

Attitudes to Chronic Poverty in the ‘Global Village’

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Abstract The paper explores attitudes to chronic poverty in a cross-section of developed and developing countries contributing data to the World Values Survey Wave Three (1994–1998). The analysis finds a consistent belief among a majority of respondents that poverty is persistent. The paper also explores the factors influencing public attitudes to chronic poverty, and finds that interests, position, knowledge, and shared values relating to social justice, are important.

Keywords Poverty · Attitudes · Chronic poverty

The paper characterises public attitudes to chronic poverty in a cross-section of countries we denote as the ‘global village’. The motivation for the paper is to establish whether there are shared public perceptions of poverty, and in particular chronic poverty, in the world today. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been instrumental in encouraging a global perspective on poverty, for example through defining the target for the reduction of global extreme poverty¹ by half by 2015 (Hulme 2010). Increasing global economic interdependence makes the presence and distribution of poverty in the world a global, as much as a country-specific, issue (Pogge 2002). It is therefore important to explore the extent to which a global perspective on poverty could be underpinned by shared public attitudes.

The literature on attitudes to poverty is scarce. In developed countries a related literature on public attitudes to redistribution has emerged, provoked by welfare state reforms in the 1990s.² There is also a small but important literature on attitudes to international aid,

¹ Extreme poverty refers to individuals and households living below the food poverty line.

² See recent reviews and summary of main findings in Gelissen (2000) and Jaeger (2006).

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with implications for attitudes towards poverty in developing countries on the part of developed country populations.³ There are studies focusing on attitudes to poverty in individual countries, and from different disciplinary perspectives.⁴ However, to our knowledge, there are no cross-country comparative studies on attitudes to poverty in developing countries. Similarly, there is no literature available on attitudes to chronic poverty. This is not surprising, given that we could only identify a single comparative dataset currently available to support such research. This is regrettable, especially in view of the fact that an estimated 1.4 billion people today live in extreme poverty, and that addressing this global problem is an urgent priority.

The analysis in the paper focuses specifically on public attitudes to chronic poverty, understood as poverty which persists over an extended period of time. There is a wide consensus in the poverty literature that chronic poverty merits especial attention (CPRC 2005). Chronic poverty is associated with greater vulnerability and harm, especially as human and productive assets and entitlements become more depleted the longer people are in poverty. Poverty persistence can lead to poverty traps (Barrientos 2007). The Chronic Poverty Report 2004–05 estimated that as many as 40% of people in poverty in developing countries are in chronic poverty (CPRC 2005). Research conducted by the Chronic Poverty Research Centre finds that chronic poverty can be tackled more effectively with multidimensional and sustained interventions (CPRC 2008). Understanding public attitudes to chronic poverty is especially relevant to the process of identifying the range of policy options available to address poverty and vulnerability.⁵

The paper examines public attitudes to poverty in a cross-section of countries we describe as a ‘global village’. Our concern is to throw light on shared attitudes to (chronic) poverty, as opposed to taking a narrower concern with country-specific attitudes, or with public attitudes in rich country populations to poverty in low income countries. This approach reflects the emergence of a global perspective on poverty and chronic poverty. The empirical work makes use of data from close to 50 countries contributing to the World Values Survey Wave Three dataset, providing a partial coverage of developed and developing countries. While taking care to acknowledge the limitations of the data, the analysis can provide powerful insights into shared global attitudes to chronic poverty. The paper will also identify the factors that influence public attitudes to chronic poverty.

Understanding attitudes to chronic poverty is essential for gauging the priority afforded to anti-poverty policy in national and international policy circles, and the likely public support given to policies addressing chronic poverty and vulnerability. Many fear that the present global crises will relegate global poverty policy further down the international community’s list of priorities. There is also concern that assistance to the growing numbers of poor and vulnerable people in rich countries will crowd out assistance to the distant poor. Changes in the global economic architecture are bringing forward the time when the

³ Chong and Gradstein review the literature on international aid and provide empirical findings (Chong and Gradstein 2006). See also European surveys of public opinion on aid and poverty and exclusion (European Commission 1999, 2007a, b).

⁴ Some recent studies on attitudes to poverty are: Hopkins 2008 (sociology), Nasser 2007 (psychology), Misurelli and Heffernan 2001 (anthropology), Gustafsson and Yue 2006 (economics).

⁵ The Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia allocated 75% to programme expenditure to support households in poverty but with work capacity; and 25% to households in poverty without work capacity. This reflects government concern to minimise the chances that support will generate dependency. Governments in low income countries that focus resources on supporting the moderately (or transient) poor as a means to move closer to the MDG1 poverty reduction target implicitly assume that public attitudes do not discriminate between extreme/chronic and moderate/transient poverty.

emerging economies of India, China, Brazil and others will be expected to step up their international assistance to low income countries. Previously aid recipients, these countries will become aid donors. Will their populations support this new role? In many low income countries, national governments have in the past willingly delegated the fight against poverty to international donors, perhaps because national elites felt there were few votes to be gained from activism on poverty reduction. Is this likely to change in the near future? In addressing these concerns, a grasp of global attitudes to poverty will be useful.

We find that survey respondents in our 'global village' show a strong measure of consistency in their understanding of chronic poverty. There appears to be a wide measure of agreement on the perception that the opportunities to escape poverty are limited, and as a consequence chronic poverty is the norm. We also find that epistemic factors and shared values concerning justice are central to shaping public attitudes to poverty.

The paper is divided into three main sections and a conclusion. The next section describes our 'global village'. The following section reports on unconditional estimates of attitudes to chronic poverty. The subsequent section explores associations between attitudes to chronic poverty and values, processes, interest and issues. A closing section draws out the main conclusions.

1 Our 'Global Village'

Our 'global village' is not the world. It is essential to understand the characteristics of the dataset we use, and the limitations it places on our findings. The coverage of the data we use in our empirical work is given by the countries included in wave three (1994–1998) of the World Values Survey (WVS3) (World Values Survey 2000, see also Inglehart 2000). The World Values Survey is currently the largest non-profit survey research project supporting the analysis of attitudes and cultural change on a global level. The project is funded by various scientific foundations, and data are publicly available online.⁶ There are currently five waves available and a sixth is in preparation. The WVS3 contains data from attitudinal surveys in 58 countries/regions and is the only wave containing information on attitudes to poverty. The analysis below pools individual responses from 49 countries with information on the variables of interest. Table 1 below indicates the participant countries by region.⁷

From an inspection of the countries in the Table, it can be observed that only a sub-set of countries in the world are included in the sample. The sample has a fairly comprehensive representation of rich countries, a good representation of transition countries and Latin American countries, very limited representation of Sub-Saharan Africa and South and East Asia, and no representation from North Africa and the Middle East. Therefore, our 'global village' cannot be taken as representative of the world population.

Our data are not representative of the world population in other important respects too. The samples for each of the countries in the Table should not be taken as fully representative of their respective populations. The sampling at country level varies from country to country, with overall a stronger representation from urban residents. For example, the coverage of the survey in China is limited to the Central regions. Most importantly, the size

⁶ See <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>.

⁷ We have adjusted the WVS3 by dropping Taiwan and Puerto Rico. We further combined samples for Serbia and Montenegro, samples for Tambov and Russia; samples for Andalusia, Galicia, Valencia and the Basque Country (Spain); samples for Republika Srpska and Bosnia; and finally samples for East and West Germany. This leaves us with data for 49 countries.

Table 1 Countries included in wave three of the world values survey (1994–1998)

Western Europe	Central Asia	Sub-Saharan Africa	South Asia	North America and OECD	East Asia	South America
Czech Republic	Azerbaijan	Nigeria	Bangladesh	Australia	China	Argentina
Croatia	Armenia	South Africa	India	New Zealand	Taiwan	Brazil
Finland	Ukraine		Pakistan	USA	Japan	Chile
Germany	Georgia				Republic of Korea	Colombia
Great Britain	Romania					El Salvador
Hungary	Russian Federation					Mexico
Norway						Peru
Spain	Estonia					Uruguay
Sweden	Belarus					Venezuela
Switzerland	Moldova					
Bulgaria						
Czech Republic						
Serbia and Montenegro						
Macedonia						
Slovakia						
Slovenia						
Latvia						
Turkey						
Albania						

of each country's sample bears little relationship to the country's share of the world population. Hence, Colombia's sample size of 6,025 respondents is almost five times the Brazil sample of 1,149 respondents, and four times that of China's sample of 1,500 respondents. Our data are not proportionate to the world population with regard to the countries included in the dataset.

As part of the research for this paper, an exhaustive search of attitudinal data on poverty, especially cross-country comparative data, was carried out. We found that of all the currently available datasets, only the WVS3 contained direct questions on poverty and covered developing countries.⁸ The data contained in the WVS3 covers the period 1994–1998. It is possible that responses to questions on poverty could have been influenced by the issues which were dominant in policy discussions at the time, and particularly the impact of the 1997 East Asian financial crisis. However, more recent data are not available. In the analysis below we explore the relative significance of possible influences on the formation of public attitudes, which will throw some light on this point.

The characteristics and coverage of the WVS3 data imply the need for careful consideration of which research questions to pursue, and which empirical methods to deploy. The data could provide only limited support for a fine-grained analysis of country-specific differences in public attitudes to poverty. However, our analysis demonstrates that the data can be appropriate, and invaluable, in supporting an analysis of shared attitudes to poverty in the cross-section of countries. If the analysis finds that there is a good measure of consistency in attitudes to poverty across the countries involved, it matters less that our sample has the imperfections noted above. If a majority of Colombians, a majority of

⁸ The European Union conducted a recent regional study of attitudes to poverty and exclusion (European Commission 2007b). We examined regional attitudinal surveys, the Latinobarometer and Afrobarometer, but the rounds currently available do not include direct questions on attitudes to poverty which could be analysed on a comparative basis.

Brazilians and a majority of Chinese in the sample share a specific perception of poverty, it matters less that Colombians are over-represented. Keeping the limitations of the WVS3 data firmly in mind, we are confident that our analysis below can throw valuable light on attitudes to chronic poverty.⁹

2 Attitudes to Chronic Poverty

The WVS3 dataset includes a set of questions specifically on individual perceptions of poverty across a large number of countries. There are questions on whether respondents perceive a change in poverty trends, on the proximate causes of poverty, on perceptions of government efforts in poverty reduction domestically and internationally, and a question on whether, in the view of the respondents, poverty is persistent.¹⁰

Responses to this last question can provide information on perceptions of chronic poverty. This question reads:

In your opinion, do most poor people in this country have a chance of escaping from poverty, or is there very little chance of escaping?

1. They have a chance
2. There is very little chance

We interpret the responses to this question as follows: those who agree that there is a chance for the poor to escape from poverty are likely to see poverty mainly as transient, or at least they do not see poverty as chronic. On the other hand, those who believe people in poverty in their country have little chance to escape see poverty as chronic. We therefore use the responses to this question to gauge public attitudes to chronic poverty.

Table 2 below shows the frequencies of responses to this particular question. For the pooled sample, a substantial majority perceive poverty as chronic, given the fact that 61.7% of respondents agree with the statement that there is little chance of escape from poverty. The sampled respondents believe that there is a distinction to be made between transient and chronic poverty and, in the view of the majority, falling into poverty is a persistent state for those affected. They *perceive chronic poverty as the rule, given the limited chance to escape from poverty*.

It is useful to explore whether attitudes to chronic poverty among sub-groups in the sample differ in significant ways. Although the nature of the sample makes this task difficult, our concern here is with testing whether this finding is simply a factor of aggregation, or whether there is a measure of consistency in responses across sub-groups.

We first examine whether there are regional differences in attitudes to chronic poverty. Table 2 provides the relevant information. In European countries, the majority of respondents see poverty as chronic. This is particularly the case in Central and Eastern Europe. This finding also carries over to the South America and Sub-Saharan Africa regions, where the pattern of responses observed for the full sample applies. However, great care must be taken with generalising the responses for the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa because only Nigeria and South Africa are sampled. In comparison, it appears as if attitudes to the persistence of poverty are markedly different in South and East Asia. In East Asia, respondents who believe that their societies provide escapes from poverty

⁹ As noted in the Introduction, to our knowledge, there is no available literature on attitudes to chronic poverty in a cross-section of developed and developing countries.

¹⁰ See Annex 1 for a detailed description of the relevant questions.

Table 2 Attitudes to chronic poverty

	A chance (%)	Little chance (%)	n
'Global village'	38.3	61.7	70,473
<i>Region</i>			
Western Europe	44.9	55.1	15,960
Eastern Europe	29.6	70.4	17,310
Central Europe	25.6	74.4	13,349
South Asia	53.0	47.0	3,797
East Asia	81.4	18.6	3,502
South America	38.5	61.5	12,080
Sub-Saharan Africa	40.0	60.0	4,475
<i>Level of development</i>			
Low income	44.5	55.5	5,561
Low middle income	37.1	62.9	25,643
Upper middle income	31.6	68.4	21,358
High income	46.2	53.8	17,911

Responses to the following question: in your opinion, do most poor people in this country have a chance of escaping from poverty, or is there very little chance of escaping?

Own calculations, from World Values Survey Wave Three (1994–1998) data

outnumber those believing that poverty is chronic by three to one. However, the limited range of countries involved (Japan, Taiwan and China only—this question was not included in the South Korea survey) requires that we exercise caution in extrapolating this result to the region as a whole. In South Asia, respondents believing that there is a chance to escape from poverty also outnumber those who believe that poverty is chronic, but the margin is much narrower. The majority in the sample perceive poverty in their societies as chronic, *but those from Asia, and especially East Asia, have a view that differs substantially from the majority view.*

A different, and perhaps more reliable, perspective on potential differences in perceptions of chronic poverty can be achieved by grouping countries according to their level of development, as identified by the World Bank classification. The relevant figures in Table 2 suggest a remarkable similarity in attitudes to chronic poverty across the different strata. Low income countries and high income countries show a smaller share of respondents in agreement with the view that there is little chance to escape from poverty, but the differences are not that pronounced. *Independently of the level of development in their own countries, respondents show a consistent attitude to chronic poverty.*

We could explore further the extent to which populations in Asian countries in the sample have attitudes to poverty which are distinct from the rest of the sample. This can be pursued by grouping responses to the question on the proximate causes of poverty. The question reads as follows:

Why, in your opinion, are there people in this country who live in need? Here are two opinions: Which comes closest to your view?

1. They are poor because of laziness and lack of will power
2. They are poor because society treats them unfairly

Table 3 Attitudes to the proximate cause of poverty

	Lazy (%)	Unfair society (%)	<i>n</i>
Western Europe	29.5	70.5	13,529
Eastern Europe	23.5	76.5	15,993
Central Europe	17.4	82.6	12,821
South Asia	38.8	58.6	3,648
East Asia	57.5	42.5	4,396
South America	27.7	70.1	12,627
Sub-Saharan Africa	28.1	71.3	4,337
Low income	30.8	67.5	5,455
Low middle income	24.9	74	25,690
Upper middle income	26.3	73.5	19,755
High income	32.5	67.5	16,451

Responses to the following question: why, in your opinion, are there people in this country who live in need? Here are two opinions: which comes closest to your view?

Own calculations, from World Values Survey Wave Three (1994–1998) data. Due to missing observations, percentages may not add to 100%

Table 3 below provides the frequencies of responses grouped by region and level of development. As can be seen, a majority of respondents confirm that people are in poverty primarily because society treats them unfairly. When disaggregated by region, sample countries in East Asia show responses that contradict those of other regions. In East Asia, 67.5% of respondents attribute the experience of poverty primarily to personal failings on the part of the poor. Interestingly, respondents from South Asia tend to follow the majority view on this issue. When countries are grouped by level of development, as in Table 2, there is overall consistency in the responses. Only in the sampled countries from East Asia do attitudes to poverty appear to diverge from the majority view.

3 What Factors Influence Attitudes to Chronic Poverty?

The main objective of this section is to explore what factors influence attitudes to poverty. We begin with a brief review of the literature on attitudes to the causes of poverty, and of theories on the factors influencing attitudes to poverty. The review helps to identify possible influences on attitudes to poverty. The section then tests for the extent to which these influences on attitudes to poverty can be observed in the WVS3 dataset.

The earliest literature on attitudes to poverty comes from social psychological studies in the USA. Feagin surveyed 1,017 Americans regarding their perceptions of the causes of poverty and identified individualistic, structural and fatalistic explanations of the causes of poverty. Responses varied by ethnicity, region, age, income and level of education (Feagin 1972).¹¹ Another strand in the literature has studied attitudes to poverty in public opinion polling. As early as 1964 the Gallup organization asked a sample of white Americans for

¹¹ Hayati and Karami (2005) find that their sample of Iranian farmers is similarly split between those who subscribe to structural, individualistic and fatalistic causes of poverty. They also find that individualistic responses could be mapped onto groups with more assets, while fatalistic views are more often held by those with lowest socio-economic status. Respondents emphasising structuralist causes were in between these two categories.

their perceptions on the causes of poverty. The respondents were evenly split across three groups: those blaming poverty on lack of effort on the part of the poor, another third emphasising the role of circumstances, and another group pointing to a combination of these two factors (Alston and Dean 1972). This literature has been reviewed by Kreidl (2000).¹²

Two distinct strands have emerged within development studies regarding attitudes to poverty. First, and most prominent, there has been a trend within poverty research to focus on elite perceptions of poverty, especially of elites in developing countries (e.g., Reis and Moore 2005). Broadly speaking, the assumption has been that elites hold power and hence their attitudes to poverty are much more relevant to understanding relevant policies than the attitudes of the powerless poor. In part as a response to the focus on elites, a second strand shifts the focus from elites to ‘the poor’ (e.g., Narayan et al. 2000; Misturelli and Heffernan 2001; Shek 2003). On the whole, these studies are more concerned with exploring the causes of poverty and the impact of poverty on people’s lives, and less attention is paid to the attitudes of the poor towards poverty. However, to our knowledge, cross-country comparative studies on attitudes to poverty in developing countries are scarce (Carr et al. 1998; Paxton and Knack 2008).

More recently, attention has been focused on attitudes to poverty in developing countries by respondents from developed countries. The EU, as well as several other Western countries, regularly conduct similar opinion polls regarding domestic perceptions of poverty and attitudes towards aid (CEC 1977; EC 2007a, b; AusAID 2005).

A related literature considers public attitudes to redistribution in developed countries. This literature could also provide some pointers as to the factors shaping public attitudes to poverty and poverty reduction policy.¹³ The literature aims to identify underlying notions of justice and solidarity, which are shown to inform attitudes to poverty and poverty policy. While egalitarian and poverty concerns often go together, their distinctiveness also needs to be kept in mind. In terms of the actual processes and institutions underpinning redistribution, for example, they could look quite different when they are motivated primarily by a concern with equality as opposed to a concern with poverty.¹⁴ In particular, poverty policy is concerned with achieving a basic or minimum social standard. As a consequence, attitudes to poverty could be said to have perhaps a greater urgency and definition than attitudes relating to gradual progress towards greater equality.

3.1 Factors Potentially Shaping Attitudes to Chronic Poverty

In the following analysis we test the joint effects of several factors shaping attitudes to poverty. They are described below, together with an indication of the type of variables that could capture their influence on attitudes to poverty.

¹² Many studies have challenged the emphasis on single-cause explanations of poverty; see Verkuyten and Hunt cited in Harper (2001).

¹³ See Taylor-Gooby (1985) for a review of the literature and Gelissen (2000) for an update. Oorschot (1999) reviews the sociological literature on attitudes to solidarity.

¹⁴ In a cross-cultural study Alesina and Angeletos (2005) compared the attitudes of US citizens to those of Western European citizens, using the World Value Survey. The authors conclude that the vast majority of the Americans (71%) but only 40% of the Europeans agreed with the proposition ‘The poor could become rich if they worked hard enough’.

3.1.1 Personal Characteristics

We hypothesise that some personal characteristics could have an influence on respondents' attitudes to chronic poverty. Life course indicators, such as age, sex or marital status, could influence people's sensitivity to, experience of, and learning concerning the nature of poverty around them.

3.1.2 Interest and Position

Interest could be a contributory factor too, especially a greater than average likelihood to have dependent status or greater than average vulnerability to poverty. The model below tests strength of interest and social position by identifying a class or group of people likely to require support from others for long periods of time, such as students, retired people and housewives. In studies of attitudes to redistribution this group is unhelpfully referred to as a 'transfer class'. We also use a variable which captures, on an extended scale, self-reported perceptions of life satisfaction as a means of capturing the influence of interest understood in a broader sense.

3.1.3 Poverty Salience

People's attitudes to poverty could also be shaped by the extent to which poverty is a social issue. In the model below we identify two variables capable of capturing this dimension: respondents' sense of changes in poverty in the last 10 years; and the level of development of the country in which they live. Chronic poverty is likely to have stronger salience in low income countries.

3.1.4 Epistemic

It is likely that attitudes to poverty and chronic poverty have been shaped by epistemic processes. In fact, many of the dimensions identified here reflect, in some sense, learning about poverty, experiential or otherwise. Respondents who have arrived at an understanding of poverty which locates its causes in structural factors, for example, are more likely to perceive poverty as chronic. By contrast, respondents who understand poverty as arising from luck, or personal effort, are more likely to see poverty as transitory. We aim to capture this dimension by testing for whether understanding of poverty as primarily explained by unfairness in society is correlated with reported attitudes to chronic poverty.

3.1.5 Values

It can be argued that attitudes to chronic poverty are linked to the strength of solidarity values. Here we test the influence of these values by reference to the self-reported position of respondents on a ten-point scale of left to right political views. We also test for the influence of views on inequality. The inequality variable captures whether respondents believe their societies would be improved by less or more inequality, also measured on an extended scale.

3.1.6 Process Effectiveness

The literature on attitudes in rich countries to international aid has noted the important role of perceptions of agent effectiveness in shaping attitudes to aid. Studies show that

respondents who believe governments and associated agencies are effective in bringing about improvements in assisted countries, are also more likely to take a positive attitude to aid. Extending this finding in the context of attitudes to poverty, it can be hypothesised that respondents' perceptions of (greater) effectiveness of public institutions are more likely to lead to perceptions that there is escape from poverty, and therefore that poverty is less likely to be chronic. We aim to capture this possible relationship by testing for the influence of satisfaction with government on attitudes to chronic poverty.

3.2 Model and Variables

Table 4 reports on variable construction and provides descriptive statistics.

We are now in a position to estimate the joint effects of the explanatory variables on the likelihood that respondents perceive poverty as chronic. The binary nature of the dependent variable (the variable takes a value of 1 if the respondent perceives poverty as chronic, and 0 otherwise) suggests estimation with a limited dependent variable model. Table 5 reports on the parameters estimated with a probit model of the joint influence of the selected

Table 4 Descriptive statistics

Variable name	Variable description	Variable type	Mean	SD	Valid n
Poverty exit	1 if little chance of exiting poverty; 0 otherwise	Binary	0.61	0.48	70,471
Age	Age of respondent	Continuous	40.90	16.06	82,783
Female	1 if male; 0 otherwise	Binary	0.51	0.49	82,934
Married	1 if marital status is married; 0 otherwise	Binary	0.57	0.49	82,943
Life satisfaction	Measured on a 10-point scale from low to high	Ordinal	5.35	0.49	80,141
Poverty change	1 if poverty in country is perceived to have increased in last 10 years; 0 otherwise	Binary	0.70	0.45	73,026
WB country classification	1 if low income; 2 if lower middle income; 3 if upper middle income; 4 if high income	Categorical	2.74	0.94	82,943
Poverty cause	1 if poverty is mainly due to unfairness in society; 0 otherwise	Binary	0.71	0.45	67,351
Political position	Measured on a 10-point scale from left to right	Ordinal	5.41	2.06	76,383
Inequality	Measured on a 10-point scale from society could be improved by less inequality, to society needs more inequality	Ordinal	5.75	2.98	77,131
Transfer class	1 if economic activity is reported as student, pensioner or housewife; 0 otherwise	Binary	0.34	0.47	79,636
Upper class	1 if social class is self-reported as high/upper; 0 otherwise	Binary	0.17	0.37	82,847
Working class	1 if social class is given as low income or working class; 0 otherwise	Binary	0.41	0.49	82,847
Satisfaction with government	Measured on a 4-point scale, 1 if very satisfied; 2 if satisfied; 3 if dissatisfied; 4 if very dissatisfied	Ordinal	2.89	0.82	71,398

Table 5 Probit model estimates

(1)Variable	(2) Coefficient	(3) Robust standard errors	(4) z	(5) Marginal effect
Constant	-0.756	0.042	-17.6	
Age	0.003	0.000	8.1	0.001
Female	0.096	0.010	7.8	0.036
Married	-0.005	0.010	-0.4	-0.001
Life satisfaction	-0.055	0.002	-22.0	-0.020
Poverty change	0.319	0.013	23.5	0.121
WB country classification	-0.035	0.006	-5.2	-0.013
Poverty cause	0.913	0.010	67.9	0.348
Political position	-0.030	0.002	-10.4	-0.011
Inequality	-0.005	0.002	-2.8	-0.002
Transfer class	0.039	0.013	2.8	0.014
Upper class	-0.038	0.016	-2.2	-0.014
Working class	0.087	0.013	6.55	0.032
Satisfaction with government	0.197	0.007	26.5	0.073

N: 52,965

LL(0): -35035.16

LL(1): -29895.21

Wald $\chi^2(13)$: 9116.63Prob > χ^2 : 0.0000Pseudo R^2 : 0.146

Dependent variable is 1 if agrees that there is little chance of escaping poverty; 0 otherwise

variables on whether respondents believe there is very little chance to escape from poverty in their country.

The model fit statistics suggest the probit model is reasonably well specified; the Wald test confirms that the explanatory variables, aside from the constant, contribute to the explanatory power of the model. The model slightly over-predicts the share of respondents believing that poverty is chronic (64% relative to actual 62.5%). We also ran the model with an adjustment for potential clustering at country level, but this did not produce any significant changes to the results reported above.

We implemented some checks on the consistency of the results. We ran the same model separately for different subgroups, defined by the World Bank classification. In the main the results above are replicated for each of the sub-groups, and the very few marginal changes that came up are unlikely to undermine the results reported. It might be useful nonetheless to discuss them briefly. Personal characteristics, age and female status turned out not to be statistically significant when the model was estimated on low income countries only. This can be interpreted as suggesting a stronger consistency in attitudes to chronic poverty in low income countries, across the life course. The parameters on the influence of inequality values are not significant at the sub-group level, except for lower middle income countries. Similarly, the influence of membership of the 'transfer class' turns out to be significant only for high income countries, perhaps reflecting the fact that extensive welfare provision is not available in most of the developing world. The only instance of a change in the sign of the variable at the sub-group level estimation was a

change in the sign of the parameter of upper class in low income countries from negative to positive. Again, this can be interpreted as reflecting greater homogeneity in attitudes to chronic poverty in these countries.

3.3 Main Findings

Overall we find that the majority of the potential factors influencing attitudes to chronic poverty identified above are confirmed as significant in the empirical analysis.

If anything, the individual characteristics appear to be relatively less important as an influence on attitudes to chronic poverty than epistemic or social factors. The estimates confirm that individual ageing and female status increase the probability that respondents see very little chance of escaping from poverty. However, there is no statistically significant association between being married and attitudes to chronic poverty.

The interest and position dimension is also relevant to attitudes to chronic poverty. A negative association exists between subjective life satisfaction and chronic poverty. The more satisfied people are with their lives, the less likely it is that they will perceive poverty as chronic. Being a member of the 'transfer class', which includes individuals more likely to be in a position of economic dependence, raises the probability that respondents perceive poverty as chronic. As expected, respondents self-classified as belonging to the upper classes are less likely to perceive poverty as chronic; while those belonging to the working classes are more likely to see little chance of escape from poverty.

Experiential factors are important. There is a strong association between perceptions that poverty increased in the previous decade and perceptions of poverty as chronic. At the same time, perceptions of poverty as chronic are more likely to be held by respondents in lower income countries. Poverty salience in a respondent's country influences perceptions of chronic poverty.

Epistemic and value influences are important too. There is a very strong association between perceptions that poverty is mainly due to unfairness in society and perceptions of poverty as chronic. Values are a factor in perceptions of chronic poverty. Respondents on the left of the political spectrum, as well as those in sympathy with the view that society needs greater equality, are more likely to perceive poverty as chronic. The findings on the influence of epistemic and value influences are extremely important, as they suggest a possible foundation for the shared and fairly consistent understanding of poverty observed in the sample.

The results suggest there is a positive association between dissatisfaction with government and the perception that poverty is chronic. This provides some support for the argument that process factors which have been observed to be influential in the context of attitudes to aid, could also be influential in the context of attitudes to poverty.

The estimates of marginal effects on the probability that respondents believe that there is little chance of escaping from poverty provide some information on the relative size of the effects for the relevant variables. Because of the limitations of the data, the estimates above should be taken with caution. The marginal effects can be interpreted as the change in the probability that respondents believe there is little chance in escaping poverty, associated with a unit change in the independent variable. The marginal effects are estimated, for continuous variables, at the mean of the variables. Some information from the marginal effects might be useful. The estimates suggest that a respondent who is persuaded that poverty is mainly due to unfairness in society would have a 34% higher probability of believing poverty to be mainly chronic. Respondents reporting that poverty has increased in the last 10 years are 12% more likely to believe that poverty is chronic. Women have a 3% higher probability than men of agreeing with the view that poverty is chronic.

4 Conclusions

The paper has attempted an examination of attitudes to chronic poverty in a cross-section of countries contributing data to the World Values Survey Wave Three (1994–1998). A pooled sample from these survey data was referred to as a 'global village', and the analysis focused on identifying shared attitudes to chronic poverty. To our knowledge, this is the first time that attitudes to chronic poverty have been studied for a cross-section of developed and developing countries.

Our main finding is that a majority of respondents in our sample believe there is little chance of those in poverty escaping from their predicament. In the majority view, chronic poverty is the norm. This view is consistent across the sample, and robust to disaggregation by level of economic development, as defined by the World Bank classification. When disaggregated by geographical region, respondents from South Asia and East Asia appear to hold a divergent view, although the range of countries involved suggests considerable caution in interpreting this finding. Notwithstanding this point, and keeping firmly in mind the limitations of the sample data, we find there is strong consistency in attitudes to chronic poverty in the sample.

The paper also explored potential influences shaping attitudes to poverty. These include personal characteristics, interest and position, epistemic factors and political values, and policy processes. The findings suggest a mix of different influences at work shaping perceptions of poverty and chronic poverty. Older and female respondents are more likely to believe poverty is chronic. Respondents from countries with a high incidence of poverty, and/or where poverty has been on the increase, are more likely to perceive poverty as chronic. Respondents on the left of the political spectrum, sympathetic to the view that society needs more equality, or who believe they belong to lower socio-economic classes, are also more likely to perceive poverty as chronic. Respondents who believe that poverty is due to unfairness in society, as opposed to individual failings or luck, are also more likely to uphold the majority view.

Data limitations preclude research into changes in public attitudes to poverty over time. We have identified and documented the gap in attitudinal data covering attitudes to poverty in developing countries.

What are the policy implications flowing from our findings? It is encouraging to find there is a strong measure of consistency in attitudes to chronic poverty in our 'global village'. Other things being equal, they suggest a strong basis of public understanding and support for policies that tackle global chronic poverty. It suggests that policy makers willing to place a greater emphasis on the duration dimension of poverty, and willing to establish institutions to tackle chronic poverty, should find a large measure of public support. This has been the experience of Latin American countries and South Africa, where poverty reduction policies have tackled chronic poverty.

At a practical level, and working through the influences on attitudes to poverty, we have identified two potentially important ways to influence perceptions on poverty and poverty policy: epistemics and values. Research on poverty and shared views on justice are key to eradicating global poverty.

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