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An Exploration of the Role of Demographically-Mediated Stereotypes on American Citizens' Views and Support of Foreign Aid

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ABSTRACT

Many studies have found that Americans often lack accurate knowledge of other countries, instead relying on inaccurate and paternalistic stereotypes to justify their views. Additionally, previous literature has shown that certain demographic factors can contribute to stereotypes; however, a practical knowledge gap remains regarding the connections among demographic characteristics, economic insecurity, educational environments, and stereotype-based attitudes toward foreign aid. Data were collected through an online survey to determine how educational campus climate diversity and feelings of economic insecurity influence stereotype-based justifications of foreign aid priority rankings. The results revealed a very weak positive association between economic insecurity and support for foreign aid, while most other findings were inconclusive. More research is needed to develop a greater understanding of the relationship between demographic factors, stereotypes, and views held on foreign aid, which could contribute to a better understanding of how individual circumstances and domestic environments may shape Americans' attitudes toward international assistance.

INTRODUCTION

Public support for foreign aid within the United States is influenced by several factors unrelated to the country or individuals receiving the aid. These views are often compounded by both a lack of access to accurate information and paternalistic, sometimes harmful stereotypes about the people receiving aid (Baker, 2015; Macdonald, 2025; Nair, 2018). Further, individuals often maintain these beliefs and sometimes try to justify inequality due to their own conditions (Berkebile-Weinberg et al., 2022; Carson et al., 2024).

Because incorrect and negative beliefs are sometimes used by Americans to justify foreign policy decisions, it is important to understand the root of these stereotypes and the impact they have on foreign aid decision making to better inform further exploration into how this can be mitigated (Macdonald, 2025; Nair, 2018). This study aims to understand the relationships between specific demographic factors, namely perceptions of economic insecurity and educational climate diversity, stereotypes individuals hold

of the Global South, and how these impact the political decisions that are made about aid (Berkebile-Weinberg et al., 2022; Sondarjee, 2023).

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, using data collected through a survey. The results were largely inconclusive. There was a very weak correlation found between economic insecurity and average foreign aid priority ranking. There was a nonsignificant correlation found between educational climate diversity and average foreign aid priority ranking, and there was not a significant difference between participants who did and did not use stereotypes to justify their foreign aid priority ratings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, awareness has increased of the impacts of seemingly minor domestic decisions on international politics, especially in developed countries such as the United States. Given this, there is a growing body of literature focused on how American citizens' decision-making changes when they have more accurate information (Nair, 2018; Scotto et al., 2017). This literature review explores the reasons behind this lack of knowledge among Americans. To start, one of the largest factors influencing Americans' political decision making is education level. Nair (2018) explores the impacts of global knowledge on the willingness of American citizens to contribute to international aid efforts, finding "politically innumeracy is a widespread phenomenon [in the United States]" (p. 828) and many Americans remain uneducated and unaware of their relative position in global economic hierarchies. The author reveals that because so many Americans do not understand their true wealth in comparison to most individuals in developing countries, this decreases their likelihood to support the United States' foreign aid initiatives, demonstrating how having accurate knowledge makes Americans much more enthusiastic in their support of international outreach efforts (Nair, 2018). This article demonstrates the influence of minor misperceptions on United States foreign aid policies, highlighting a potential disconnect between truth and perceptions of Americans and raising questions about the true causes behind the lack of broader awareness of global development in the United States (Nair, 2018).

In contrast, many people in countries outside the United States have a higher level of knowledge about global politics and development (Melegh et al., 2016; Milner, 2020; Thornton et al., 2012). Thornton et al. (2012) explores the ability of average people from various parts of the world to sort several countries into developmental hierarchies where countries are ranked based on their development levels relative to each other. The authors reveal even without being provided a definition of development, most individuals had a high level of knowledge about global development, assigning countries ratings that largely resembled the United Nations Human Development Index (Thornton et al., 2012). Additionally, the authors find that even among the citizens of developing countries where education levels are lower, rankings are accurate (Thornton et al., 2012). Additionally, this article provides context to the unique circumstances characterizing the lack of knowledge many American citizens have on global issues (Thornton et al., 2012).

A potential reason for the discrepancy between Americans and the rest of the world can be found in the United States education system (Sondarjee, 2023). Sondarjee (2023) explores ideological inequalities within American and Canadian college curriculum, specifically calling attention to the highly Eurocentric viewpoints that characterize courses on international development and relationships. Sondarjee asserts that the shift the education system must make to a more neutral perspective must be an active decision involving teachers, students, and individuals working in academia in order to "dismantl[e] academic hierarchies" that perpetuate a colonial European belief system (p. 709). Through this reasoning, Sondarjee is able to provide a potential explanation for the lack of knowledge many Americans have about global affairs despite even potentially specializing in fields such as international relations. This study provides reasoning behind why and how education can be responsible for lack of knowledge about global issues in Americans. In conjunction with more information on how this phenomenon impacts the decisions Americans make regarding United States policies, this could elucidate just how much of a role bias in education plays in determining the country's priorities.

Moreover, the generalized views American citizens develop of other countries are influenced by current conditions, including the economy (Berkebile-Weinberg et al., 2022). Berkebile-Weinberg et al. (2022) examine the connection between economic factors, such as scarcity, on an individual's propensity to stereotype Black Americans. Specifically, they evaluate the impact of experiencing scarcity on community and personal stereotypes and the creation of visual representations of black Americans that allude to common negative stereotypes of these individuals. In simulated representations of life, individuals who felt they were less well off were more likely to stereotype black Americans and associate them with crime and laziness in order to "legitimize the status relations between groups…to justify a reduced distribution of resources" (p. 4). This article highlights the functional implications of economic factors on biases and stereotypes that can allow individuals to justify wealth disparities that benefit them (Sondarjee, 2023). This reveals the importance of investigating how domestic turbulence and a country's citizens' feelings of insecurity can influence their country's decisions and role in the landscape of global politics (Sondarjee, 2023).

The stereotypes existing among United States citizens may impact American international policies (Baker, 2015; Hanania & Trager, 2020). Baker (2015) explores the role of race and racial stereotyping in American citizens' support for foreign aid, finding most individuals feel greater support for aid to poor Africans than eastern Europeans, likely due to a sense of paternalism and "the mass belief that Africans have more limited capacity for positive agency than…Europeans" (Baker, 2015, p. 103-104). This study demonstrates the common racial prejudices that underlie relations between developed and developing countries regarding foreign aid, providing context to the often biased views of Americans about United States aid policies (Baker, 2015). Additionally, existing international aid efforts can influence American viewpoints. Carson et al. (2024) investigate the relationship between foreign policies and racial stereotyping, especially in developing countries in the Global South. The authors examine the usage of racial tropes, or exaggerated negative stereotypes, by politicians and other important figures in the United States, finding these negative views are often worsened in countries the United States is currently

providing support to (Carson et al., 2024). According to the authors, this is likely a result of Americans' feelings that countries they are providing aid to are dependent on the aid and do not have the ability or autonomy to improve their own situation (Carson et al., 2024). These articles highlight the interconnected relationship between negative stereotypes and foreign aid, demonstrating how condescending and paternalistic American attitudes on foreign policies might influence foreign policy (Baker, 2015; Carson et al., 2024).

Furthermore, these stereotypes impact American support of foreign aid (Paxton & Knack, 2011). Paxton and Knack (2011) explore how throughout all developed countries, there are a few common factors that influence individuals' support for foreign aid, specifically determining that women and younger individuals have a higher support for foreign aid. Additionally, the authors highlight how despite several other factors normally associated with high support of foreign aid, including attending church and trusting the government, are fairly common in the United States, American citizens are found to have the lowest support for foreign aid out of the citizens of all other developed countries (Paxton & Knack, 2011). They suggest this is due to American citizens' "agreement that poor people are lazy and lack willpower" (Paxton & Knack, 2011, p. 186) being the highest throughout developed countries. This article demonstrates how the presence of many demographic factors associated with high support for foreign aid is overshadowed by the significant negative stereotypes present among Americans that instead rule decisions made about foreign policy (Paxton & Knack, 2011). Similarly, Macdonald (2025) examines the role of trust in the government in American citizens' view on the United States government's foreign aid spending. The author determines that while there are a variety of demographic factors including race and political values that are often tied to views on foreign aid, the most influential factor is trusting the government, which is commonly associated with and exacerbated by stereotypes of the country receiving the aid (Macdonald, 2025). Specifically, a view that the government is providing funds or resources to countries that are not deserving, countries that will misuse the funds, or countries that will not provide any benefit back to the United States can create a perception that funds are not being used in the best way (Macdonald, 2025). This article demonstrates how negative stereotypes of countries that are often the target of humanitarian relief initiatives may impact the United States' contributions to international aid (Macdonald, 2025).

Considering the previously established relationships between demographic factors and negative stereotypes as well as between stereotypes and support for international aid programs, it is critical to understand the links between these subjects. This has led to the research question, how do the stereotypes that Americans have of developing countries caused by educational climate diversity and perceptions of economic condition affect their view of and likelihood to support international aid efforts? The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between these factors in order to understand the role of a country's domestic conditions on its ability to provide global foreign aid. This reveals a practical knowledge gap because Berkebile-Weinberg et al. (2022) determined that demographic factors such as perceptions of economic insecurity increased stereotyping behavior and Baker (2015) demonstrated the impact that holding stereotypes can have on foreign policy decisions, but examining the connections

between all three of these factors is key in determining the direction of reforms to reduce the likelihood of Americans making biased decisions that have consequences for the rest of the world. Based on the assumptions that an individual's personal struggles will cause them to look less favorably upon developing countries and that they will allow these beliefs to impact their political decisions, this has led to the hypothesis that individuals with lower education levels that feel they are experiencing high economic strain will exhibit more bias in view of foreign aid due to negative stereotypes of the individuals receiving the support than individuals with higher education levels that do not feel they are experiencing economic strain.

METHODS

Due to this study being correlational, data were collected through a survey. The survey collected a combination of quantitative and qualitative data from participants, including quantitative demographic information and qualitative responses used to analyze stereotypes and foreign aid support. The online survey method was selected because of its ability to collect information from a diverse range of participants throughout the United States. Face to face interviews, such as the method used by Berkebile-Weinberg et al. (2022), were considered but rejected due to the presence of questions about sensitive topics such as citizenship status and financial situation. Specifically, this method was rejected due to worries that participants would not feel comfortable answering these questions in person where the answers would have been tied to personally identifying information. In order to ensure the study was ethical, an IRB was consulted before beginning data collection. Additionally, consent was obtained from the participants both on the first and last screens of the survey, with both forms including a detailed description of how the data would be used in the study (only in aggregate form, with no individual data points shared about any individual). In order to maintain anonymity of participants, no identifying information was collected from any of them.

Participants

The survey yielded 72 participants, with 1 excluded for not answering the free response questions. The sample from this study was a convenience sample, due to the high costs and low likelihood of success associated with collecting data from a random sample of all US citizens.

Materials

The main independent variables being assessed by the survey were educational climate diversity and economic insecurity. The survey also assessed views on foreign aid as an independent rating of several foreign aid scenarios. These were classified as stereotype-based or non-stereotype-based depending on the main theme present in the explanation participants provided for their rating. Other demographic information was collected to account for potential confounding variables.

The data were collected through a survey, which is attached in the appendix. The survey consisted of three main sections, demographic information, stereotypes, and foreign aid support. In the demographic

information section, the general questions and the evaluation of educational climate diversity were based on the scale from Yaj & Tran (2022), and the assessment of economic insecurity was based on the survey from Glei et al. (2019). The second section on stereotypes assessment was based on the categories from Berkebile-Weinberg et al. (2022), with specific questions adapted to fit an online survey. The foreign aid section of the survey was adapted from Berkebile-Weinberg et al. (2022) and Nair (2018) to have a narrower scope. Additionally, the first screen of the survey was a consent form that participants were required to agree to before continuing, and the last screen was a debrief. The survey included various question structures including multiple choice, likert scale, short answer, and long form free response. The survey was expected to take about 15 to 20 minutes for participants to complete, and they were advised to complete the survey in one sitting if possible.

Procedure

Participants filled out the survey via Google Forms. They were not required to read or watch any additional materials outside of the survey before or during filling it out. Participants were required to fill out each section of the survey before progressing to the next one, but they could move between the questions within each section. They were only required to fill out the survey once, and there were no particular requirements for their environment while answering the survey.

The participants were given a set of instructions before the survey that informed them their data would not be published individually, only the data of all participants together would be used for the study. Each subsection of the survey also had specific instructions, and participants were requested to write at least one full sentence for each free response question in the stereotypes and foreign aid support sections. Both of these sections also contained additional scenarios within each question that survey participants had to read before answering each question.

In order to avoid introducing bias, all participants answered the same questions, and these were all presented to participants in the same order. In addition, no scenarios or questions presented contained any identifying features of the individuals mentioned such as their race or gender unless this factor was being evaluated by the question.

To ensure the study was ethical, IRB approval was obtained before beginning data collection. Additionally, participants were required to confirm that they were 18 before beginning the survey and could stop filling it out at any time. No personally identifiable data was collected.

Limitations

The main limitations of this study include the small sample size in addition to the usage of a convenience sample. Also, in order to minimize participant worry from sensitive data being collected, questions about United States citizenship and immigrant status were replaced with less concrete questions such as intention to vote in the next election, which may have resulted in less clear exclusion criteria.

Due to the use of a survey in this study, none of the data collected can establish causation between any of the assessed variables. In addition, participants filled out the survey on their own without outside assistance, leaving the questions up to their interpretation. In order to mediate this limitation, extra explanations were included both at the beginning of the survey and before each question if necessary.

Analysis

To analyze the data economic insecurity was calculated as a score out of 60. Questions 1.9 - 1.11 were coded with point values equal to the respondent's original selection. Question 1.12 was coded with point values of 1 for "Not enough to meet your needs", 2 for "Just enough to meet your needs", and 3 for "More money than you need". These values were then converted to a 10-point scale by multiplying each value by 10/3 to get a rescaled value ranging from 3.33 to 10. Question 1.13 was coded with point values of 1 for "Very difficult", 2 for "Somewhat difficult", 3 for "Not very difficult", and 4 for "Not at all difficult". These values were then converted to a 10-point scale by multiplying each value by 2.5 to get a rescaled value ranging from 2.5 to 10. Question 1.14 was coded with point values equal to 10/7 times the respondent's initial selection to get a 10-point scale ranging from 1.43 to 10. Point values for questions 1.9 - 1.11 and 1.14 were added, along with the rescaled values from questions 1.12 - 1.13 to form a composite economic insecurity score from 7.26 to 60. This score was then converted to a percentage ranging from 12.1% to 100%, with higher percentages referring to greater perceptions of economic insecurity.

Average foreign aid priority ranking was calculated by averaging the respondent's numerical ratings for questions 3.1 - 3.4.

Educational campus climate diversity was calculated as a score out of 40. Questions 1.8a - 1.8e and 1.8h - 1.8j were coded with point values of 1 for "Strongly disagree", 2 for "Disagree", 3 for "Agree", and 4 for "Strongly agree". Questions 1.8f and 1.8g were reverse coded with point values of 1 for "Strongly agree", 2 for "Agree", 3 for "Disagree", and 4 for "Strongly disagree". Point values for all ten questions were added to form a composite educational climate diversity score, which could range from 10 to 40. This score was also converted to a percentage ranging from 25% to 100%, with higher percentages referring to greater educational climate diversity.

A Pearson correlation was then calculated to examine the relationship between economic insecurity and average foreign aid priority ranking. This test was chosen due to the nature of both of these variables as composite numerical scores, and the goal to determine the strength, statistical significance, and direction of a potential linear association between these two variables.

A Person correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between educational climate diversity and average foreign aid priority ranking. This test was chosen due to the nature of both of these variables as composite numerical scores, and the goal to determine the strength, statistical significance, and direction of a potential linear association between these two variables.

Response explanations for foreign aid priority rankings were analyzed for the main justification. These were grouped into categories for analysis. The categories were as follows: vulnerable population, which included references to the vulnerability of the families; benefit of education, which included references to the importance of foreign aid in ensuring proper education of the children in the families; obligation, which included references to the obligation of rich countries to provide for poorer countries; internal help, which included references to poorer countries being responsible for aiding their own citizens; domestic focus, which included references to prioritizing domestic issues over international aid; unproven, which included references to doubts of the efficacy of foreign aid; situational, which included references to foreign aid needing to be decided based on individual situations; other priority, which included references to focusing on more pressing international issues; and other, which included miscellaneous references that were unrelated to the question or did not match any of the main thematic categories. Some respondents did not provide an explanation, which was categorized as "no reason".

The justification categories for obligation and internal help were categorized as reflecting stereotypes while the other categories were not. Participants who did not provide any justification for their foreign aid priority rankings were excluded from the following tests, yielding a sample size of 39. A two-sample t-test was conducted to compare the economic insecurity scores of those whose justifications reflected stereotypes and those whose did not. This test was chosen because the participants were split into two mutually exclusive groups, the variables were both composite numerical scores, and because the purpose of the analysis was to determine if there was a significant difference in the mean economic insecurity scores between two groups. The same analysis was repeated to compare the educational climate diversity scores of those whose justifications reflected stereotypes and those whose did not. This test was chosen because the participants were split into two mutually exclusive groups, the variables were both composite numerical scores, and because the purpose of the analysis was to determine if there was a significant difference in the mean educational climate diversity scores between two groups.

RESULTS

Data were collected through an online survey, which yielded 72 responses. One response was excluded due to invalid responses on the free response section of the survey, leaving a final sample of 71 respondents. Information was collected on the following demographic factors to account for potential confounding variables: age, race, gender, household income, and education level. This information is listed in Table 1. When asked if they were planning to vote in the next United States election, 81.7% of respondents said yes, 9.9% said no, and 8.5% said they were not sure.

Characteristic	Full Study Population
Age group	
18-19	2 (2.8%)
20-29	3 (4.2%)
30-39	11 (15.5%)
40-49	34 (47.9%)
50-59	17 (23.9%)
60+	4 (5.6%)
Race	
Asian	49 (69%)
African	2 (2.8%)
Hispanic	2 (2.8%)
Middle Eastern/North African	1 (1.4%)
White	19 (26.8%)
Gender	
Male	21 (29.6%)
Female	49 (69%)
Non-binary	1 (1.4%)
Household income	
Less than $10,000	0 (0%)

$10,000 - $14,999	1 (1.4%)
$15,000 - $19,999	0 (0%)
$20,000 - $24,999	0 (0%)
$25,000 - $29,999	0 (0%)
$30,000 - $39,999	3 (4.2%)
$40,000 - $49,999	0 (0%)
$50,000 - $59,999	1 (1.4%)
$60,000 - $74,999	2 (2.8%)
$75,000 - $99,999	3 (4.2%)
$100,000 - $149,999	7 (9.9%)
$150,000 - $199,999	13 (18.3%)
$200,000 - $249,999	11 (15.5%)
$250,000 or more	30 (42.3%)
Highest completed education	
High school	3 (4.2%)
Undergraduate degree	24 (33.8%)
Masters degree	16 (22.5%)
Doctoral degree	28 (39.4%)

Table 1. *Study participant characteristics. Values are provided as frequencies (percentage).*

Respondents reported an average economic insecurity score of 16.7%. As seen in Figure 1, a Pearson correlation analysis yielded a small correlation coefficient between economic insecurity and average

foreign aid priority ranking (r = 0.216, n = 71, p = 0.071). This correlation was statistically significant at the α = 0.10 level. Given the exploratory nature of these analyses, as well as the small and relatively homogenous sample, a significance threshold of 0.10 was chosen to reduce the likelihood of overlooking potentially meaningful associations. This decision was made because of the exploratory nature of this study, meaning that there is a relatively low negative impact of making a Type I error. Correlation coefficients and exact p-values are reported to facilitate interpretation of the magnitude and precision of each association.

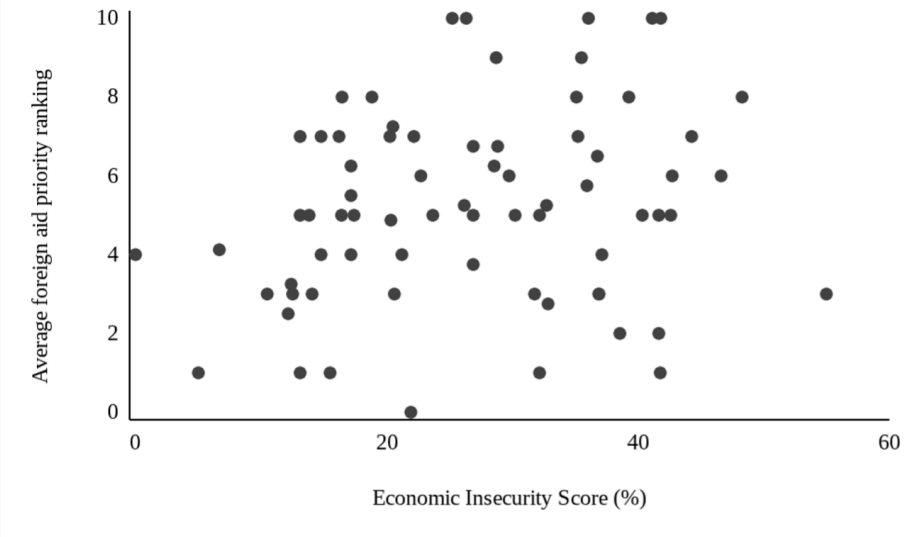


Figure 1. *Scatter plot of perception of economic insecurity score and average foreign aid priority ranking. Pearson correlation analysis yielded a small positive correlation coefficient (r = 0.216, n = 71, p =*

Respondents reported an average educational campus climate diversity score of 30.35 or 75.9%. As seen in Figure 2, there was no statistically significant correlation between educational climate diversity and average foreign aid priority ranking at the α = 0.10 level (r = 0.066, n = 71, p = 0.582).

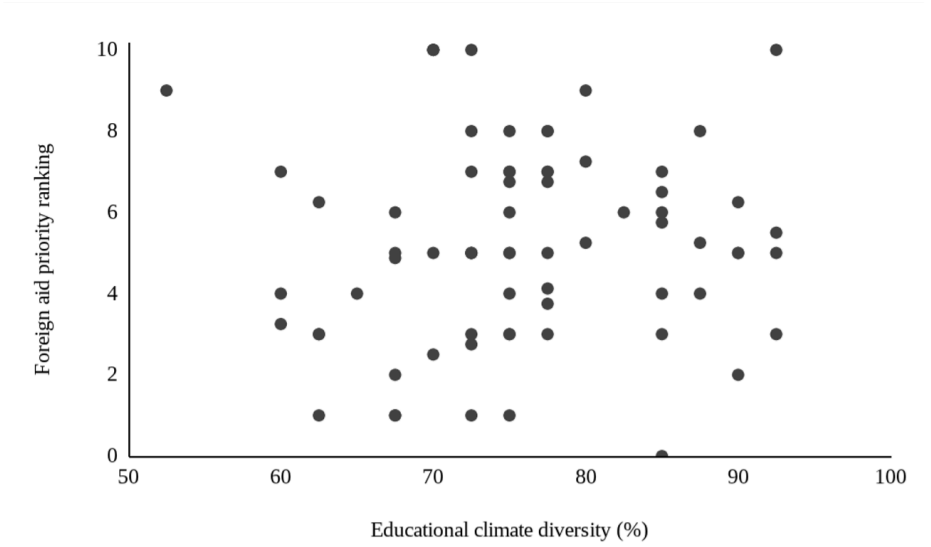


Figure 2. *Scatter plot of educational campus climate diversity score and average foreign aid priority ranking. A weak positive correlation was observed (r = 0.066, n = 71, p = 0.582).*

A Pearson correlation was also conducted to examine the relationship between the two independent variables, economic insecurity and educational climate diversity that found no statistically significant correlation indicating that the two variables were largely independent of each other (r = 0.109, n = 71, p = 0.366).

Respondents independently ranked the foreign aid priority of four hypothetical families, given almost identical scenarios between them. A high percentage of the respondents had no variance between their rankings of the different families. Of the subset of respondents who demonstrated large differences between rankings, there was a correlation between higher educational climate diversity and lower variance in foreign aid priority rankings (Figure 3). There was no clear trend observable in the outliers for the variance in relation to perception of economic insecurity.

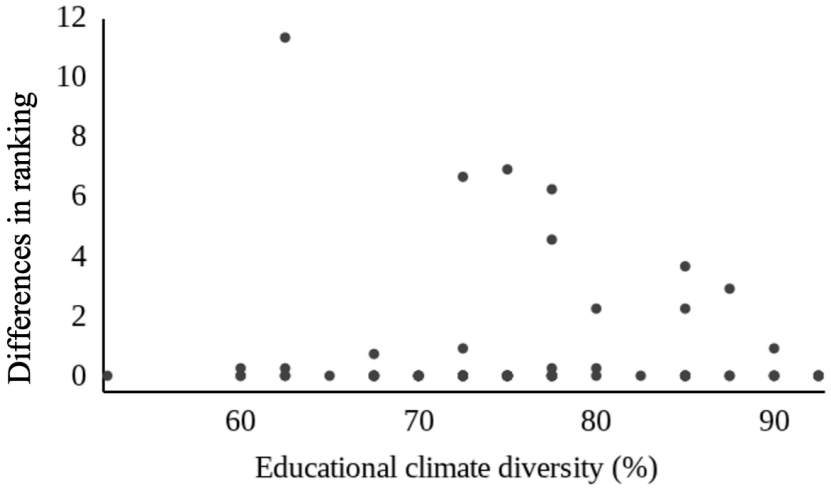


Figure 3. *Scatter plot of educational climate diversity score and variation in foreign aid priority rankings. Among participants who demonstrated variation in rankings (n = 16), higher educational climate diversity was associated with lower variation in foreign aid priority rankings.*

As seen in Figure 4, foreign aid was favored the most by respondents who felt that the United States was obligated to provide aid to poorer countries (M = 7.930), while it was favored the least by respondents who felt that countries should not rely on external help (M = 3.000).

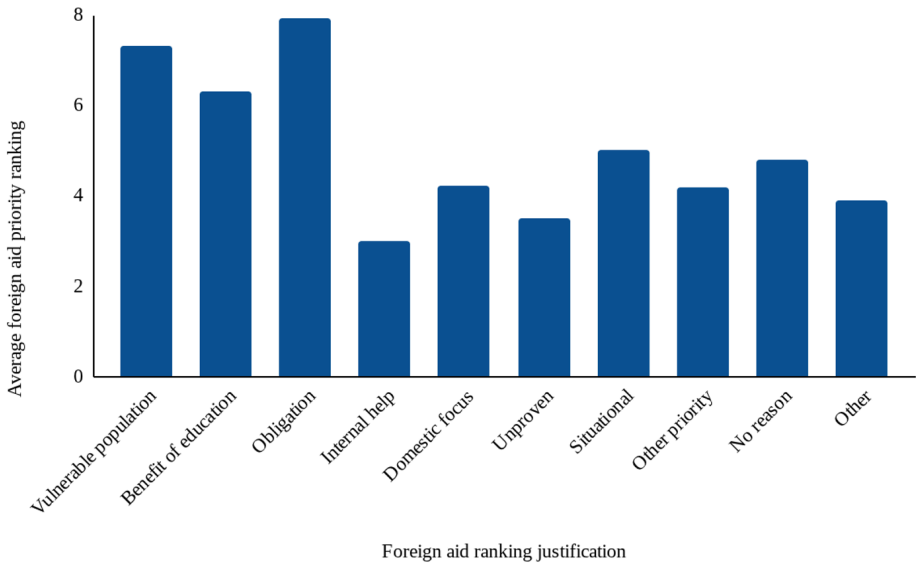


Figure 4. *Foreign aid average priority ranking and main justification. Respondents in the obligation category demonstrated the highest average foreign aid support (M = 7.930), while respondents in the internal help category demonstrated the lowest average foreign aid support (M = 3.000).*

The results did not indicate a statistically significant difference between the economic insecurity of those who did versus did not use stereotypes to justify their foreign aid ranking ($t(37) = 0.744$, $p = 0.472$). Similarly, there was not a statistically significant difference between the educational campus climate diversity of those who did versus did not use stereotypes to justify their foreign aid priority rankings ($t(37) = -1.775$, $p = 0.255$).

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine the relationship between demographically-mediated stereotypes and US citizens' view of foreign aid. The results of the study are inconclusive as to whether there is an association between educational climate diversity and foreign aid support. Although there was a statistically significant association between economic insecurity and foreign aid support, the observed relationship was very weak, making this result inconclusive as well. Further, there was not a significant difference in foreign aid support between participants who did and did not use stereotypes to justify their ranking.

Several potential methodological factors could have influenced the results. This includes the homogenous population: 47.9% of respondents were in the 40 - 49 age group, 69% of respondents were Asian, 69% of respondents were female, 42.3% of respondents had a household income of over $250,000, and 61.9% of respondents had completed graduate education (22.5% masters degree and 39.4% doctoral degree). The

respondents were not spread evenly across the United States. Additionally, about 45% of participants did not correctly complete the survey. The most common issue that participants demonstrated was not providing any justification for the foreign aid priority ratings, thus limiting our ability to interpret their perspectives and glean information from their responses. In addition, while the individual components of the survey were validated, they were combined for this study and the full survey was not validated.

Our findings, especially the weak positive correlation between economic insecurity and foreign aid priority ranking, partially support that of Berkebile-Weinberg et al. (2022). Specifically this supports the finding of Berkebile-Weinberg et al. (2022) that perceived economic scarcity increased racial stereotyping, as our finding also supports that there is an association between economic insecurity and social judgement of others. However, our results were inconclusive as to the role stereotypes, such as the racial stereotypes found by Berkebile-Weinberg et al. (2022) played in this decision-making. A potential reason for this could be because there are other factors that play a role in decision-making when it comes to foreign aid, that when considered, could reveal a stronger association with foreign aid priority rankings.

The methodology of Berkebile-Weinberg et al. (2022) differs from ours because their study was experimental, using a money allocation game to simulate economic insecurity in some groups, while our correlational study measured this through survey questions. Further research could examine how an experimental design, such as utilizing simulations like this, would change the results, as this type of study would establish whether economic insecurity actually influences foreign aid priority rankings, as Berkebile-Weinberg et al. (2022) only examines the impact of this insecurity on racial stereotyping.

Further, our findings partially support that of Baker (2015) that in the context of foreign aid, paternalism and prejudice are often used to make decisions. Specifically, the findings support the idea that stereotypes play a role in foreign aid attitudes and decision-making, seen in the foreign aid priority ranking explanations that used stereotypes to justify their position. Unlike Baker (2015), this study's results did not find a significant difference between the mean foreign aid ranking of those who did versus did not use stereotypes to justify their position. A potential reason for this difference could be that almost half of respondents (about 45%) did not follow instructions in providing an explanation and had to be excluded from the stereotype and foreign aid justification analyses, which may have affected the results in these areas.

Additionally, the weak findings show some support for the results found by Carson et al. (2024). Specifically, Carson et al. (2024) found that racial stereotypes regularly appeared in assessments on foreign policy. This is partially supported by our results which included several stereotype-based justifications that people provided as explanations for their foreign aid priority rankings, supporting the idea that stereotypes are often present in foreign policy related judgements, though our findings were not specific to racial stereotypes and included any generalizations of the Global South.

Carson et al. (2024)'s methodology focused on analyzing government intelligence documents and the prevalence of racial stereotyping within these communications, while our study was focused instead on the views held by American citizens. Further research could follow Carson et al. (2024)'s model and examine the prevalence of stereotypes in current government documents and records regarding foreign aid specifically. This could be used to determine whether there is a difference in views from what Carson et al. (2024) found about varying foreign policies, and whether these views are different between the government and ordinary citizens.

The results also partially support the findings of Hanania and Trager (2020). Hanania and Trager demonstrated that group-related biases influence foreign policy preferences. Our findings support this because we noted the presence of stereotype-based justifications within the foreign aid priority ranking explanations. However, unlike Hanania and Trager's findings, this only establishes the presence of these stereotypes and results were inconclusive as to whether or not there is a significant difference between foreign aid support among those who did versus did not use stereotypes to justify their decision. Further, we established a significant yet weak correlation between economic insecurity and foreign aid support, which relates to Hanania and Trager's findings that an individual's identity is often associated with differences in support for various foreign policy decisions, though their study examined different factors than ours and different types of foreign policy decisions, rather than just foreign aid as we did.

Future Directions

Future research on this topic would benefit from larger and more diverse samples, as studies have found that many of the demographic factors that were very homogenous within this sample are associated with differing support on foreign policy decisions (Hanania & Trager, 2020). Additionally, more research is needed to determine whether these results would differ between different types of foreign aid, different groups receiving the aid, and other factors related to the foreign aid itself, rather than treating all aid as one category. These studies could also use an experimental design similar to that of Baker (2015) to continue usage of the survey format to have a sample from throughout the United States and minimize the impacts of social desirability bias while being able to establish causation.

Future studies are also needed to separate types of stereotypes, such as negative, positive, and paternalistic as distinct stereotypes to determine whether they differently affect foreign aid support.

Future research could also explore whether foreign aid support or usage of stereotypes differs between group and individual settings, as studies such as Hanania and Trager (2020) determined that group identity affects support for differing foreign policies.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the findings of this study reveal that more work needs to be done to understand the intersection of demographic factors, stereotypes, and views on foreign aid. A positive correlation was observed between economic insecurity and average foreign aid priority ranking, and while this was statistically significant it was a very weak association. Further, there was not a significant correlation between educational climate diversity and average foreign aid priority ranking, or a significant difference in the mean foreign aid priority rankings for participants who did versus did not use stereotypes in their main justification of their foreign aid priority rankings, highlighting how many of the results are inconclusive.

Furthermore, this is a topic with a high level of complexity, and there are many factors that could play a role in how participants make political decisions, and therefore manifest in this study's results. In order to account for this, approaches could prioritize greater heterogeneity in study participants. They could also consider more demographic factors to see if examining more factors that are known to have an association with differing attitudes on foreign policy could reveal a clearer pattern of the various influences on American citizens' political decision-making in regards to foreign aid. They could utilize easier to understand surveys to mitigate the impacts of a large portion of participants having to be excluded from some analyses due to incorrect responses to the form, as what happened in our study. Including more response formats such as interviews could also reveal more patterns and factors that are associated with foreign aid support. Additionally, conducting more research on this subject and including these specific demographic factors of economic insecurity and educational climate diversity could also simply reveal that there is not a relationship with these factors specifically for foreign aid-related decisions, but that they have an influence in other areas.

Overall, this subject has widespread implications for American foreign and domestic policy. With more research, this could provide an understanding as to the decision-making utilized by American citizens when it comes to foreign policy, and especially foreign aid, as well as how domestic conditions play a role in that. Having a better understanding of these factors could influence political decision-making domestically to ensure that American citizens make policy decisions that are based on having an accurate understanding of a situation, rather than background demographic factors or stereotypes, as has previously been observed within the literature.

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APPENDIX

Section 1

1.1 Age group

a. 18-19
b. 20-29
c. 30-39
d. 40-49
e. 50-59
f. 60+

1.2 Race (select all that apply)

a. Native American
b. Asian
c. African
d. Caribbean
e. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
f. Hispanic
g. Middle Eastern/North African
h. White

1.3 Gender

a. Male
b. Female
c. Non-binary
d. Other: __

1.4 Please provide your best estimate of your total family income last year. Consider income from all sources before taxes. All amounts are in US dollars.

a. Less than $10,000
b. $10,000 - $14,999
c. $15,000 - $19,999
d. $20,000 - $24,999
e. $25,000 - $29,999
f. $30,000 - $39,999
g. $40,000 - $49,999
h. $50,000 - $59,999
i. $60,000 - $74,999

j. $75,000 - $99,999
k. $100,000 - $149,999
l. $150,000 - $199,999
m. $200,000 - $249,999
n. $250,000 or more

1.5 Are you planning to vote in the next US election?
a. Yes
b. No
c. I don't know

1.6 Highest completed education
a. Did not complete high school
b. High school
c. Trade school/vocational school
d. Undergraduate degree
e. Doctoral degree
f. Other: __

1.7 How would you currently rate yourself in the following areas:
a. Ability to see the world from someone else's perspective
b. Tolerance of others with different beliefs
c. Openness to having my own views challenged
d. Ability to discuss and negotiate controversial issues
e. Ability to work cooperatively with diverse people

Options
a. Major strength
b. Somewhat strong
c. Average
d. Somewhat weak
e. Major weakness

1.8 Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements
The educational institutions which I have attended:
a. Encouraged students to have a public voice and share their ideas openly
b. Had a long-standing commitment to diversity

c. Accurately reflected the diversity of its student body in publications (e.g., brochures, website)
d. Promoted the appreciation of cultural differences
e. Had campus administrators who regularly spoke about the value of diversity
f. Had a lot of racial tension
g. Had a lot of political tension
h. Provided the financial support I needed to stay enrolled
i. Had an obligation to prohibit racist and sexist speech on campus
j. Had a right to ban extreme speakers from campus

Options

a. Strongly agree
b. Agree
c. Disagree
d. Strongly disagree

1.9 Using a scale of 0 to 10, how would you rate your financial situation these days?
0. The worst possible financial situation
10. The best possible financial situation

1.10 Looking ahead ten years into the future, what do you expect your financial situation will be like at that time?
0. The worst possible financial situation
10. The best possible financial situation

1.11 Using a 0-10 scale, how would you rate the amount of control you have over your financial situation these days?
0. No control at all
10. Very much control

1.12 In general, would you say you (and your family living with you) have more money than you need, just enough for your needs, or not enough to meet your needs?

a. More money than you need
b. Just enough to meet your needs
c. Not enough to meet your needs

1.13 How difficult is it for you (and your family) to pay your monthly bills?

a. Very difficult

b. Somewhat difficult
c. Not very difficult
d. Not at all difficult

1.14 Are others individuals in your community better off or worse off financially than you are now?
1. A lot better off
7. A lot worse off

Section 2
Please respond to each question in this section with at least one full sentences

Consider a group of 5 individuals. Person A is a citizen of the Global South (Latin America, Oceania, Africa, Southeast Asia). Person B, Person C, Person D, and Person E are citizens of the United States and have just met Person A for the first time.

2.1 Person B believes that Person A is poor, on welfare, and lazy. How common do you believe this view is among Americans? Please respond with a percentage of Americans that you believe have these views and your reasoning.

_____

2.2 Person B believes that Person A is poor, on welfare, and lazy. How accurate do you believe this view is? Please respond with your reasoning.

_____

2.3 Person C believes that Person A is aggressive, criminal, and rude. How common do you believe this view is among Americans? Please respond with a percentage of Americans that you believe have these views and your reasoning.

_____

2.4 Person C believes that Person A is aggressive, criminal, and rude. How accurate do you believe this view is? Please respond with your reasoning.

_____

2.5 Person D believes that Person A is musical, rhythmic, and athletic. How common do you believe this view is among Americans? Please respond with a percentage of Americans that you believe have these views and your reasoning.

_____

2.6 Person D believes that Person A is musical, rhythmic, and athletic. How accurate do you believe this view is? Please respond with your reasoning.

_____

2.7 Person E believes that Person A is curious, adventurous, and grumpy. How common do you believe this view is among Americans? Please respond with a percentage of Americans that you believe have these views and your reasoning.

_____

2.8 Person E believes that Person A is curious, adventurous, and grumpy. How accurate do you believe this view is? Please respond with your reasoning.

_____

Section 3
Please respond to each question in this section with at least one full sentence.

3.1 Two parents live with their two children in a village in Kenya. They grow maize, keep a small garden, and have a modest home. This family sometimes struggles to cover school expenses for their children. How much of a priority should they be for foreign aid from the US government or US-based nonprofits? Please include a rating from 1 to 10, with 1 being lowest priority and 10 being highest priority and reasoning for your answer.

_____

3.2 Two parents live with their two children in a small town in Bangladesh. They grow rice, keep a few chickens, and have a modest home. This family sometimes struggles to cover school expenses for their children. How much of a priority should they be for foreign aid from the US government or US-based nonprofits? Please include a rating from 1 to 10, with 1 being lowest priority and 10 being highest priority and reasoning for your answer.

_____

3.3 Two parents live with their two children on the outskirts of a city in the Philippines. They grow vegetables, keep a garden with fruit, and live in a modest home. This family sometimes struggles to cover school expenses for their children. How much of a priority should they be for foreign aid from the US government or US-based nonprofits? Please include a rating from 1 to 10, with 1 being lowest priority and 10 being highest priority and reasoning for your answer.

_____

3.4 Two parents live with their two children in a rural area in Guatemala. They grow beans, keep some goats, and have a modest home. This family sometimes struggles to cover school expenses for their children. How much of a priority should they be for foreign aid from the US government or US-based nonprofits? Please include a rating from 1 to 10, with 1 being lowest priority and 10 being highest priority and reasoning for your answer.

_____