.

RESULTS

Poverty explanations used in this study were derived from items previously reported in the psychological and sociological literature (Feagin 1972; Hine and Montiel 1999; Nasser et al. 2002, 2005; Shek 2003; Robinson 2004; Wollie 2009). As attributions were scored on a five-step Likert scale (where 1= strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree), the highest possible score was 190, while the lowest was 38. The higher scores meant higher agreements with the item. The poverty attribution scale was computed using two approaches. In the first stage, a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was carried out on 38 items on various causes of poverty. The results of PCA shows that factor analysis was an appropriate extraction method for the data obtained given a Kaiser Meyer-Olkin measure of sample adequacy of 0.802 and a Bartlett Test of Sphericity (BTS), $\chi^2= 6612.03$ (df = 300), $p < .001$ indicating a relationship between rotated variables as well as sample size adequacy. A standard benchmark of 0.00001 for correlation matrix produced by PCA is desirable (Field 2005) to avoid multicollinearity. PCA produced a correlation matrix of 0.0.016 and hence the assumption of absence of multi-collinearity was maintained. Two stages of factor analyses were run. In the first stage, factor analysis produced Eigen values for the thirty eight items before rotation. In the next stage, PCA was repeated excluding thirteen items whose Eigen values were lower than the adopted threshold of 0.05 thus contributing insignificantly to factor loading. Varimax rotation was again applied on the remaining twenty-five items. Consistent with the main path in the poverty attribution literature (Feagin 1972; Hunt 2004), Varimax rotation extracted three factors: Individual, fatalistic and structural attributions of poverty. As most respondents chose more than one form of attribution indicating split consciousness (Mann 1970; Bobo 1991), it became necessary to derive which causal attribution of poverty each respondent favoured. To achieve this, the extent of acceptability of each form of explanation was calculated for each respondent using the 'transform by computation' command in the Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The total scores of each respondent on the 12 items on the individualistic subscale, 12 on the structural subscale and 13 items on the fatalistic subscale were added and total scores

of each respondent were divided by the number of items in each subscale. In this way, mean Individual (MEANIND), mean Structural (MEANSTR) and mean Fatalistic (MEANFAT) scores were generated for each respondent. Subsequently, MEANIND, MEANSTR and MEANFAT were compared for each respondent and respondents' PREFAT was taken to be the attribution category in which they obtained the highest mean score. Second Preference Attribution (SPA) was the attribution type in which each respondent obtained the second highest score.

Attribution and Dual Consciousness: The Implications for Action

The results of the study showed that structural attribution is the dominant explanation among the people of Badia. As Table 1 shows, 59% of the respondents preferred structural attribution. However, 37.1% preferred fatalistic explanation. These results are consistent with the 'actor and observer' thesis (Robinson and Bell 1978) and the fundamental 'attribution error' (Ross 1977), both of which propose that lower economic status respondents attribute poverty to factors external to themselves. As both structural and fatalistic attributions are external attribution, the results conform to expectations. These results are consistent with past findings of many studies of poverty attribution (Hine and Montiel 1999; Nasser et al. 2002; Nasser et al. 2005; Bolitho et al. 2007; Wollie 2009). Lower economic status is reportedly consistent with structural attribution. As Wilson (1986) has argued, explanation of poverty is a function of respondents in question and the kind of inequality that exists in one's environment. However, while structural attributions have been combined with fatalistic attributions in this sample, those studies which found the predominance of structural attribution over individual attribution reported that their findings support the system

Table 1: Preferred attributions

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Individual attribution	15	3.9
Structural attribution	226	59.0
Fatalistic attribution	142	37.1
Total	383	100.0

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

'blame hypothesis' (Nasser et al. 2005; Wollie 2009) as against the 'culture of poverty' thesis where individual attributions predominate (Bullock 2006).

Given that many past studies have reported that structural attribution has been combined with individual attribution with diminished report of fatalism (Nasser et al. 2005; Wollie 2009), it became imperative to examine the nature of layering of attribution. A preponderance of attribution studies among samples in developed countries reported greater preferences for individual attributions. This is more so among Americans given the strong adherence to the dominant ideology thesis (Kluegel and Smith 1986) and the belief in the 'American Dream' or the individualism consensus (Bobo 1991: 87). While many studies have shown that an opposing logic of structural attribution supplements dominant individualism, Robinson (2009) argued that American attribution can be understood in terms of a continuum within which attribution could be placed. On the contrary, limited cross-cultural studies combining sample from developed and developing countries (for example, Hine and Montiel 1999; Bolitho et al. 2007) showed that individuals in developing countries were more likely to adopt structural attributions than their counterparts in the developed world. Investigators who studied samples predominantly of respondents from the developing world reported higher structural attribution layered upon individual attribution, with diminished adherence to fatalistic attribution (for example, Wollie 2009). While more privileged groups have been found to adopt single causal explanations, more often, disadvantaged persons combined explanations indicating dual/split consciousness (Bobo 1991; Hunt 1996). Kluegel and Smith (1986: 290) showed for example that while black Americans predominantly supported structural explanations, they do not deny that individuals are responsible for their situations. In fact Hunt (1996: 304) reported that despite exhibiting greater levels of structural attribution, blacks surpass the individualism of whites. These studies showed that the disadvantaged predominantly combine individual attributions with structural attributions concurrently. The implication of this for social stability can be easily discerned. If people believe that poverty is the result of their own deficiencies, the likelihood of taking action to fight poverty is stalled (Mann 1970; Matijù 1996). In the

same vein, where they make structural attribution, if this is layered upon individual or fatalistic attribution, consciousness is impaired and the revolutionary potential of frustration is deflected. Mann (1970) argued that social cohesion rests upon value inconsistency consequent upon the lack of consensus on system challenging values particularly among the deprived and the dispossessed, indicating that '*societal stability and the lack of acute group-based conflict are rooted in the inconsistency of the belief systems*' (Hunt 1996: 296). In past studies (for example, Bobo 1991) dual consciousness has been conceptualized as the layering of individual and structural attributions among disadvantaged groups with debates about which of the two forms of attributions predominates inconclusive. The results from the present study are therefore a departure from the main current within the literature and consequently the implication for action owing to the fact that they provide the perception for the possibility of action or non-action.

The results of the study on the issue of the use of a second attribution showed that indeed a preponderant 96.1% of respondents used more than one attribution given that 3.9% reported not using a second attribution (see Table 2). Respondents were said to have used a second attribution if they scored more than the minimum 1 point for each item on the Likert scale for each attribution sub-dimension. A 1(one) point

score signifies 'strongly disagree' with the item indicating that the respondents did not favour those items. In other words, scores above 1 implied increasing agreement. As Table 2 further showed, a majority, 59.3%, of the respondents chose fatalistic attribution as a second explanatory construct. The *t*-test reported in Table 3 showed that both preferred attribution and second preference attribution were significantly different. However, more revealing is the data presented in Table 4 which shows the true nature of split/dual consciousness among the Badia sample. Of the 15 respondents who preferred individual attribution, 13 (86.7%) chose fatalistic attribution as a second option. Similarly, of the 142 who preferred fatalistic attribution, 107 (75.4%) adopted structural attribution as a second option. The results showed further that of the 226 who were structural in attribution, a preponderant 214 (94.7%) combined structural attribution with fatalistic attribution. The implication of the above is glaring. Respondents were ambiguous in their explanations for poverty. They concurrently adopted multiple explanations for poverty. While this has been the consistent findings of studies into the attribution maps of disadvantaged groups (Bobo 1991; Hunt 1996), the results from the present study showed a unique difference in the way attributions were layered.

Rather than layer individual attribution with structural attribution as has been most often reported, Badia respondents combined structural with fatalistic attribution with diminished adherence to the individualistic philosophy. However, the implication for action as proposed by Mann (1970) and Matijù (1996) may be similar given that either individual or structural attributions, when combined with structural explanations have the tendency to deflect consciousness and revolutionary potential of frustration (Portes and Walton 1976). Given the extreme effect of fatalistic explanations on its adherents

Table 2: Second attribution preference

	Frequency	%	Cumulative %
None	15	3.9	3.9
Individual	32	8.4	12.3
Structural	109	28.5	40.7
Fatalistic	227	59.3	100.0
Total	383	100.0	

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

Table 3: One-sample test for PREFAT and second preference of attribution

	<i>Test value = 0</i>		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	95% Confidence interval of the difference	
	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>			Lower	Upper
	Preferred attribution	83.205			382	.000
Second preference	59.051	382	.000	2.431	2.35	2.51

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

Table 4: Preferred attribution and second preference

		<i>Second preference</i>				Total
		<i>None</i>	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Structural</i>	<i>Fatalistic</i>	
<i>Preferred Attribution</i>	Individual Attribution	0 .0%	0 .0%	2 13.3%	13 86.7%	15 100.0%
	Structural Attribution	2 .9%	10 4.4%	0 .0%	214 94.7%	226 100.0%
	Fatalistic Attribution	13 9.2%	22 15.5%	107 75.4%	0 .0%	142 100.0%
Total		15 3.9%	32 8.4%	109 28.5%	227 59.3%	383 100.0%

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for PERPOW

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Commonalities</i>
Collective action is pointless	3.44	1.231	.686
The system is unchangeable	3.72	1.351	.668
Democracy is fruitless	4.44	.636	.024
Only the government can change things	3.38	1.260	.664
Political agitation is pointless	3.39	1.299	.719
Protest is risky in Nigeria	4.59	.533	.202
Government must be supported	3.42	1.334	.547
I prefer peace to conflict	4.10	1.138	.139
Protest is for hooligans	3.84	.848	.249
Protest gives opportunity for criminals to loot	3.76	.893	.224

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

(Gandy 2006) and its tendency to defray even policy possibilities (Robinson 2009), the uses of fatalistic attribution to counter conscientization consequent upon structural attribution among the people of Badia diminishes possibilities of taking action to challenge the status quo.

In line with the above, the effects of attributions on perception of powerlessness, a known antecedent of action, are examined.

Poverty Attribution Accentuates Feelings of Powerlessness

Perception of powerlessness (PERPOW) was conceptualized as the opposite of Bandura’s (1977) concept of ‘efficacy’ used as a mediator of action in previous studies inspired by Social Identity Theory (Hornsey et al. 2006; Giguere and Lalonde 2010). Efficacy which refers to the perceived ability of an in-group to effect change has been otherwise conceptualized as ‘empowerment’ (Drury and Reicher 2005) in many studies of crowd behaviour and police responses. Perception of efficacy has been found to effectively mediate action albeit with a paradoxical relationship with group identification given that

both have been reported to be mutually reinforcing and recursive (van Zomeren et al.2010). The reverse conceptualization was adopted in this study because of the high adherence to fatalistic attributions among the Badia sample. Fatalistic attribution is therefore hypothesized to diminish perception of efficacy and accentuate powerlessness. Poverty attribution research has delineated attribution into an internal and external dimension (Shirazi and Biel 2005). While individual attributions are internal to the actor, external attribution encompassing structural and fatalistic attributions is beyond the control of the individual.

While this dichotomy enhances our understanding of the perceived locus of causality, it however diminishes the understanding of the effects of these attributions on the reaction of people based on perceived causality. While it can be argued that structural attribution deflects the blame to an external party to which the actor may respond to seek redress, where attributions are individual the individual engages in self blame and may ‘do nothing’. Similarly, where attribution is fatalistic, although causality is perceived as external, the individual has no immedi-

Table 6: Total variance explained for PERPOW

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction sums of squared loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.122	41.224	41.224	4.122	41.224	41.224
2	1.749	17.493	58.717			
3	1.405	14.049	72.766			
4	.809	8.089	80.855			
5	.708	7.077	87.932			
6	.402	4.016	91.948			
7	.333	3.329	95.277			
8	.190	1.899	97.176			
9	.170	1.703	98.879			
10	.112	1.121	100.000			

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

ate external party from which to seek redress and may also “do nothing”. In other words, the action implications of individual (internal) and fatalistic (external) attributions are likely to be the same. Results from the Badia sample show that while structural attributions are predominant, a considerable proportion of respondents rated fatalistic attribution highly. All respondents chose more than one type of attribution indicating split consciousness. This dual consciousness has been theorized to inhibit action (Mann 1970; Bobo 1991; Hunt 1996; Matijù 1996) especially among disadvantaged groups. A chi-square test was therefore conducted to decipher the effects of attributions on perception of powerlessness in seeking redress to grievances. It was hypothesized that fatalistic attribution will diminish perception of efficacy and increase feelings of powerlessness where it is predominant. PERPOW was measured using 10 items on the questionnaire. Here the highest possible score was 50 whilst the lowest was 10. Higher scores indicate higher perception of powerlessness. PCA determined the extent of the input of each item to the variable. One factor was extracted bypassing factor rotation. Sample adequacy was indicated by a ‘good’ Kaiser Meyer-Olkin test of sample size adequacy, $KMO = .72$, showing that the subscale is a good measure.

Table 5 shows the scale statistics and commonalities of PERPOW items. The item ‘perception of protest as risky in Nigeria’, mean = 4.59, SD = .43, is the most adopted item relating to powerless among the Badia sample. As Table 6 shows however, variable PERPOW extracted through PCA accounted for 41.2% of variance.

Contributions of other factors diminish after the extraction of one variable.

In further analysis, respondents’ scores on PERPOW items were added and divided by the total number of items ($n = 10$). Three categories of powerlessness; ‘low’, ‘medium’ and ‘high’ were conceptualized and respondents were grouped according to their mean scores. Table 8 shows the cross tabulations of choice of attributions with feelings of powerlessness. The table indicates that significantly, 86.6% of fatalistic attributors reported high level of powerlessness. However, 80% of individual attributors reported low feelings of powerlessness. This indicates that while fatalism represses feelings of self control, it does not do so to people with individual attributions.

These results can be interpreted within the paradigm of Social Dominance Orientations (Sidanius and Pratto 1999). In terms of this paradigm, individual attributors are people with a greater belief in themselves and Lerner’s (1980) ‘belief in a Just world’ for oneself and for others and are therefore less likely to feel powerless. The chi-square test results (see Table 7) show that the hypothesized relationship is statistical-

Table 7: Chi-square test for PREFAT and PERPOW

	Value	df	Asymp. sig. (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	197.317 ^a	4	.000
Likelihood ratio	88.354	4	.000
Linear-by-linear association	62.515	1	.000
N of valid cases	383		

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

Table 8: PREFAT and PERPOW

<i>Preferred attribution</i>		<i>Perception of powerlessness</i>			<i>Total</i>
		<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>	
<i>PREFAT</i>	<i>Individual Attribution</i>	12	1	2	15
	% in PREFAT	80.0%	6.7%	13.3%	100.0%
	% in PERPOW	60.0%	1.1%	.7%	3.9%
	% of Total	3.1%	.3%	.5%	3.9%
<i>Structural</i>	<i>Attribution</i>	7	73	146	226
	% in PREFAT	3.1%	32.3%	64.6%	100.0%
	% in PERPOW	35.0%	79.3%	53.9%	59.0%
	% of Total	1.8%	19.1%	38.1%	59.0%
<i>Fatalistic</i>	<i>Attribution</i>	1	18	123	142
	% in PREFAT	.7%	12.7%	86.6%	100.0%
	% in PERPOW	5.0%	19.6%	45.4%	37.1%
	% of Total	.3%	4.7%	32.1%	37.1%
Total		20	92	271	383
		5.2%	24.0%	70.8%	100.0%
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		5.2%	24.0%	70.8%	100.0%

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

ly supported; by: ' $\chi^2=197.317, p<0.05$ '. Fatalistic attribution therefore attenuates feeling of powerlessness.

The implication of efficacy and empowerment for action has received empirical support from a plethora of Social Identity Theory inspired studies (Drury and Reicher 2005; Hornsey et al. 2006; Giguère and Lalonde 2010; van Zomeren et al. 2010). Efficacy or empowerment is therefore a known antecedent of action. While efficacy is operationalized in its reverse form in the present study, the implication is the same given that powerlessness implies lack of efficacy beliefs. The implication of this finding is that as powerlessness has been linked to action in the form of efficacy albeit in a recursive relationship, a relationship between powerlessness and attribution logically suggests that poverty attribution is correlated to action.

DISCUSSION

Few studies of attributions by the poor in the developing world are available to compare results with and this factor should be taken into consideration in the discussion that follows below. In a nutshell, the present study has shown that the external – internal distinction in attributions does not correspond to the consequences attached to attribution. While scholars have categorized individual attributions as internal but structural and fatalistic attributions as external (Shirazi and Biel 2005), the present study showed that individual and fatalistic attributions al-

though being on different divides in terms of the internal-external distinction, entailed similar consequence as both were positively correlated with PERPOW. Klandermans (2002: 887) is of the view that:

Collective action is not a very common response to injustice. When confronted with injustice, at best, a minority of the people affected will engage in protest. Most people will continue to do what they are used to doing, that is, nothing.

Bobo (1991) hypothesized that the disadvantaged combine structural and individual attributions in compromise explanations, in what has been termed 'dual consciousness' and accepted as the causes of social stability (Mann 1970; Matijū 1996). As results from the present study showed, layering of attribution is not only in an individual-structural continuum. Perhaps the layering of fatalistic attributions with structural attributions offer better explanations of failure to take action in the face of injustice, given the more extreme effects of fatalistic attribution than individual attribution. Robinson (2009) recently argued that there are not many actions or policy options possible where people adduce poverty to fate. The finding that fatalistic attribution is heavily

layered with structural attributions by the disadvantaged answers the question why people remained reluctant to engage in collective action. The results of the study also showed that 94.7% of structural attributors adopted fatalistic attribution as a second choice. There-

fore, Olsen's (1968) 'free ride' option is complemented by fatalistic explanations to render social change on the basis of injustice feeling an illusion unless 'conscientization' ensues, a process which must necessarily involve exclusive education on (structural) causal explanations before the disadvantaged will take action.

CONCLUSION

Years of poverty attribution research dominated by data from American and to some extent European samples have led scholars to preponderantly conceptualize poverty causes within individual and structural explanations. While individual explanations relate to characterological deficiencies as the causes of poverty, structural attributions pertain to the assertion that social and economic factors are responsible for poverty. While it has been argued that individualism represents the dominant explanation among Americans, scholars have also found that segments of the American population adhere more to structural attributions or that individual attributions are held with structural attributions as opposing 'logics'. However, where attribution studies have been done outside the western hemisphere, in cross-cultural studies, explanations have been situated within the fundamental attribution error or the 'actor and observer' thesis, as often 'observers' from western countries chose individual attribution while 'actors' from developing countries preferred structural attribution. There has also been evidence that these explanations vary according to socio-economic and class status. Perhaps more striking about results from previous studies is the fact that reports of fatalistic attribution have diminished not only in studies conducted in the developed world, but also those in the developing countries. As earlier noted, there has been a dearth of studies on how the poor view poverty and its consequences. Where attribution studies were done in developing countries samples had consisted of students and middle class anti-poverty activists, neglecting the views of the poor. As the present study was conducted using a sample of poor slum dwellers, the consequence of attributions in the light of the proposal of political functionality of attributions and micro-mobilization insinuations become salient. Evidence presented in the study showed that respondents exhibited dual consciousness by

combining structural and fatalistic attributions. It was also shown that attribution influences feelings of powerlessness and in reverse feelings of efficacy as equally evidenced in recent SIT inspired studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evidence that attribution influences powerlessness and thus efficacy and empowerment logically suggests that attributions are antecedents of action. Given strong evidence from SIT that efficacy has a recursive relationship with action, it can be deduced therefore that other variables that relate to efficacy are likely to influence action. However, there is a need for more empirical tests to validate this. As SIT research has been interested in the effects of group identification, future studies need to discern how layered consciousness among group members directly affect group solidarity even where group norms are strong. Furthermore, given the reported strong effects of split consciousness in accentuating powerlessness, organizations

interested in promoting social change may become more effective if they design educational and conscientization programmes to counter the possible negative effect of split consciousness on mobilization among the underprivileged classes.

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