

‘The Righteous Considereth the Cause of the Poor’? Public Attitudes Towards Poverty in Developing Countries

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Abstract

Events in 2005 such as the G8 Summit in Gleneagles and the Make Poverty History campaign have been successful in focussing the public’s attention to the problem of world poverty. Despite these high profile events and consistently high levels of public support for development assistance programmes, people’s understanding of poverty and development issues remains shallow and levels of official development aid for many OECD countries fall well below the 0.7% GDP goal. In this paper we examine what factors drive individual-level attitudes of concern for poverty, how the media portray poverty in developing countries and how media portrayal affects individual’s concern for poverty. Drawing on extant literature on motivations for aid, we argue that individual concern for poverty can stem from self-interest or moral drivers. However, the implications of the different drivers do not appear to be well understood, yet they have important consequences for DFID and the OECD; strategies based on preference-accommodation rather than preference-shaping strategies may undermine rather than strengthen public concern for poverty. The data for the paper come from DFID’s 2005 Omnibus survey of public attitudes towards development and a content analysis of eight UK newspapers from January to December 2005. Using a binary logistic regression model we estimate individual concern for poverty in developing countries as a function of moral judgements, self-interest, awareness of poverty, and assessments of achieving Millennium Development Goals, controlling for a host of demographic variables. Results from the content analysis show that economic and political frames dominate media coverage of poverty in developing countries. We find differential effects for moral and self-interested attitudes on concern for poverty; moral attitudes are positively related to concern, whereas self-interested attitudes are negatively related to concern.

Introduction

In 1999 the UK Department for International Development (DFID) issued a strategy paper, *Building Support for Development*, which called for an ‘increased public understanding of our global mutual dependence, the need for international development’ and ‘for every child to be educated about development issues, so that they can understand the key global considerations that will shape their lives’.¹ The creation of DFID—the first independent ministry for foreign aid in 22 years (Young, 2001)—was part of the newly-elected Labour government’s vision for a new ethical dimension to UK foreign policy (Wheeler and Dunne, 1998; Abrahamsen and Williams, 2001). DFID has taken a number of steps to raise awareness and increase knowledge of poverty and poverty reduction programmes by working with formal education institutions, media, business/trade associations, and faith communities; establishing the Development Awareness Fund (DAF) to fund development education initiatives; incorporating development issues into curriculum provision across the UK; and finally, by providing enhanced public access to White Papers from the DFID website and a shorter ‘easy-to-read’ version distributed free in high-street supermarkets (Burnell, 1998; DFID 1999; Cameron and Fairbrass 2004). The strategy adopted by DFID is one of garnering public support for development assistance programmes as both an indicator for, and as leverage against politicians who must vote to allocate foreign aid against any number of competing budget issues (Council of Europe, 2001; Burnell, 1998). In this vein, DFID’s strategy in advancing its policy issues is no different than any other organised interest, yet, it remains to be demonstrated that public support for poverty reduction programmes *is* successful in influencing levels of aid in the UK or elsewhere.

One consequence of linking public support for development assistance and levels of aid is a dedicated commitment by DFID and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to measure public attitudes and knowledge. Since 1999 DFID has sponsored an annual survey of public attitudes towards development and the OECD’s Development Centre has produced a number of studies documenting support for aid across member countries (Fransman et al. 2004, McDonnell et al. 2003a, 2003b). These surveys are an

important component in informing and monitoring DFID's strategy towards building support for development. By way of a general summary, findings show that public support for aid is consistently above 70% and stable since the early 1990s.²

The aim of this paper is not to test the relationship between public opinion and aid levels, but rather to ask: what motivates individual-level concern for poverty³ in developing countries in the first place? Theoretically, different motivations for concern can or could have important implications for the strength and robustness of public support for development assistance. More practically, could knowing something about why individuals support poverty reduction programmes help DFID and others devise more effective education and media campaigns? How poverty and development aid are portrayed in the media, what frames are used, and the public's prospects for learning about poverty as a policy issue, raise important questions not just for estimating support or concern, but also for DFID's strategy of 'increased public understanding'.

There is a tendency – both by DFID and more generally (Sachs 2002; 2005) – to frame development assistance to the poor in the language of *both* self-interest *and* morality. According to DFID ending poverty 'is the greatest moral challenge in the world today. Human suffering and wasted potential are also against our own national interests.'⁴ As Burnell (1998, p. 795) notes, DFID's rationale for engaging in development policy is 'a combination of morality and self-interest, the second stemming from global interdependence'. The material interests of the UK are seen to be linked to the fate of the global south through trade links, political and social stability, and global threats such as terrorism and immigration. DFID (1999) suggests that tapping into individuals' self-interest offers a potentially fruitful source of support for development assistance, and notes the 'practical potential' afforded by appealing to self-interest when it reports that 'polls show that the main motivation for [supporting] aid has been moral or humanitarian, though there is also more recent recognition of self-interest.' Such a policy mirrors Downsian accommodation strategies (Dunleavy and Ward 1981), as opposed to a stronger commitment to preference-shaping in line with the normative commitment to eradicating world

poverty. Our contribution here is to examine whether this more ‘practical’ strategy has implications for levels of concern.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the next section we set out the theoretical argument about motivations for political action highlighting the literature on logics of consequences and appropriateness; we briefly review the literature on motivations for granting aid, the relationship between development assistance and public opinion, and DFID’s strategy with respect to these concerns. The data and methodology section lays out our approach to the content analysis and analysis of the survey data. We conclude with a discussion of the results and implications for public policy and future research.

Logics of Official Development Assistance

March and Olsen (1996, 1998) devised an influential typology for explaining political action, distinguishing between the ‘logic of expected consequences’ and the ‘logic of appropriateness’. The logic of consequences posits that action is driven by instrumental rationality and prior preferences; in short, consequentialist reasoning ‘is associated with the pursuit of self-interest’ (Goldmann 2005, p. 40). In contrast, the logic of appropriateness ‘involves cognitive and ethical dimensions, targets, and aspirations ... As an ethical matter, appropriate action is action that is virtuous’ (March and Olsen 1998, p. 951). There are a number of problems with March and Olsen’s distinction. As some critics have pointed out, it is unclear whether the logics are perspectives, theoretical or explanatory devices, ideal types, and should they be used to classify scholars or describe the practices of political actors? (Goldmann, 2005). For our purposes, we seek to explain ‘whether (or when) one logic is more likely than the other to be observed as the basis for actual behaviour’ (March and Olsen 1998, p. 949). Furthermore, it is uncertain whether to treat ‘appropriate’ behaviour as little more than regulatory rule-guided behaviour, routines or standard operating procedures, or as the rather different situation of sharing ‘a common life and identity, and to have concern for others’ (March and Olsen 1996, p. 253).⁵ Plus, the two logics overlap considerably, i.e. we can have consequentialist obligations and non-selfish interests, such

as altruism. Goldmann (2005) accuses March and Olsen of failing to recognise the classic distinctions between consequentialism and deontology or self-interest and the common good. As such, following Goldmann (2005, p.41), we prefer the more specified notions of ‘logic of egotism’ and ‘logic of deontism’ as they specifically relate to *self-interested* consequentialism and *morally-driven* appropriateness which is operationalised in the individual-level survey data presented below.

The existing literature on motivations for international development assistance is organised into two categories: state motivations for giving aid and domestic public opinion and development. First, the majority of work on motivations for granting aid is interested in the international relations of, and state motivations for, foreign aid. Much of the International Relations (IR) literature has been dominated by consequentialist logics of power politics and the self-serving reasons for giving aid (Morgenthau 1962, Pakenham 1966, Hayter 1971, McKinlay and Little 1979; Hook 1995, Macrae and Leader 2001, Thérien 2002, Headey 2008). Liberals have also interpreted foreign aid as a rational – as opposed to moral – way of maximising a state’s utility. Indeed, one can go back to Adam Smith (1776, p. 494) where he notes that having wealthy and prosperous trading partners is advantageous for a country (‘though dangerous in war and politics’) through creating a larger, better market. Building on the foreign-policy models from the 1970s (McKinlay and Little 1979) more recent studies, such as Alesina and Dollar (2000), have shown that donor interests tend to trump recipient need and others show that the strategic alignment of the recipient and donor state positively affects allocation decisions (Canavire et al. 2005; Schraeder et al., 1998; Maizels and Nissanke, 1984). According to Dollar and Levin (2006) consequentialist logics have dictated recent donor strategies based on Burnside and Dollar’s (2002) influential work.⁶

However, Lumsdaine (1993, p. 29) has argued that ‘foreign aid cannot be explained on the basis of the economic and political interests of the donor countries alone, and any satisfactory explanation must give a central place to the influence of humanitarian and egalitarian convictions

upon aid donors.’ This logic was most famously articulated in President Harry Truman’s ‘Point Four’ speech setting out the case for the modern post-war aid regime (Hattori 2003). Busby (2007, p. 247) defines true moral action in world politics as when states and/or decision-makers are ‘motivated not by their own material interests but broader notions of right and wrong’. But the morality of aid granting isn’t necessarily liberal or deontological; Hattori (2003) argues that the act of giving secures the donor’s civic virtue through fortifying the society of states, this often maps onto former colonial ties (Burnell 1997, 1991). Appropriateness is thus related to identities, for example Japan became a major foreign aid provider because it was tied-up with the country’s sense of itself as a good international citizen (Lumsdaine, 1993; Busby, 2007). However, Chandler (2003) argues that governments turn to moral rhetoric as little more than a cheap and easy way to shore up domestic authority and sense of purpose.

The second line of enquiry has sought to examine the role of public opinion and attitudinal structures on foreign policy, albeit from several different angles. Early studies of public opinion found that the public lacked rational and coherent opinion structures or frameworks (Sniderman, 1993; Page and Shapiro, 1992) and consequently scholars dismissed the notion of public influence on foreign policy issues (Holsti 1992). However, this conclusion has been tempered by more recent studies. Olsen (2001) argues that the impact of public opinion on support for development aid comes from a top-down rather than bottom-up approach; for states to carry out costly international moral actions domestic political interests must be aligned with the aims of moral activists (Kaufmann and Pape, 1999). Risse-Kappen (1991) argues that interaction between government elites and public opinion is strongly shaped by the institutional form of the regime. Busby (2007) has looked at the role of coalitions – in particular relation to the Jubilee coalition – and their effectiveness in framing and other strategies of moral suasion (see also Stone, 2000; Chabbott, 1999).

Otter (2003) asks, do governments (in democracies) pay any real attention to what the public think about development aid, and finds it difficult to draw robust conclusions. One reason is

that foreign aid or development assistance may be a unique policy issue and thus the usual rules regarding the effects of domestic public opinion as leverage on policy decisions don't apply. Although there are a number of reasons to have a good aid programme – altruism, being good international citizens, to promote national interests and to secure export markets – governments are motivated to limit dissent no matter how small it might be (Otter, 2003). Olsen, Carstensen and Høyen (2003) find that media doesn't tend to play a decisive role in allocation of humanitarian aid, instead the security interests of governments plus the strength of NGOs and other lobbying groups are more important.

More recent studies have found that whilst the public are relatively uniformed about foreign policy issues, they can make both rational and coherent judgments based on limited information. One example of this approach has been to examine the link between the welfare state and development assistance. Noel and Thérien (2002) argue that (assuming coherent attitude structures) there is a positive relationship between domestic public opinion's support for welfare redistribution and foreign commitments to redistribute. Stern (1998) finds that the most important determinants of support for aid are the level of compassion in a society and the public perception of aid effectiveness. Crucially, income levels and economic growth rates are not deemed to be driving factors.

Three points are worth noting at this stage. First, many studies of the role of public opinion and development aid proceed descriptively or a-theoretically. For example, Stern argues for a correlation between perceptions of effectiveness of aid and public support but does not test these claims statistically, consequently how confident we can be in these findings is unknown. Second, public opinion is treated as both the dependent variable (as in the case of Stern) and as an aggregated independent variable (as in the cases of Olsen and Otter). Thus, we cannot infer anything about individual level attitudes from aggregate numbers without committing an ecological fallacy. Third, whilst the literature speaks to motivations for development aid, it does so only at the level of the state or aggregated public opinion. We contribute to the literature on

the role of self-interest and moral motivations in the politics of development by drawing on the logics of egotism and deontism to derive individual-level explanations for concern for poverty.

From this, we generate two hypotheses:

H₁: Respondents holding moral attitudes are more likely to be concerned for poverty in developing countries

H₂: Respondents with self-interested attitudes are more likely to have concern for poverty in developing countries

Data and methodology

The empirical work in this paper seeks to answer two questions: how is poverty in developing countries portrayed in the media, and what factors drive individual-level attitudes of concern for poverty? Data for our first question comes from a content analysis of eight UK national newspapers from 1 January 2005 through 31 December 2005 (N= 112).⁷ The choice of a newspaper content analysis follows other studies (Martin, 2005) of the effects of media framing and development assistance. Whilst television has become the dominant medium for news on foreign issues, newspapers remain a popular source of political news and information and can serve to minimise the knowledge gap on policy issues (Chaffee and Frank 1996). Data for the second question come from DFID's (2005) annual survey of public attitudes toward development (N= 1,087).

The decision to examine 2005 is not spurious: former Chancellor Gordon Brown called 2005 'a make or break year for development' (cited in Payne 2006, p. 917); the UK held the G8 presidency; the Africa Commission (convened by Blair) published its report; the UN World Summit in New York met in September to discuss progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); and the WTO Doha Development Round was ongoing with the Hong Kong Ministerial conference in December. There was also an unprecedented push to raise public awareness about international poverty: global Live8 concerts, the G8 Edinburgh Rally and, most visibly, the Make Poverty History campaign. However, whilst the number of events designed to raise awareness make this case unique, we also need to ask: does the timing of the Live8 concerts

and G8 Summit in July affect the data for this study by potentially biasing both the frequency and content of newspaper articles and individual survey responses?

We argue that whilst these events did raise awareness in the aggregate—global poverty remains—a low-salience issue. Some evidence to support this claim can be seen from data from the 2005 British Election Study which asks: ‘What is the most important issue facing Britain today?’ Neither global poverty, foreign aid, or development assistance were available from the closed-ended list of response options, and when respondents were presented with a similar open-ended question fewer than 10 of the 4,789 respondents cited issues relating to global poverty. Second, we do not see the impact of these events affecting the distribution of response on our dependent variable, concern for poverty in developing countries. Consistent with findings of other studies (McDonnell et al., 2003a/b; Otter, 2003) the survey data shows that 70% of respondents are fairly or very concerned about poverty, 18.9% indicate they have no strong feelings either way, and just over 10% of respondents are not concerned or not very concerned about poverty in developing countries. Finally, of the 112 articles we reviewed, 19% appeared in July and less than 3% appeared in August (the month of the DFID survey). Thus, despite the overwhelming attention given to poverty in the summer of 2005, we take the view that neither the content analysis nor the survey data suffer unduly.

Results and discussion

We ask four questions of the newspaper data.⁸ First, how does the media frame poverty in developing countries and which frames are used most frequently? Indicators of moral framing include references to justice, fairness, empathy/pity, and duty or obligation to help. Self-interest frames are sub-divided into three further categories, economic (references to levels of aid, effectiveness or efficiency of aid, trade, debt cancellation, and good governance), security (references to terrorism, war/conflict, environmental degradation and risks associated with foreign travel), and political (references to migration/immigration, refugees, corruption, human rights, capacity and conditionality). Second, what are the causes of poverty? We examined

causes across four categories: individual behaviour/attributes, national environment, global or structural factors and causes not mentioned. Third, we ask what are the consequences of poverty? We extrapolated response items from the DFID survey for purposes of comparability which included, amongst others, the financial costs of cancelling debt/providing aid, conflict/war, impacting UK jobs/exports and environmental damage. And fourth, we ask who is responsible for solving poverty? Here, we used a question from the DFID survey which asked who makes a contribution to poverty reduction to create our categories of interest.

By a sizable margin (82%) self-interest frames are used to engage the public on poverty and development aid, and despite observing indicators of multiple frames most articles employed a single, dominant frame. Of the self-interest frames, 39% were political in orientation focussing predominantly on issues of corruption in the domestic setting and migration. Economic self-interest accounted for 36% of frames used with the emphasis here clearly on the financial costs of cancelling debts, providing aid and promoting good governance. Only 7% of articles used security issues to frame the discussion of global poverty. Moral framing, observed as calls for justice and human rights, accounted for less than 18% of the total. Although a large percentage of the articles used multiple frames, very few did so in equal proportions.

Comparing news coverage of poverty in developing countries for frame dominance by newspaper outlet, figure 1 shows the *Financial Times* (38.4%), *The Guardian* (24.1%) *The Independent* (17.0%) and *The Times* (9.8%) reported most frequently on poverty and development aid. *The Telegraph* (4.5%), *The Sun* (4.5%) and *Daily Mail* (1.8%) reported much less frequently, collectively accounting for only 12 of the 112 of stories for 2005. Frames emphasising security were the least common, followed by moral framing, of which *The Guardian* employed the largest number and percentage in reporting on global poverty. Both *The Times* and *The Independent* used the same percentage of economic frames, followed by *The Guardian*. And perhaps not surprisingly, both in terms of number and percentage the *Financial Times* used primarily economic frames. Political frames were used fairly evenly across all four papers.

[Insert figure 1 here]

Finally, we examined the articles to see how (if) the causes, consequences and attributions of responsibility for solving poverty were presented. It soon became clear that given the short-length of the articles (the average article length was just over 700 words) a substantive and healthy discussion on the causes, consequences and responsibility for poverty wouldn't be forthcoming and certainly not within a single article. We infer this not to be lack of interest on the part of the journalist, or perhaps even the public, but more likely a reflection of space constraints and editorial decisions. The results show that a majority of the articles did not make references to the causes (56.2%) or consequences (61.6%) of poverty. For those articles including a discussion of the causes of poverty, 25.9% cited the domestic or national environment, with 17% citing global or structural causes of poverty. Less than 1% of the articles framed causes of poverty as lying with individual behaviour or attributes. In terms of framing the consequences of poverty for the UK, the dominant reason was the financial cost of providing aid or cancelling debt (18.8%) followed by feeling obliged to do something to help (9.8%). The impact on UK jobs, exports, migration, trade and conflict/war were infrequently cited. In contrast to examining the causes and consequences, only 12.5% of articles *did not* make reference to who held responsibility for solving global poverty. Just under 60% of the articles attributed responsibility for solving poverty to wealthy countries like the US, UK, Japan, Germany and France; 10.7% attributed responsibility to the governments of developing countries and international organisations each, 5.4% to business and less than 1% to charities/NGOs.

These findings raise two points for consideration. First, whilst the data do not allow us to test explicitly for a relationship between media framing and public attitudes, it would be difficult to argue that the media have no influence on individual attitudes toward poverty. Previous research on poverty and developing countries has shown that the number of stories covering such international issues has fallen in recent years (Martin, 2005) and the quality of reporting on poverty more generally is biased (Clawson and Trice, 2000). The survey data show that when

asked, over 80% of respondents get information about poverty in developing countries from television and newspapers, and whilst the sample of newspaper examined here show a less than thorough review of the causes and consequences of poverty, it is precisely this truncated treatment⁹ of the issue that individuals are exposed to, and subsequently informs their knowledge and understanding of global poverty. Second, reporting on poverty in developing countries is substantially more sensationalist and episodic than thematic (e.g. focussing on long term or chronic conditions) (Iyengar, 1996; 1990). McDonnell et al. (2003a) find that 'Britons have a negative and inaccurate picture of people in developing countries. Overwhelmingly they are confident that the developing world exists in a permanent state of doom and gloom, yet more than half want a more complete portrayal, showing positives and negatives' (McDonnell et al. 2003a, p. 16). A DFID/BBC (2002) study of engagement with news stories from the developing world found that despite relative high-levels of interest in developing countries, there was a measurable lack of engagement with news stories on developing countries due in part to:

viewers' feelings of impotence in the face of what they see as an overwhelmingly negative picture of the developing world. Viewers criticise what they see to be the relentlessly depressing nature of news stories about the developing world, and top-of-the-mind associations with the developing world are of poverty, natural disasters, and "bad news" in general (DFID/BBC 2002, p. 7).

Consequently, we argue that not only do the media influence public attitudes, but awareness of poverty in developing countries from TV news and newspaper readership is negatively related to concern—a direct consequence of the doom and gloom approach to portraying poverty in developing countries. From this we hypothesize:

H₃: On average, awareness of poverty in developing countries from TV news or newspaper readership is negatively related to concern for poverty in developing countries

Modelling support for poverty reduction in developing countries

What drives individuals' concern for poverty in developing countries? To situate better our model and explore the breadth of the DFID survey, we begin by examining respondents' perceptions of whether poverty in developing countries affects them personally or the country more generally. When asked 'if poverty in developing countries could have consequences that may affect me personally', 37.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement

with just under 40% (strongly) disagreeing. In contrast, when asked ‘poverty in developing countries could have effects which damage the interests of this country’, nearly two-thirds of respondents (strongly) agreed, with just 20% (strongly) disagreeing. Pressures from immigration/refugees was cited as having the biggest impact on the UK (27%), followed by the financial costs of providing aid/cancelling debts (24.5%), conflict/war (13.6%) and by affecting UK jobs and exports (10.3%). Environmental impacts, risk to foreign travel or availability of cheap imports were infrequently cited as consequences.

The financial costs of poverty reduction programmes are a significant component in the public’s calculus of support for poverty reduction programmes. Previous studies (Smillie and Helmich, 1998) have shown that where support does wane for poverty reduction programmes it is generally because respondents over-estimate the percentage of the national budget allocated to foreign aid. However, when controlling for knowledge levels of development aid or when revealing the actual percentage of national budget allocations, public support is robust (Stern, 1998). Examining respondents’ assessment of the UK government’s commitment to poverty reduction, the data in table 1 show the modal response for government commitment to poverty reduction programmes is ‘about right’ (49.6%). Thirty-two per cent of respondents thought government commitment levels were too low and 17.6% of respondents too high.

[Insert table 1 here]

The survey data do not allow us to control for knowledge levels or estimate concern using validated UK development assistance spending; however, we were interested to juxtapose respondents’ assessment of the UK government’s level of commitment against level of concern for poverty in developing countries. Based on previous studies, we expected that concern and commitment levels were negatively related: at lower levels of concern we would expect respondents to claim government spending is too high, and for high levels of concern we expect government spending to be too low. The data bear out these expectations nicely ($p < .001$). For those respondents not at all concerned with poverty in developing countries, 63.6% thought

government commitment to be too high, and for those not very concerned the data show a bi-modal response for too high (47.4%) and about right (47.7%) appear. For respondents with no strong feelings or some concern about poverty, government commitments are deemed about right, whilst for those very concerned 53.5% thought current commitments too low.

Finally, we examined respondents' assessment of progress on achieving the MDGs. These goals aim to halve the number living in poverty by 2015, make primary school education available worldwide, reduce child and birth mortality rates, increase access to family planning services, put mechanisms in place to slow the spread of malaria, HIV/AIDS, protect environmental resources, and establish a global partnership for development. We use this information here to inform our modelling of concern for poverty in developing countries. We argue that those respondents with positive assessments of achieving the MDGs are also more likely to believe in the effectiveness and efficiency of aid and other policy instruments in tackling poverty. Moreover, these respondents are less likely to possess a 'fatalist' attitude toward poverty in developing countries – i.e., that's just the way the world is – but see poverty as a man-made, or solvable problem. Respondents' assessment of progress on these goals is the best available proxy for confidence in the ability of the development community, including states, international charities, NGOs and the private sector, to successfully reduce poverty in developing countries. Therefore, we hypothesise:

H₄: Respondents with positive assessments of progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals are more likely to be concerned for poverty in developing countries.

Using the theoretical motivations for concern for poverty in developing countries presented earlier and the empirical data here, we construct a binary logistic regression model to estimate the impact of moral judgements, self-interest, assessment of the MDGs, awareness, and four demographic control variables: sex, age, education and income. Our dependent variable is concern for poverty in developing countries. We use respondents' placement on a 5 point scale to the statement, 'Poverty in developing countries is a moral issue', as our measure of moral attitudes. For self-interest attitudes we coded response options having economic, security or political implications as self-interest.¹⁰ The awareness variables, TV news programmes and

newspaper readership, are coded as dummy variables. To measure respondents' assessment of success in achieving the MDGs we created an index combining assessments on each of the eight goals. Cronbach's Alpha test for internal consistency reliability was acceptable at $\alpha = .79$. Diagnostic tests for multicollinearity show no problems of severe multi-collinearity.¹¹ Table 2 shows the results of the regression model 1.

On balance the model performs well in estimating concern for in developing countries and we find support for our hypotheses, albeit one in the unexpected direction. Our first two hypotheses set out to test that both moral judgements and self-interest are factors driving concern for poverty in developing countries. The data show that respondents who believe that poverty is a moral issue are more likely to be concerned about poverty in developing countries – a robust finding consistent across all models. The same relationship does not hold however for self-interest and concern. Here, self-interest is negatively related to concern for poverty and on average, the odds of being concerned about poverty are 0.636 times for those respondents holding self-interested attitudes as they are for those not holding self-interested attitudes. In an effort to tease out this relationship further we ran several other models with capturing differential measures of self-interest and in every case the direction of the relationship was negative, albeit with varying levels of statistical (in)significance. If we follow the logic that self-interest should increase concern for the consequences of poverty this finding is counter-intuitive. We address this finding in more detail below.

Our third hypothesis, awareness of events in developing countries from TV news or newspaper readership is negatively related to concern or support, is shown in the expected direction and statistically significant ($p < .01$). The content analysis coupled with existing evidence informs our theoretical expectation for a negative relationship between awareness of poverty from TV/newspapers and concern. This finding may be counter-intuitive given that awareness may, in other policy or issue areas, have a positive relationship with concern; however the largely negative, sensationalistic and truncated nature of media coverage of global poverty works to

reduce individuals' feelings of efficacy in solving the issue. We further tested this finding by examining other sources of information on poverty that we expected to be more positive and reflective in their content (information from school, church or religious groups, charities and books) and found a small, but positive and statistically significant relationship of concern for poverty and these sources of information ($p < .001$). We also find evidence in support of our fourth hypothesis; respondents with positive assessments of progress in achieving the MDGs are more likely to be concerned about poverty in developing countries. Support for this finding was robust across models, falling just outside of traditional levels of statistical significance ($p < .06$). Finally, in looking to the demographic variables, only sex differences were found to be statistically significant. On average, the odds for males are 0.519 times the odds of females of being concerned about poverty ($p < .001$).

[Insert table 2 here]

Given the counter-intuitive finding on self-interest and concern we attempted to tease out this relationship further. The original survey question asked 'In what ways, if any, do you think we in the UK can be affected by poverty in developing countries?' and from this we coded all response options having economic, political or security interests as self-interested rationales. One argument for the negative finding here may be that self-interest is poorly operationalised in the question or alternatively, that it is weak on face validity. Whilst a possibility, the logic of consequences/egotism literature articulates self-interest as 'action driven by instrumental rationality' and it is arguable that response options such as affecting UK jobs and exports, immigration/refugees, and increased risks of foreign travel, exemplify consequentialist reasoning: e.g. poverty in developing countries affects export demands and by consequence UK jobs therefore one should be concerned about poverty in developing countries. However, it is not clear how respondents weigh such consequences of poverty – are the consequences narrowly concentrated (e.g. impact on individuals) or widely distributed (absorbed by the country) – and what impact, if any, this demarcation may have on concern. Again, the survey question cues respondents to reflect on how 'we in the UK' may be affected, and thus it may be possible that

self-interest is weak here, not because it fails to measure self-interest, but that self-interest may be working on multiple levels. In an effort to tease out this hypothesis, we utilise two survey questions that differentiate the impact of poverty in developing countries on individuals personally and the country as a whole. Model 2 in table 2 shows the results from this analysis.

The results here are interesting and help to clarify the negative relationship between self-interest and concern found in model 1. The addition of these two variables does not alter the results in model 1 in terms of direction or significance. Self-interest remains negatively related to concern for poverty in developing countries and statistically significant ($p < .05$). However, respondents appear to have a significantly different calculus in thinking about poverty in developing countries in terms of demarcating poverty as an issue that has personal consequences, and poverty as an issue that has consequences more widely distributed. Respondents are more likely to be concerned about poverty when they feel poverty affects them personally ($p < .001$); whereas where poverty is deemed to affect the UK, respondents are less likely to be concerned ($p < .06$). This may be evidence of a more 'egotistic' approach adopted by some respondents in the survey: 'I am concerned about poverty when, and only when, I think it affects me'. Such distinctions are not easily observed in the current battery of survey questions.

Conclusions

So what does this mean for DFID's strategy of building support for development? Goldmann (2005) reflects on how the different logics lead to different conceptions of democratic citizenship and thus alternative strategies for government engagement. The logic of expected consequences leads to a liberal democratic conception where citizens are assumed to be rational, capable of adjudicating the consequences of actions and policy for themselves and others, and the role of government is to maximise the public information available to citizens to base their decisions on. The alternative vision of citizenship – March and Olsen's preference – is a 'civic identity ideal'. This conception implies a role for government in shaping people's identities. There is also, however, a 'middle way' based on the rationality of deliberative democracy.

In the first case [consequentialism], the task of the politician is to help individual citizens decide what is best from the point of view of their ideas and interests, and in the second case [deliberative democracy] to contribute to joint problem solving. The politician's task in the third case [appropriateness] is to make citizens realise what sort of people they are and what is right to do because they are what they are. (Goldmann 2005, p. 47)

For Goldmann (2005) the first two are educational strategies and the third and final one is closer to a process of socialisation. For us, the first one is a strategy of accommodating citizens' existing preferences and the latter two are strategies of preference-shaping. Given our findings, should DFID adopt preference-accommodating or preference-shaping strategies? Is DFID being driven by strategic imperatives of securing political support for development or is it genuinely morally-driven?

Hay (2007) argues that preference-accommodation is inherently depoliticising. If citizens are encouraged to think of themselves as atomistic, self-interested individuals then, in-line with the rational voter paradox, citizens rationally disengage on the assumption that the individual influence and benefits of political engagement are easily outweighed by the costs of doing so. Hence citizens disengage. This would seem to fit well with our findings about the differences in concern driven by moral judgements and self-interest, and the demarcation between poverty affecting individuals personally and affecting national interests. The crucial lesson from Hay is not to rely on the assumed stability and fixity of people's preferences, in particular assumptions of self-interest and consequentialist reasoning; this only serves to create a self-fulfilling prophesy. As such it is not sufficient for DFID to merely focus on just 'Giving people in Britain the facts about the forces that are shaping the world – and their lives – [assuming that this] will help strengthen support for this effort.' (DFID 1997, p. 77). Cameron and Fairbrass (2004, p.739) have argued, whereas post-1997 DFID appeared to be concerned to open up a space for 'deliberative democracy', post-1999 it began to close down this space and drifted to 'an emphasis on information dissemination rather than interactive policy development'. Our results suggest that a more active and preference-shaping strategy is both desirable and necessary.

Finally, whichever route DFID chooses to take, new survey questions need to be developed to get at more subtle and different kinds of motivations and indeed how they lead (or not) to individual support and action for development assistance. Our purpose here has been to demonstrate the importance of unpacking different motivations for individual-level attitudes towards concern for poverty and therefore to outline this important and underdeveloped research agenda. At a time when donor governments are increasingly occupied with their own financial woes this is an agenda that is ever more urgent.

Figure 1 Dominant frame by newspaper outlet

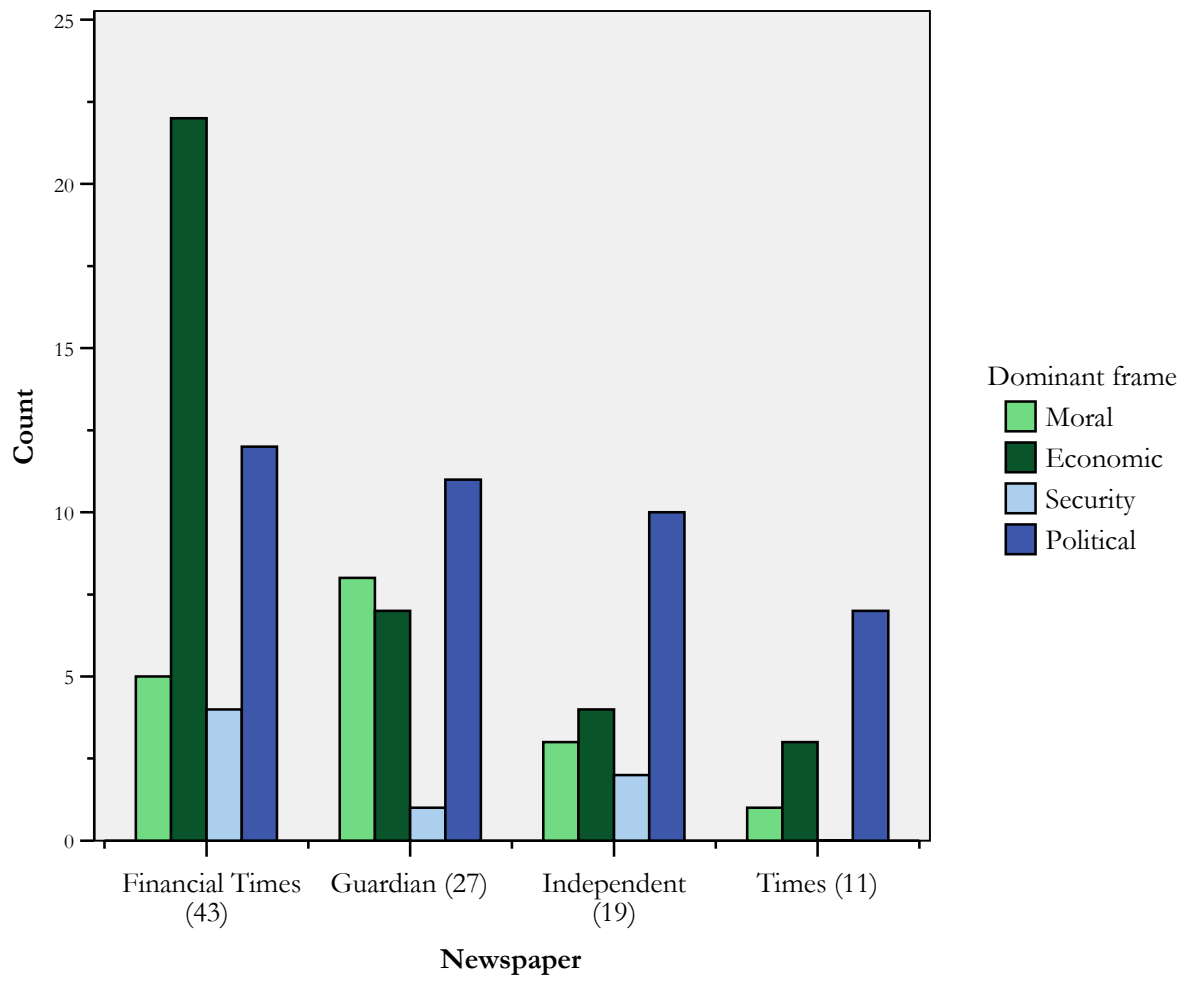


Table 1 Respondents' assessment of level of UK government's commitment to poverty reduction by level of concern

UK govt commitment	Not at all concerned	Not very concerned	No strong feelings either way	Fairly concerned	Very concerned	Total
Too low	7.3% (4)	5.3% (5)	14.7% (40)	33.5% (212)	53.5% (221)	32.8% (482)
About right	29.1% (16)	47.7% (45)	55.7% (152)	54.8% (347)	40.9% (169)	49.6% (729)
Too high	63.6% (35)	47.4% (45)	29.7% (81)	11.7% (74)	5.6% (23)	17.6% (258)
Total	100% (55)	100% (95)	100% (273)	100% (633)	100% (413)	100% (1,469)

(Source: DFID Public Attitudes towards Development 2005; Column totals provided; N= 1469, $\chi^2= 314.5$, $p < .001$; $\gamma = -.550$, s.e. = .027, $p < .001$)

Table 2 Binary logistic regression estimates for concern for poverty in developing countries

	Model 1		Model 2	
	b	Exp(β)	b	Exp(β)
Moral issue	1.029** (.108)	2.798	.960*** (.113)	2.613
Self-interest	-.452** (.195)	.636	-.404* (.200)	.668
Affects personally	--	--	.519*** (.102)	1.680
Affects country	--	--	-.245+ (.129)	.783
Assessment of achieving MDGs	.304+ (.165)	1.356	.288+ (.169)	1.334
TV news	-1.332** (.430)	.264	-1.183** (.436)	.306
Newspapers	-.994* (.468)	.370	-.927* (.475)	.396
Sex	-.656*** (.192)	.519	-.764*** (.199)	.466
Age	.000 (.006)	1.00	.000 (.006)	1.00
Education	.113 (.110)	1.120	.072 (.113)	1.074
Income	-.024 (.105)	.976	-.007 (.107)	.993
Constant	-1.761* (.799)	.172	-2.197* (.913)	.111
-2 LL =	763.6		728.1	
Model Chi Square	152.98***		172.67**	
Cox and Snell R ² =	.18		.20	
N =	787		777	

(Data: DFID Public Attitudes towards Development 2005; ***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, +p < .10, standard errors in parentheses)

Appendix A

1. Data: Office for National Statistics Omnibus Survey (2005) on behalf of the Department for International Development (SN 5665, file no. c0407236)

The data set is made available via the UK Data Archive (www.data-archive.ac.uk) and data are weighted to correct for unequal probability of selection due to interviewing one adult per household and/or restricting the eligibility to certain types of respondent. Weights also adjust for non-response bias by calibrating the Omnibus sample to ONS population totals.

2. Measurement of variables

Concern

How you feel about levels of poverty in developing countries: 1= very concerned or concerned, 0= no feelings either way, not very concerned, not at all concerned

Moral issue

Poverty in developing countries is a moral issue: 1= disagree strongly – 5= agree strongly

Self-interest

The survey asked respondents, 'In what ways, if any, do you think we in the UK can be affected by poverty in developing countries' and provided a list of twelve options. We coded responses with economic, political or security implications as =1, 0= other.

MDG index

The survey asked respondents to assess the world's governments progress on each of the eight Millennium Development Goals: 1= no progress made toward achieving the goal by 2015, 2= some progress made, 3= significant progress made, 4= goal achieved by 2015 were combined to create an index of progress. The index ranges from 8-32 and Cronbach's Alpha test for internal consistency reliability = .79.

TV news

How do you personally find out what is happening in developing countries: 1= TV news, 0= other

Newspapers

How do you personally find out what is happening in developing countries: 1= newspapers, 0= other

Affects personally

Poverty in developing countries could have consequences that may affect me personally:
1= disagree strongly – 5= agree strongly

Affects country

Poverty in developing countries could have effects which damage the interests of this country:
1= disagree strongly – 5= agree strongly

Age

Age of respondent

Sex

1= male, 0= female

Education

Grouped education: 1= no formal qualification, 2= other qualification below degree level, 3= GCSE, O level, A levels, other qualification below degree level, 4= degree or higher degree

Income

Total income before tax: 1= £0-10400, 2= £10400-15600, 3= £15600-20800, 4= £20800-26000, 5= £26000-31200, 6= £31200-36400, 7= £36400 +

3. Content analysis

We conducted a content analysis of nine UK newspapers, the *Daily Telegraph* (*Sunday Telegraph*); *Daily Mail* (*Mail on Sunday*); *Financial Times*; *The Guardian* (*The Observer*); *The Independent* (*The Independent on Sunday*); *Mirror* (*Sunday Mirror*); *The Observer*; *The Sun*; and *The Times* (*The Sunday Times*) using the Nexis UK database. For the purposes of presentation, we've combined the Sunday papers with the parent paper, e.g. articles from the Observer are included with *The Guardian* for a total of seven papers. The search revealed N= 131 articles using the search terms poverty and development aid or development assistance for the period of 1 January 2005 through 31 December 2005. A small number of articles were determined not relevant or repetitive yielding a final N = 112.

We coded for the dominant frame of the article using the following indicators.

DOMINANT FRAME

Moral frame (humanitarian aid, justice, fairness, fair trade, moral responsibility, deaths due to malnutrition/disease, duty/obligation to help, duty not to harm, empathy/sympathy/pity, other)

Economic frame (jobs, falling exports, cancelling debts, trade, cheap imports, investment, transnational corps, good governance, other)

Security frame (environmental impact/concerns (Stern Review, IPCC), war/conflict, disease, risks with foreign travel, terrorism, other)

Political frame (immigration/migration, corruption, human rights, capacity, conditionality, democracy, other)

CAUSES OF POVERTY

Individual (Laziness, lack of work ethic, disposition of the poor, fatalism, bad luck/fate)

National environment (War/conflict, domestic inequalities, corruption, employment opportunities, exploitation)

Global/Structural (global inequalities, international intervention, banking/financial system, debt, North/South poverty)

CONSEQUENCES OF POVERTY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

(damage to earth's environment, affecting UK/world jobs or exports, conflict/war, increase in tropical/diseases, increased risk in foreign travel, financial costs of providing aid/cancelling debt, immigration/migration/refugees/asylum, trade, cheap imports, global effects, other)

RESPONSIBILITY FOR AMELIORATING POVERTY

(governments of developing countries, international organizations (UN, IMF, WB, WTO), rich/wealthy countries, business, private investment, charities/NGOs, not mentioned)

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Endnotes

¹ See www.DFID.gov.uk or Global Education Network Europe (GENE) for additional information on the role of DFID.

² Consistently high-levels of support for development assistance belie two important points. First, support for development aid has been characterized as ‘a mile wide and an inch deep’ Smillie (1999). Or in other words, public support for poverty reduction programmes is important only at the time when asking someone about it. Even when compared to other foreign policy priorities, development assistance ranked 9th out of 10 policies (Stern, 1998). Second, just at the time when support for development aid reached an all-time high, overall aid levels began to drop. Average DAC aid levels have fallen from 0.31% of combined GNI in 2006, to 0.28% in 2007 – mainly a consequence of diminishing debt relief grants to Iraq and Nigeria (OECD 2008). It has long been suggested that donor countries – Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden aside – remain uncommitted to the 0.7% aim (Thérien and Lloyd, 2000)—a long-standing target from the 1969 report of the Pearson Commission.

³ We conceptualise ‘concern for poverty’ as an attitudinal response to the recognition of global poverty. In using ‘concern for poverty’ we follow DFID’s phrasing on the omnibus survey (DFID 2005). Concern for poverty is clearly different from, though related to, support for development assistance.

⁴ http://www.dfid.gov.uk/aboutdfid/faq_1.asp

⁵ Risse (2000) argues that the logic of appropriateness contains two sub-logics: a deeply socialised or habitual taken-for-grantedness rule-following and a more conscious reflective decision-maker rule-following.

⁶ This is complicated by the fact that Burnside and Dollar’s contribution is used prescriptively and normatively to determine who should receive aid. See, for example, the operations of the US’s Millennium Challenge Corporation. For critiques see Ram, 2004; Easterly et al., 2004; Easterly 2006; Zanger, 2000.

⁷ Search terms include ‘poverty’ and ‘development assistance’ or ‘development aid’.

⁸ See Kensicki (2004), ‘No Cure for what Ails Us: The Media-Constructed Disconnect between Societal Problems and Possible Solutions’ for evidence of exploring the cause, effect and responsibility approach to understanding policy issues.

⁹ We would expect television news coverage to be similar to newspapers in terms of quality and depth of exploration save for extended specialist programmes and documentaries which likely fail to reach a similarly sized audience as evening news programmes.

¹⁰ There was no explicit question regarding self-interest in the manner that respondents were asked about poverty as a moral issue, therefore we categorized responses to the question ‘How are we affected by poverty in developing countries as indicators of either economic, security or political self-interest. Response options to this question included ‘damaging the earth’s environment’, ‘affecting UK jobs and imports’, ‘financial costs of providing aid/cancelling debt’, ‘feel obliged to do something’, ‘not affected’, etc. We coded options as self-interested if they had a direct impact on respondent.

¹¹ Diagnostic tests for multicollinearity show that for question ‘How do you personally find out what is happening in developing countries’, TV news and newspapers correlate at $r = .75$ pushing the boundaries of extreme multicollinearity. However, a Lambda test for nominal x nominal data shows $\lambda = .54$.