

Beliefs and Preferences Over Foreign Economic Aid: An Experimental Study*

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Abstract

Do beliefs about the effects of foreign aid on the US economy influence preferences over aid funding? To answer this question I draw on two data sources. First, I use surveys from the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations that asked respondents what they perceived the effect of aid to be on the U.S. economy. Second, I use a new survey experiment to identify the role of beliefs by randomly exposing individuals to informational frames about the effects of foreign aid. I isolate heterogeneities in how people responded to information about the effect of economic aid on the US economy. Men respond differently than women, as do internationalists versus anti-internationalists. Overall, I find that beliefs about the effects of aid have a strong influence on stated preferences.

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1 Introduction

A common observation about foreign aid in the United States is that it is unpopular amongst the public (Irwin, 2000; Lancaster, 2007). Concerned by lagging public support the main U.S. foreign aid agency, USAID, recently helped create a public outreach program in order to improve public awareness and opinion about U.S. foreign aid programs.¹ What are the sources of opposition and support to foreign aid amongst the public? People may oppose foreign aid because they (mistakenly) believe that it constitutes 20% of the U.S. federal government budget and thus it crowds out other services or poses a tax burden (PICA, 2001). Others may support aid because they value improving the welfare of those in developing countries, and believe aid has a positive effect on workers in recipient countries through the provision of jobs. Others might support aid because they believe it helps maintain U.S. national security. In the eyes of the public foreign aid may be associated with many different policy outcomes, and individuals can have different beliefs about whether aid leads to these outcomes.

I focus on the role of beliefs in influencing policy preferences. In particular, I focus on beliefs about the economic effects of aid on the U.S. economy, a policy outcome noted by some advocates of aid.² My central question is whether beliefs about the impact of foreign aid on the U.S. economy influence stated preferences. To answer this question I examine survey responses from the 1975-1982 Chicago Council of Foreign Relations series that asked for individual preferences over foreign aid but also about what they perceived were the effects of economic aid on various outcomes. Next, to better establish a causal relationship between these perceptions and aid preferences I use a new survey experiment. In the experiment I randomly expose individuals to information linking

¹“Quite simply, foreign assistance does not magically communicate itself. The prevailing lack of knowledge in America and recipient countries of aid – and its effectiveness – reflects a failure of communications. Unless the word is spread about the impressive results of U.S. aid programs, public support will remain weak and ambivalent” (USAID, 2008, pg. 1). Similarly, on the importance of improving public opinion to aid, see Collier (2007)

²World Bank President Robert Zoellick recently argued that the U.S. should support development assistance because “There is an additional incentive for America to help: building projects abroad are likely to increase demand for American-made equipment” (Zoellick, 2009). Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin (1995) provides a similar commentary on the benefits of multilateral development banks (MDBs) for the U.S. economy: “The MDBs provide substantial benefits to the U.S. economy. Caterpillar of Peoria, Illinois estimates that it gets \$250 million each year from contracts funded through the MDBs. These contracts help the economy in Illinois and have a ripple effect elsewhere through sub-contractors and suppliers. Other U.S. corporations also get major contracts from the MDBs.” Former USAID Administrator J. Brian Atwood (1996) noted: “USAID has particular importance in expanding new markets for the U.S. economy...Most of the growth in U.S. exports continues to come from countries in the developing world and countries in transition from state-dominated economies to free market economies...This growth supported roughly 1.9 million jobs in the United States...That translates into over 4 million jobs for Americans. Developing countries are particularly good customers for our high-value exports.”

aid to U.S. economic outcomes. These simple informational frames have at least short term effects on stated aid preferences. Support for foreign aid is related to the expected benefits to the U.S. economy.

In addition to identifying the influence of framing on foreign aid preferences I also isolate heterogeneities in the effect of the frame (Hiscox, 2006; Lecheler *et al.*, 2009). I find that treatment effects depend on a respondent’s *prior* expectations about the effects of foreign aid on the U.S. economy, as well as demographic variables such as education level, gender, and degree of support for general U.S. engagement internationally. Gaps in aid preferences between high and low educated individuals, men and women, and those with and without an “internationalist” orientation are reduced after exposure to information that aid can be good for the U.S. economy because it increases exports. These differences are most robust with respect to gender and internationalist attitudes.

I proceed as follows. First, I describe the existing literature on preferences for foreign aid and link this to a larger literature on preferences for other types of foreign economic policy (Section 2). Second, using data from the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations I examine how perceptions of economic aid’s effect on various outcomes, such as U.S. economic health and security, influence preferences for aid (Section 3). Third, I describe a new survey with experimental manipulations that help me identify the influence of the perceptions (Section 4). Fourth, I evaluate the treatment effects of this information and demonstrate heterogeneity in its effect (Section 5). A final section concludes (Section 6).

2 Existing Literature

2.1 Public Opinion and IPE Preferences

The academic literature on foreign aid has tended to focus on the effects of aid in recipient countries, the patterns of aid allocations (Alesina and Dollar, 2000; Maizels and Nissanke, 1984; Bermeo, 2009) or domestic institutions that implement donor foreign aid policies (Irwin, 2000; Lancaster, 2007). In one of the most prominent accounts of donor *public* support for foreign aid, Lumsdaine (1993) argues that preferences for foreign aid are driven by ideological commitments about the desirability of helping others: a “moral vision.” Citing data from the Eurobarometer series as supportive of his thesis, “all indicators suggest that sympathy with the Third World, moral conviction, and desire to help the poor of the less developed countries emerge consistently

as the bases of support for aid” (pg. 154).³ Several recent studies instead stress the role of economic motivations in explaining public opinion on foreign aid (Chong and Gradstein, 2008; Tingley, 2007; Milner and Tingley, 2008). Milner and Tingley (2009) analyze legislative voting by Congresspersons in the U.S. and find an important role for the economic composition of districts. Legislators from higher skilled districts were more likely to support economic foreign aid⁴ and ideological factors were also salient, with more conservative legislators opposing foreign aid.⁵

In the public opinion literature on trade, immigration, and international financial rescues, some argue that economic motivations drive preferences (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001b,a; Mayda and Rodrik, 2005; Broz, 2005) while others maintain that preferences for these policies arise from particular sets of values, such as “internationalist” or “ethnocentric” attitudes (Citrin *et al.*, 1997; Margalit, 2006; Mansfield and Mutz, 2009; Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2006). Studies continue to be published that attempt to ply this divide (Fordham, 2008). In a recent article Mansfield and Mutz (2009) compare the role of beliefs about the economic effects of trade liberalization on the U.S. economy as a whole versus beliefs about liberalization on the individual. They term these beliefs “perceptions”: “(p)erceptions of how trade affects the country as a whole – what are often referred to as “sociotropic” perceptions – play a substantial role in shaping attitudes about foreign commerce, a role that is largely independent of self-interest. Indeed, these perceptions are among the most important influences on opinions about trade” (pg. 427).

2.2 Information and Expressed Preferences

While most of the IPE literature analyzes the influence of particular values or material sources of self-interest, the American politics literature often emphasizes the role of information and beliefs, as well as more psychological variables like the “availability” of an issue (Sniderman and Theriault, 2004; Zaller, 1992; Gilens and Murakawa, 2002). Here, information provided to respondents can influence the beliefs they have about the operation of foreign aid. For example, this might take the form of influencing their “causal beliefs.” Causal beliefs “are about cause-effect relationships which derive authority from the shared consensus of recognized elites” (Goldstein and Keohane,

³Lumsdaine’s perspective is consistent with cross-national work on aid budgets that links the presence of welfare state institutions to the size of foreign aid budgets (Noel and Therien, 1995; Therien and Noel, 2000).

⁴Similarly, see Younas (2008).

⁵For cross-national work linking liberal-conservatism of governments to aid budgets, see Tingley (2010).

1993, pg. 8).⁶ The relevant cause effect relationship could be between aid and particular policy outcomes, such as the effect on recipient economies or the U.S. economy. Or this information could make a particular way of thinking about the issue more available or salient at that point in time (Nelson *et al.*, 1997).

A common way this literature has studied the role of information is through framing experiments (e.g., see review in Chong and Druckman, 2007) and the operation of these and other mechanisms account for the finding that framing an issue can modify support. Zaller and Feldman (1992) argued that, especially with low salience issues (which some might consider foreign aid to be), individual preferences are “blowing in the wind” and easily manipulable depending on an individual’s exposure to information. Following Hiscox (2006) in the IPE literature I take a similar approach in Section 5, and randomly provide respondents with information about positive effects of aid on the U.S. economy. While neither Hiscox nor I am able to exactly pin down the mechanism through which this information operates (e.g., changes in beliefs, issue availability), the results I present refine our understanding of how perceptions about the effects of a policy influence expressed preferences.

3 Influence of Perceptions on Preferences

Drawing on the sociotropic voting literature (Kinder and Kiewiet, 1981; Kiewiet, 1983), Mansfield and Mutz (2009) argue that information about national level policy outcomes is more influential than information about policy outcomes that are at an individual level. They interpret that perceptions about national level outcomes will be more influential than perceptions about the impact of a policy on an the respondent or their family. Perceptions about the effects of trade policy on the nation as a whole will have the most salient influence on trade preferences because information about the national level outcomes is easier to understand and process. Perceptions about the impact of trade on the individual matter less. Key here is that this is not a distinction about motivation (e.g., self-interest versus altruism) but instead about the influence of information (Kinder and Kiewiet, 1981, pg. 132). Therefore, information individuals receive about national level economic outcomes will influence expressed preferences more than information about the

⁶Goldstein and Keohane distinguish causal beliefs from two other types of beliefs. *World views* define the “universe of possibilities for action...are entwined with people’s conceptions of their identities, evoking deep emotions and loyalties” (8). *Principled beliefs* “consists of normative ideas the specify criteria for distinguishing right from wrong and just from unjust.”

effect of a policy at the individual level.⁷

Mansfield and Mutz (2009) try to identify the influence of beliefs on IPE policy preferences (trade policy) by collecting survey responses to questions about 1) how positive or negative trade was for the U.S. economy, 2) how positive or negative trade is for their family, and 3) individual level variables that existing theories suggest influence utility over trade. The first two independent variables are what they term “perceptions.” They then use regression to estimate $f(TradeSupport) = \beta_1 NationalEconomyGoodBad + \beta_2 Family + \xi_1 Income + \xi_2 Nationalism + X\xi_3' + \varepsilon$. β_1 is interpreted as the effect of perceptions about trade’s effect on national level outcomes, which involve the beliefs of an individual formed from exposure to information.⁸

I follow a similar approach and look at survey data from the 1975-1982 Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (CCFR) series. Like many surveys on foreign affairs this series asked whether respondents wanted economic aid budgets expanded, cut back, or kept the same.⁹ The 1975, 1977, and 1982 surveys are unique in that they asked respondents for their perceptions about the effect of economic aid on different policy outcomes. In particular, respondents were asked “Do you think that giving such economic aid to other countries [Helps our own national security/Helps the national security of other countries/Helps out economy at home/Helps the economy of other countries].” Respondents could say that they did think this, that they did not think this, or that they were not sure.

I estimate foreign aid preferences as a function of each of these perceptions plus individual controls for whether the respondent had more than a high school education (College), age (Age), and political ideology (Ideology).¹⁰ This follows standard specifications elsewhere in the IPE literature. To allow for mean differences across the surveys I include dummy variables for each survey with the 1982 survey as the excluded category. The dependent variable takes on three ordered values. Hence I estimate an ordered probit model and use robust standard errors.

⁷“(i)f available information convinces a person that many in the U.S. are being adversely affected by free trade, even if they are personally or not, it will be the former, sociotropic perception that is tied to his or her trade policy preference rather than how trade has influenced his own economic well-being” (Mansfield and Mutz, 2009, pg. 14).

⁸They argue that these sociotropic perceptions outweigh the influence of perceptions about trade’s effect on an individual’s own family (β_2) as well variables tapping material self-interest (e.g., income proxies for preferences induced by factor based explanations of trade preferences).

⁹The exact wording was: “Here is a list of present federal government programs. For each, I’d like you to tell me whether you feel it should expanded, cut back or kept about the same...Economic aid to other nations.”

¹⁰Age measured in 8 categories and Ideology runs along a 0-4 scale with 0 the most liberal and 4 the most conservative. Instead of using a college education variable alternative models using a measure of skill level produced similar results.

I present four separate models. Models 1 and 3 include only the perception variable about the effect of aid on the US economy as well as the control variables. Models 2 and 4 include all four perception variables. In models 1 and 2 I exclude observations where someone said that they did not know whether aid had the effect on the particular policy outcome. Models 3 and 4 recode these perception variables such that the middle value corresponds to someone saying they did not know.

As can be seen in the table, perceptions about the effect of aid on the US economy were positive and significantly related to support for aid. Perception about aid's impact on US and recipient security were also important predictors of aid preferences. Contra Lumsdaine's argument, perceptions about aid's impact on the recipient economy were not significantly related to support for aid. Individuals with a college education were more likely to support aid whereas conservatives were more likely to oppose aid. Unlike some other results there was no difference in aid preferences by gender.

To facilitate interpretation of the results for the perception variables I used model 2 and calculated the change in predicted probability of being in each category of the dependent variable (cut aid, keep same, increase aid) while holding all variables at their median value and changing each of the perception variables from 0 to 1. Such a change corresponds to someone changing their perception that economic aid does not help some policy outcome to a perception that it does help. The y-axis gives the change in predicted probability and the x-axis lists each of the dependent variable categories. The upper left figure presents results for perceptions of aid's impact on the US economy. A change in perception from thinking that aid does not have a positive impact on the US economy to thinking that it has a positive impact leads to a -17% change in the probability of wanting to cut foreign aid, an 11% increase in the probability of wanting to keep aid levels the same, and a 7% increase in the probability of wanting to support aid. Similar magnitudes in effect sizes were also seen for perceptions of aid's effect on US and recipient country security. These results suggest that, like those observed in trade policy by Mansfield and Mutz (2009), perceptions about aid's effect on the US economy are an important determinant of aid preferences.

4 Framing Foreign Aid

While these results show a strong associational relationship between beliefs about economic aid and foreign aid, they are not able to show a causal relationship. Mansfield and Mutz (2009) face a

similar problem. For example, individuals with a particular interests may have previously sought out information that would support a particular belief that they subsequently reported. A variable for this interest may not be in the model. Or, it may be a variable in the model and hence we have a form of post-treatment bias. For example, auxiliary analysis shows that individuals with a college degree are more likely to hold beliefs that aid is good for the U.S. economy. These and other challenges limit the extent that we can make causal claims based on the CCFR or Mansfield and Mutz (2009) data. As a first step to help identify a causal relationship I turn to an experimental design.

The literature on framing argues that information provided to individuals can change stated preferences. These changes could happen through a variety of mechanisms. For example, the information could change an individual’s causal beliefs or the extent to which a particular facet of the policy is “available” for consideration. To test whether information can have some influence on foreign aid preferences I pose the following hypothesis.

H1: Individuals exposed to positive information about the effect of foreign aid on the U.S. economy will be more likely to support aid compared to individuals not provided with this information.

Mansfield and Mutz argue that information like this should influence preferences because it relates to social level outcomes. However, individuals come into our sample with different existing beliefs and interests. Providing a particular piece of information may interact with these things, leading to heterogeneities in the treatment effect. Hence a reformulation of hypothesis 1 that I also consider is that the effect of the treatment will be heterogenous across the sample.

To study the influence of information and beliefs on expressed foreign aid preferences I use a nationally representative survey experiment conducted by Polimetrix/YouGov in the summer of 2008. All analyses incorporate the survey weights estimated by the Polimetrix/YouGov team.

4.1 Survey Introduction

The survey made it explicitly clear that it was asking about economic aid.¹¹ Many studies fail to clarify the type of foreign aid that is being discussed; there is no clarification about whether

¹¹Prior to beginning the section of foreign aid respondents were told the following: “The United States gives various types of foreign aid to other countries. Some of this aid is economic aid that is designed to help countries develop. Other aid is military aid such as military hardware and training. Other aid is humanitarian aid that helps fight hunger and disease. Currently the U.S. gives slightly less than one cent out of every dollar of the U.S. budget to foreign economic aid.”

the aid is economic, humanitarian, or military. Differences in aid type can have a large influence on solicited public opinion.¹² The focus here is on economic aid. The survey also provided respondents with information about the amount of economic aid that is actually given, relative to the U.S. Federal government’s budget, in order to control for unobserved prior differences in beliefs about the size of the aid budget (beliefs shown to influence stated preferences, see e.g., Gilens (2001)). *Hence the study design is an important improvement on existing designs that might generate unobserved heterogeneities due to respondent interpretation of “aid” and beliefs about existing levels of aid.*¹³

4.2 Prior expectations about the effects of aid

Next the survey asked a series of questions intended to probe expectations about the consequences of foreign aid. It asked respondents to say whether aid has a positive or negative effect on 1) the U.S. economy, 2) people with jobs like the respondent’s, 3) national security, and 4) workers in recipient countries.¹⁴ In this paper I focus on responses to the U.S. economy question.

These perceptions, or “expectations,” were solicited for several reasons. First, as noted above, few existing public opinion studies on foreign economic policy consider respondent expectations over certain outcomes of some policy. Mansfield and Mutz (2009) claim that expectations about the U.S. economy have a powerful impact on overall preferences for trade liberalization. Second, the frame I describe below laid out a specific causal mechanism through which aid could influence the U.S. economy. This allows me to investigate how randomized information treatments about causal mechanisms influence individuals depending on their prior expectation about the effect of a pertinent policy outcome, here the effect of aid on the U.S. economy.

¹²An analysis of the Chicago Council of Foreign Relations series reveals large differences between the type of people that support economic aid versus military aid. While conservatives (liberals) are more (less) supportive of military aid, the opposite is true for economic aid. And overall levels of support for humanitarian aid (such as disaster relief) are relatively high through the population.

¹³This of course means that the respondents are “treated” with information that otherwise might not be known by U.S. citizens, making it harder to extrapolate outside the sample. This seems an acceptable cost in order to control up front for subject heterogeneities that might obscure relationships pertinent to the paper’s motivations.

¹⁴The precise question phrasing was: “Indicate the effect you think U.S. foreign economic aid has on the following concerns and groups of people.” The response options were very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative, very negative, and not sure. I used a “not sure” option while Mansfield and Mutz (2009) group together people who said there was “no effect” with those who refused to answer or were not sure. Unless lacking a “no effect” option systematically forced people to be more likely to answer one way or the other, which I am unaware of why this would be the case, this difference across the studies is unimportant.

4.3 Randomized information frame

Most existing IPE studies that study beliefs do not directly manipulate information that might change these beliefs (Mansfield and Mutz, 2009; Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2006), though see Hiscox (2006). Following the elicitation of expectations I randomly presented respondents with a frame providing positive information about aid. In the **Pro aid** treatment respondents received the following information: “*Some people say that economic aid to other countries is good for the U.S. because it increases U.S. exports to those countries.*” A control group did not receive any additional information.¹⁵ Table 2 gives summary statistics by treatment status and shows substantial covariate balance across the groups.

4.4 Preference solicitation

Next subjects were asked a standard question about the economic aid budget. “What should the U.S. do with its foreign economic aid program: expand it a lot, expand it a little, keep it the same, decrease it a little, decrease it a lot or not sure.” Response options were randomly reversed. This is standard foreign aid question that a range of surveys, such as the World Values Survey, have used in the past and forms the key policy preference measure of this paper.

4.5 Benefits and limitations of the experiment

This paper examines the influence of beliefs on preferences for economic foreign aid. Given this motivation, the design of this study has a number of attractive features. First, I use a simple frame that is ecologically valid in that they have been used by political actors in the past and hence are not far-fetched or academic in origin (see quotes in introduction). While I do not experimentally study the influence of other information, e.g., about national security or development, I do consider the influence of these expectations below. Second, the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (CCFR) surveys from the late 1970’s solicited expectations about aid’s effect on the U.S. economy *after* asking the general aid preference question. The CCFR procedure risks respondents rationalizing their stated preferences or trying to appear consistent by stating expectations that, in fact, they do not hold. Third, randomized frames allow us to better identify the influence of information on stated preferences because the treatment assignment is independent of subject characteristics

¹⁵The survey also had two other treatment conditions, one dealing with the negative effects of aid through higher taxes and the other a mixture between the two treatments. The focus of this paper is on beliefs about the economics effects of aid on the U.S. economy through exports. I discuss the other treatments briefly below.

that might otherwise influence whether someone is exposed to such information in the real world.

The design of the current study’s survey has *at least* two important weaknesses. First, space constraints on the survey, and attention spans of the respondents, required extremely simple frames. Stronger frames may well have given stronger results; these weaker frames provide a tougher test of whether information can influence expressed preferences. An example of a stronger frame would be a statement from a specific person or group that might be seen as an expert on the matter.¹⁶ Second, like other work on framing I am unable to identify the exact mechanism through which the experimental treatment has an effect. The treatment information could be changing beliefs directly, or it could be making particular ways of evaluating the policy more salient. Future research will engage with these issues.

5 Results

I structure the results section in the following way. First, I provide basic descriptive statistics about the distribution of prior perceptions/expectations about the effect of aid on the US economy. Second, I analyze the effect of the randomly assigned information treatments by estimating the difference in stated preferences across the control and treatment groups. Third, I isolate the presence of differential treatment effects across groups of individuals. For example, I estimate treatment effects separately for men and women. I follow these tests of the moderating influence of covariates with a multivariate analysis of treatment effects.

5.1 Prior expectations about effects of foreign economic aid

Following the introduction, respondents were asked about the consequences of foreign economic aid. These questions were framed as: “Indicate the effect you think U.S. foreign economic aid has on the following concerns and groups of people”. Response categories ranged from very positive to very negative with a not sure option available to respondents. Figure 2 gives the survey weighted frequencies for the “U.S. economy” question.

There are several interesting patterns in Figure 2. First, there is heterogeneity in the way people see the relationship between foreign economic aid and its consequences on the U.S. economy. Some people had a prior positive expectation, others a negative relationship. Second, the population appears relatively unsure about what affect aid has on the U.S. economy, though still the majority

¹⁶However, Mutz (1992a) argues that even information from unknown, “impersonal”, sources can be influential.

of people stated whether they perceived this to be a positive or negative relationship. As we will see, differences in these expectations about aid’s effect on the U.S. economy will pattern the effect of the informational treatment.

5.2 Effects of information on expressed preferences

Next I compare the effect of the randomized information treatment on stated foreign aid preferences. Table 3 displays the average aid preference for the treatment and control group, where I have excluded respondents who were not sure. The difference between the group averages is .18, which while small is significantly different from 0 ($p < .05$).¹⁷ Averaging across the entire sample I find support for H1. While the effect of the frame is small, it is interesting to note that an anti-frame had a similar effect.¹⁸

5.2.1 Differential treatment effects

Next I investigate whether the treatment effect was constant across different groups of the sample. First I collapse prior responses about the impact of aid on the U.S. economy into whether someone said aid had a negative or positive effect on the U.S. economy. I then compare the impact of the pro treatment to the control within each of these two different groups. Thus I compare the influence of the frame conditional on an individual’s prior expectation on whether aid was good for the U.S. economy.

For those saying aid was good for the U.S. economy there was no significant effect of the pro treatment ($p = .51$) or the anti treatment ($p = .14$). For those saying aid was bad for the economy the pro treatment significantly increased support for aid by .27 ($p = .002$) while the anti treatment had no effect ($p = .53$). *The effect of the pro treatment is concentrated on individuals saying aid was bad for the economy.* Individuals with prior expectations opposite the treatment condition were on average more influenced by the treatment than those with expectations consistent with the information.¹⁹

Are there other pre-treatment variables that moderate the impact of the treatments? I explore

¹⁷All tests use survey weights but results do not change if weights not used.

¹⁸The anti-frame emphasized the costs of foreign aid: “Some people say that economic aid is bad because U.S. taxpayers have to pay for it.” On average this frame decreased preferences by .2. A mixed frame, with both the pro and anti frame, had on average no effect. Unlike Hiscox (2006) I do not find that the pro treatment has no effect and is swamped by a frame opposing the policy.

¹⁹For the set of individuals saying they were not sure if aid had a positive or negative impact the treatment effect was not significantly different from 0 ($p = .33$).

three: whether someone has a college education, gender, and an individual’s “internationalist” attitude. A common result is that those with lower levels of education are more likely to be influenced by informational frames. Another possibility is that variables previously identified as effecting aid preferences might also moderate the influence of the treatments. Gender differences²⁰ in support for foreign aid might arise because women and men have different priorities about the goals of foreign aid. Similarly, depending on the situation, men and women might have different levels of altruistic motivations (Croson and Gneezy, 2009). For example, Andreoni and Vesterlund (2001) show that women are more altruistic when altruistic acts are expensive. Individuals with low levels of internationalist orientation might have different beliefs about what the likely effects of foreign aid are. For example, these individuals might believe that the probability of aid effecting the U.S. economy is quite low whereas pro-internationalist individuals already believe such a mechanism exists. In this case we would expect to see the pro treatment have a strong impact on anti-internationalist individuals, but little impact on pro-internationalist individuals as the informational treatment provides no new information. While the purpose of this paper is not to develop a complete theory about why these variables could serve as moderators of the treatments, illustrating the moderating effect they do have helps us understand the influence of beliefs in more detail.

I first breakout respondents by whether they hold a four year college degree and by the prior expectation about the effect of aid on the U.S. economy. For those *with* a college degree the effect of the pro treatment was insignificant *no matter the prior position about the effect of aid on the U.S. economy*. This suggests that people with higher levels of education had more solidified beliefs that could not be moved around by the informational prompt. Conversely, those *without* a college education appeared much more responsive to the treatment, but their responses depended on whether or not they saw aid having a positive impact on the U.S. economy. For individuals without a college degree and expressing a negative relationship, the pro aid treatment had a significant effect ($p < .01$). But for those stating a positive relationship there was no significant difference ($p = .6$).²¹ Hence for low educated individuals, the effect of the treatment was significant

²⁰A common result in several earlier foreign aid and trade surveys is a difference between men and women (Milner and Tingley, 2008; Bjereld, 2001; Burgoon and Hiscox, 2008), though this was not observed in the CCFR surveys analyzed above.

²¹One explanation for the treatment to have no effect on the those stating a positive relationship is that these respondents already had higher aid preferences, and so there could be a ceiling effect. This is unlikely as average

only when it disagreed with an individual's prior expectation. It did not reinforce prior views.

Next I consider differential treatment effects by gender. Are men or women more likely to respond to the informational treatments? To analyze this question I proceed as above but first breaking out respondents only by gender. Male aid preferences increased under the pro treatment compared to the control condition ($p < .01$), whereas there was no significant difference for women ($p = .8$). On average women are less influenced by appeals about the positive economic effects on the donor economy whereas men were more likely to be affected.

What happens to these differences by gender if I also breakout responses by prior expectations about aid's impact on the U.S. economy? Does a heterogeneous treatment effect across gender remain? Amongst men stating a negative relationship there was a .43(.19, .67) difference in aid preferences across the pro treatment and control group. Amongst men expressing a prior positive relationship there was a .33(.01, .66) increase. *Regardless of prior responses about the effect of aid on the economy the pro-aid prompt have a significant positive effect on men.* Information linking foreign aid to consequences for the U.S. economy appears particularly influential for men. Even breaking out by prior expectations about whether aid was good for the U.S. economy, no significant differences were observed for females (additional results for women available from author). Further research is needed to ascertain the source of these differential treatment effects across gender. Perhaps, for example, men respond more to information bearing on "socio-tropic" outcomes whereas women respond more to information about "altruistic" outcomes involving those in developing countries.

Next I consider differential treatment effects across "internationalist" attitudes that have been suggested as a source of preferences for particular foreign economic policies. To measure these values I drew on a set of questions from Mansfield and Mutz (2009) to form an index of international orientation. I first created an additive index of 4 questions about the role of the U.S.²² and then dichotomize the measure at its mean to facilitate analysis (the distribution was relatively symmetric, mean \approx median). Keeping with the above analysis I continue to break out respondents

preferences were still around 2 on a 0-4 scale.

²²I used the following questions that had respondents answer: strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree and strongly disagree. 1) The U.S. needs to play an active role in solving conflicts around the world. 2) The U.S. government should take care of Americans not other nations. 3) It is essential for the U.S. to work with other nations to solve problems. 4) It will be best for the future of the country if we stay out of world affairs. 5) The U.S. has the responsibility to play the role of world policeman.

by their prior statements about the effect of aid on the U.S. economy.

The pro treatment had no effect on pro internationalists, regardless of their prior expectations about the effect of aid on the US economy.²³ Despite one's internationalist orientation, being reminded of the costs of this orientation led to less support for foreign aid. For the anti-internationalist group the pro aid treatment significantly increased support by .37(.10) amongst those stating a negative relationship between aid and the US economy ($p < .01$). Anti-internationalist values may be an important source of preferences for foreign aid, but information about advantageous economic consequences from US engagement leads to increased support. Interestingly, amongst anti-internationalists reporting that aid has a positive impact on the US economy, the pro aid treatment also had an effect, though this just misses significance at the 10% level with a two tailed test ($p = .106$). Even across prior expectations about aid's effect on the U.S. economy, the influence of an anti-internationalist orientation on policy preferences can be partially overridden by information about the positive economic consequences of aid to the US. Anti-internationalists appear uninterested in overseas engagement, but information about favorable effects of aid for the US economy helps these respondents warm up to economic aid.

5.3 Multivariate Analysis

The preceding section evaluates the influence of simple informational prompts on expressed preferences. The effect of the treatment appears to be heterogenous across several groups. However, this heterogeneity could be the result of confounds within the population. For example, men could be more likely to be anti-internationalists. To control for these confounds I move to multivariate tests. In the next subsection I follow Hiscox (2006) and estimate aid preferences as function of treatment status, subject specific variables (such as gender) and interactions between the treatment and these other individual level variables. This section allows me to see if the differential treatment effects identified in the previous section hold controlling for other variables and their moderating influence.

USEcon is the dichotomous variable used in the previous section to separate respondents by their prior expectations of the effect of aid on the US economy. *College4yr* is a dichotomous measure of whether someone had a 4-year college degree (*College4yr*). *IntlRole* measures interna-

²³Ceiling effects are unlikely to account for this because mean preferences were less than 2.5 on a 0-4 scale. Further, ceiling effects could not explain the lack of difference for those stating a negative relationship which generally had lower levels of support.

tionalist attitudes and is equal to 1 for those with above average internationalist orientation and 0 if below. *Gender* is measured as 1=Male and 0=Female. In several models I also add measures of political ideology²⁴ and age that are common in IPE public opinion work.

I estimate an equation where I include a dummy variable for whether or not someone received the treatment (*ProVsNoAidPrompt*) and interactions between this treatment and *pre-treatment* covariates²⁵ so as to allow for heterogeneity in the effect of the treatment.²⁶ I include interactions for all of the covariates, though the results do not change if I estimate more restrictive models that have interactions with a subset of variables or with separate regressions. I continue to use linear regression so as to estimate a mean response, though the results are substantially the same with an ordered probit estimator but are more difficult to interpret. I estimate all models with robust standard errors and survey weights. Dropping the weights produces no substantive differences.

I present six different models in Table 4. The first model includes only the treatment variable. As linear regression is a mean response model, this coefficient is equal to the difference in means test conducted in Table 3. Model 2 adds the set of covariates that were considered in the previous section. Models 3 and 4 add an additional set of covariates but only display estimates for the core variables and age and ideology.²⁷ Model 5 replicates Model 1 but adds the respondent’s prior expectation about the influence of aid on the US economy, *USEcon* while model 6 builds off model 2.

Do we continue to see evidence that the treatment effect is moderated by pretreatment vari-

²⁴Individual political orientation on a left-right scale is a frequently cited source of preferences for foreign aid, and forms a key part of Lumsdaine’s argument. Political ideology is measured on a 0-9 liberal-conservative scale and age is measured continuously.

²⁵While prior expectations and gender certainly are pre-treatment, the internationalism variable was in fact measured post-treatment. This was done because I did not want to prime respondents. However, this raises the possibility that the treatment could influence this variable. This is unlikely conceptually, as most take this variable to be relatively fixed. Empirically there were no significant differences in the internationalism measure between any of the treatment and control groups.

²⁶To illustrate how this works consider the following linear model. Let α represent parameters from a regression using only the control group and β for the treatment group. Then we have $Y^{obs} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 X + T((\beta_0 - \alpha_0) + (\beta_1 - \alpha_1)X)$ where $\beta_0 - \alpha_0$ represents the mean shift from the treatment and $\beta_1 - \alpha_1$ the difference in the average estimated treatment due to a difference in covariate status (X).

²⁷I include a dummy variable for whether an individual has ever taken an economics class (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2006; Mansfield and Mutz, 2009), a measure of political interest (2 if the respondent was very interested in politics, 1 if somewhat interested and 0 if not interested at all), and a dummy for passport ownership. Following Paxton and Knack (2008) I include a dummy for whether a person contributed to a charity or not (result using the percentage of income given to charities in the previous year were similar), a measure of church attendance (3 if respondent attends church at least once a week, 2 if a few times per month, 1 if less than once per month, and 0 if almost never).

ables? Given the linear specification, the coefficient on the interaction term represents the difference in the difference in means across the covariate. Hiscox (2006) terms this the “sensitivity” of the covariate to framing. For example, in model M2 the coefficient of .43 on the interaction between gender and the treatment represents the difference in treatment effect between men and women.²⁸ I find that the differential treatment effects observed earlier are also apparent in the differential sensitivities of these demographic groups to the manipulation provided in the treatment. The gap in the treatment effect between genders and internationalism status remains conditioning on other variables as well.

The coefficient on the interaction between college education and the treatment was negative but not significant. This may be due to confoundedness in the population between college educated persons and internationalist orientations, for example. Overall, most heterogeneities in the effect of the treatment remain even after conditioning on a large number of other variables, as evidenced in models M3-M6. Further empirical and theoretical work should be done to explain the differences in the way information influences expressed preferences.

5.4 Discussion

I find support for hypothesis 1. On average, information about a causal mechanism linking foreign aid to certain policy outcomes can influence the preferences of individuals over foreign aid, at least in the short term. Furthermore, the effect of this information differs across portions of the sample, depending on prior expectations about the effects of aid on the US economy, education, gender, and internationalism. While the differences across education level may be attributable to Zallerian type dynamics with more educated persons arguing against the informational prompt, the differences across gender and internationalist attitudes require more research to understand. Men and anti-internationalists have their preferences shifted when information was provided about material consequences from foreign aid to the U.S. economy. While the design of the study does not permit us to see whether this information has long lasting effects, their experimental demonstration here is likely a necessary condition for longer lasting influences.

The effect of the treatment may be mediated by a number of different mechanisms. The beliefs an individual has about the linkage between aid and the U.S. economy may have been influenced

²⁸Consider the regression model $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T + \beta_2 X + \beta_3 TX$, where $X = 1$ means someone is male and $X = 0$ female. Then β_3 represents $[E(Y|X = 1, T = 1) - E(Y|X = 1, T = 0)] - [E(Y|X = 0, T = 1) - E(Y|X = 0, T = 0)]$.

by the treatment. Hence the treatment effect may be through changes in what Goldstein and Keohane (1993) call “causal beliefs.” That the effect of the treatment differs by prior expectations about this relationship is evidence to this end. Alternatively, the extent to which individuals weight portions of their utility function dealing with the effect of aid on the U.S. economy could have changed. Nelson *et al.* (1997) suggest mechanisms of this nature. Like other scholars of framing effects in IPE (Hiscox, 2006) I am unable to identify the exact mechanism through which these changes happen, and leave such questions for future research.

6 Conclusion

Perceptions about the effect of aid on the US economy amongst the public can have a significant effect on support for foreign economic aid. To show this I take advantage of two data sets. The first used a standard set of surveys from the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s. These surveys were unique in that they directly tap individual perceptions about the effects of US economic aid. The second data source sought to manipulate these perceptions and hence better show a causal relationship. I find that average public support for foreign economic aid can be increased by positively framing foreign aid as something that helps U.S. exports. This framing effect helps capture the influence of information on preferences.

While the average influences tend to be small, they were on average significantly different from 0. Interestingly, Hiscox (2006) found that a pro-trade frame had no influence on responses while I find a positive effect for aid using perhaps a weaker frame.²⁹ Furthermore, the effect size varied across the sample. Individuals with prior expectations that aid was good for the U.S. economy were less influenced than those who had a negative prior. Men and individuals with anti-internationalist orientation were particularly influenced by the experimental treatment. Hiscox (2006) did not observe these differential effects for trade. Efforts to change foreign economic policy attitudes will clearly be moderated by existing subject characteristics and future work should focus on explaining these moderating effects.

This paper also is one of the most systematic explorations of public opinion for foreign economic aid. A number of studies speak to preferences over trade and immigration policies. Foreign aid, though, also plays a key role in U.S. foreign economic policy but public opinion work is rarer. This

²⁹Hiscox’s frame for trade mentioned several reasons trade is good for the U.S. and predicated the frame with “Most people say...” instead of “Some people say”.

study contributes to understanding how support for aid might change (e.g., USAID, 2008), but also helps paint a more complete picture of preferences held by U.S. citizens over international economic engagement.

The opportunities for future research are considerable, though I raise only four here. First, the informational treatments I use were weak. Stronger, more credible/source specific (Hiscox, 2006; Lupia and McCubbins, 1998), pieces of information that deal with more specific outcomes could have stronger effects. Second, the experimental design provides information about a sociotropic outcome (effect on U.S. economy). I could also provide information frames about altruistic outcomes and economic effects in respondent's state or industry. An experimental design that focuses on these contrasts could yield important insights into the sources of individual preferences for aid. Third, future survey experiments will try to measure beliefs, and associated levels of certainty, more directly and both before and after the provision of information. This will allow me to identify the exact mechanisms through which changes in preferences occur. This will permit a more refined analysis of how information influences individuals with congruent or incongruent prior beliefs, as well as direct estimates of how changes in beliefs—as opposed to other variables like saliency—influence preferences. Finally, more work needs to be done on preferences for different types of foreign aid (military, multilateral versus bilateral) as well as the relationships between preferences for aid, trade, and immigration, and how beliefs about each of these policy areas influence preferences. I currently am pursuing all of these opportunities.

Table 1: 1975-1982 CCFR: Economic Aid

	EconAid1	EconAid2	EconAid3	EconAid4
CutExpEconAid				
EconAidUSEcon	0.68** [0.04]	0.48** [0.05]		
EconAidHelpsUSEcon_dk			0.35** [0.02]	0.24** [0.02]
EconAidRecipEcon		-0.03 [0.08]		
EconAidHelpsRecipEcon_dk				-0.02 [0.04]
EconAidUSSec		0.51** [0.05]		
EconAidHelpsUSSec_dk				0.24** [0.02]
EconAidRecipSec		0.23** [0.06]		
EconAidHelpsRecipSec_dk				0.13** [0.03]
College	0.17** [0.04]	0.17** [0.04]	0.17** [0.04]	0.19** [0.04]
Ideology	-0.11** [0.02]	-0.11** [0.02]	-0.11** [0.02]	-0.11** [0.02]
Gender	-0.05 [0.04]	-0.04 [0.04]	-0.06 [0.04]	-0.07+ [0.04]
Age	-0.01 [0.01]	-0.00 [0.01]	-0.01 [0.01]	-0.00 [0.01]
yr1975	-0.01 [0.05]	0.05 [0.06]	0.02 [0.05]	0.07 [0.05]
yr1979	0.08+ [0.05]	0.12* [0.05]	0.08+ [0.05]	0.12* [0.05]
cut1				
Constant	0.26** [0.07]	0.70** [0.11]	0.27** [0.07]	0.68** [0.10]
cut2				
Constant	1.39** [0.08]	1.81** [0.11]	1.40** [0.08]	1.82** [0.11]
Observations	3673	3108	3770	3364
ll	-3170.29	-2599.36	-3269.76	-2825.76

Standard errors in brackets

+ p_i0.10, * p_i0.05, ** p_i0.01

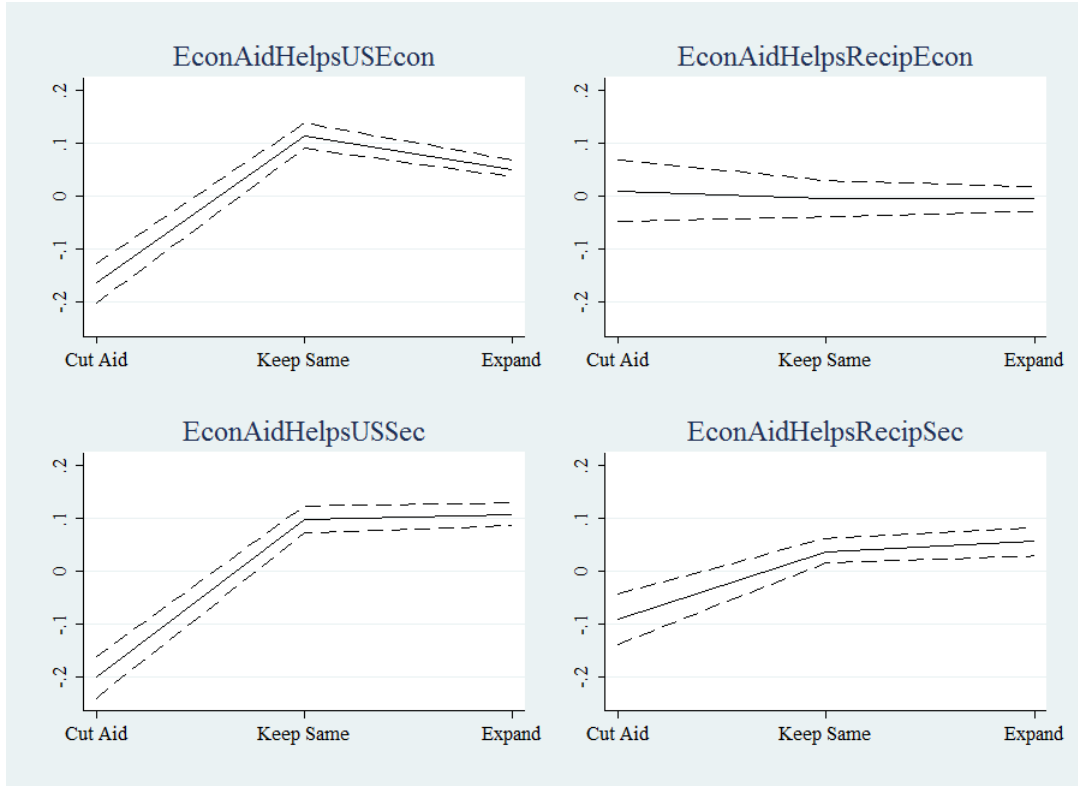


Figure 1: Change in probability of economic aid support moving aid effect perceptions from 0 to 1. Dashed lines represent 95% confidence intervals calculated using multivariate normal approximation (Clarify).

	Treatment Condition	
	Control	Pro-Aid
College4y	.29(.02)	.3(.02)
Age	48(.7)	47(.65)
Gender	.48(.02)	.50(.02)
Ideology	3.14(.05)	3.14(.04)
Internationalism	.48(.02)	.49(.02)

Table 2: Summary statistics by treatment status.

	Treatment Condition	
	Control	Pro-Aid
Aid Preference	1.37(.05)	1.55(.05)
Difference: .18(.07), $p < .05$		

Table 3: Aid preferences by treatment status. Aid preference scale runs from 0-4 with higher values indicating more support.

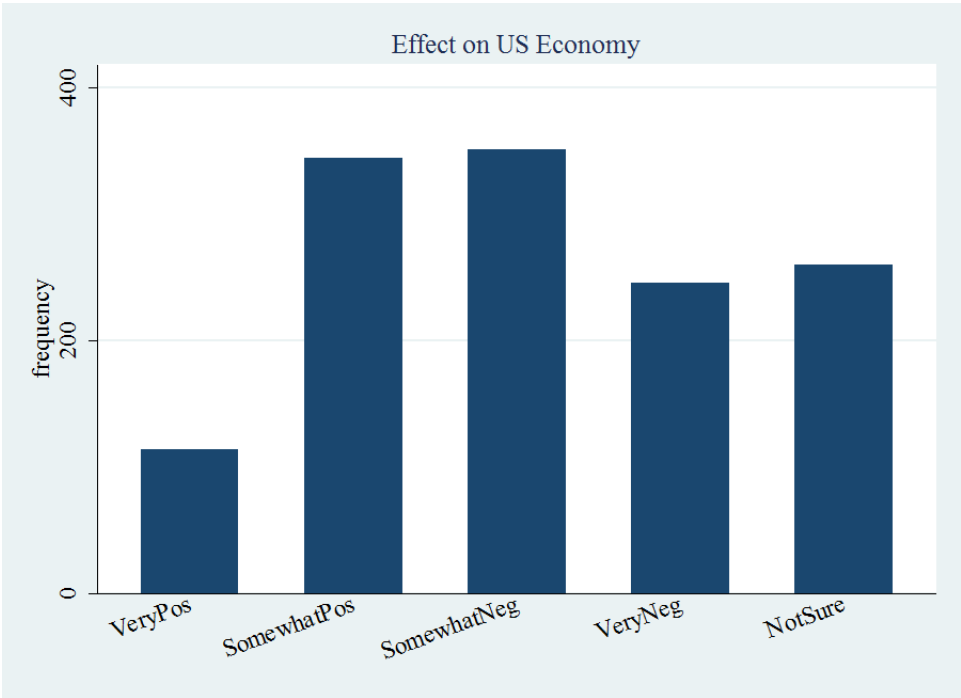


Figure 2: Expectations About Effects of Aid

Table 4: Preferences for foreign aid as a function of treatment condition, pre-treatment variables, and interactions.

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
ProVsNoAidPrompt	0.18*	0.15	0.08	0.03	0.27**	0.08
	[0.08]	[0.12]	[0.33]	[0.39]	[0.09]	[0.33]
College		0.31*	0.19	0.25+		0.09
		[0.13]	[0.12]	[0.13]		[0.11]
CollegeXtrt		-0.22	-0.17	-0.23		-0.09
		[0.17]	[0.16]	[0.18]		[0.16]
Gender		-0.39**	-0.26*	-0.24*		-0.28**
		[0.11]	[0.11]	[0.11]		[0.10]
GenderXtrt		0.43**	0.38*	0.35*		0.43**
		[0.15]	[0.15]	[0.16]		[0.14]
IntlRole		1.00**	0.97**	0.95**		0.75**
		[0.11]	[0.11]	[0.11]		[0.11]
IntlRoleXtrt		-0.38*	-0.32*	-0.26+		-0.39**
		[0.15]	[0.15]	[0.15]		[0.15]
Age			-0.01**	-0.01**		-0.01**
			[0.00]	[0.00]		[0.00]
AgeXtrt			0.01	0.01		0.01
			[0.00]	[0.01]		[0.00]
Ideology			-0.24**	-0.28**		-0.21**
			[0.05]	[0.05]		[0.05]
IdeologyXtrt			-0.07	-0.07		-0.06
			[0.07]	[0.07]		[0.07]
USEcon					1.22**	0.91**
					[0.11]	[0.11]
USEconXtrt					-0.19	-0.04
					[0.15]	[0.15]
Constant	1.37**	1.04**	2.50**	2.57**	0.80**	2.06**
	[0.06]	[0.09]	[0.24]	[0.29]	[0.06]	[0.23]
r2	0.00	0.13	0.22	0.23	0.21	0.35
bic	3590.69	3351.61	3067.75	2953.67	2926.69	2590.46
N	1108.00	1062.00	997.00	943.00	971.00	886.00

Standard errors in brackets

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

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