

The Millennium Development Goals and Education: Accountability and Substitution in Global Assessment

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Word Count

Manuscript: 12,213

Appendix: 3,107

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Abstract

Precise international metrics and assessments may induce governments to alter policies in pursuit of more favorable assessments according to these metrics. In this paper, we explore a secondary effect of global performance indicators (GPIs): Insofar as governments have finite resources and make trade-offs in public goods investments, a GPI that precisely targets the provision of a particular public good may cause governments to substitute away from the provision of other, related, public goods. We argue that both the main effect of the GPI (on the measured public good) and this substitution effect vary systematically based on the domestic political institutions and informational environments of targeted states. Specifically, we contend that both the main and substitution effects of GPIs should be largest for governments that are least accountable (opaque and non-democratic) and should be smallest for those that are most accountable. We illustrate the logic of these arguments using a formal model and test these claims using data on primary and secondary enrollment rates across 114 countries. We find that countries substitute toward primary (which is targeted by the MDGs) and away from secondary (which is not), and that these effects are mitigated as accountability rises.

*We are grateful to the attendees of the Global Assessment Power Workshop at Harvard University, in particular to our discussant, Karthik Ramanna, our quantitative discussants, Anton Strezhnev and Christopher Lucas, and the organizers, Beth Simmons and Judith Kelley. We are also grateful to John Freeman for feedback on our error correction model. James Hollyer would like to thank the Niehaus Center on Globalization and Governance and the Benjamin Lippincott foundation for research support.

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Abstract

Precise international metrics and assessments may induce governments to alter policies in pursuit of more favorable assessments according to these metrics. In this paper, we explore a secondary effect of global performance indicators (GPIs): Insofar as governments have finite resources and make trade-offs in public goods investments, a GPI that precisely targets the provision of a particular public good may cause governments to substitute away from the provision of other, related, public goods. We argue that both the main effect of the GPI (on the measured public good) and this substitution effect vary systematically based on the domestic political institutions and informational environments of targeted states. Specifically, we contend that both the main and substitution effects of GPIs should be largest for governments that are least accountable (opaque and non-democratic) and should be smallest for those that are most accountable. We illustrate the logic of these arguments using a formal model and test these claims using data on primary and secondary enrollment rates across 114 countries. We find that countries substitute toward primary (which is targeted by the MDGs) and away from secondary (which is not), and that these effects are mitigated as accountability rises.

Not everything that can be counted counts,
and not everything that counts can be counted

William Bruce Cameron

*Informal Sociology: A Casual Introduction to
Sociological Thinking*, p. 13

1 Introduction

Quantifiable targets shape incentives. Indeed, the idea that Global Performance Indicators (GPIs) represent attempts to influence governments is a central tenet of this symposium. When economic development organizations and the foreign aid ministries of states deploy performance assessment metrics, they stimulate the governments of developing countries to meet and surpass those quantified goals.¹

Other studies in this symposium corroborate this hypothesis. Doshi, Kelley, and Simmons document the *reactivity* of states to the World Bank's *Ease of Doing Business Indicators*, as they take policy steps to attempt to climb in the rankings.² Measurable targets can also influence aid donors – Honig and Weaver demonstrate that even a small organization can influence aid agencies to publish the outcomes of development projects simply by promising to report on the publication.³ Failure to achieve measurement targets can also influence market actors. Julia Morse finds that being labeled as non-compliant by the Financial Action Task Force induces private sector investors to avoid a given country.⁴

The upshot of these studies is that GPIs can serve as effective incentives for governments by either directly influencing elite behavior or by indirectly impacting third parties. Precisely because of their effectiveness, however, we explore the unintended consequences of quantified targets. As suggested by the epigraph above, when an organization sets a quantified target, they explicitly inform developing countries that some outcomes count – but they also implicitly convey that other outcomes do not count. As a result, governments have an incentive to substitute resources and effort toward outcomes that are counted and

¹Kelley and Simmons 2019

²Kelley, Simmons, and Doshi 2019

³Honig and Weaver 2019

⁴Morse 2019

away from those that are not. This unintended effect of assessment is implicitly noted by others in this symposium. In our study of the Millennium Development Goals, we formalize the mechanism by which assessments can lead to unintended outcomes and find empirical evidence consistent with our model.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were the product of the Millennium Summit of the UN General Assembly in September of 2000. At this meeting, members committed to "...spare no effort to free our fellow men, women, and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected."⁵ To this end, the Declaration advanced resolutions to achieve key numeric targets which evolved into the Millennium Development Goals.⁶ Specific targets applied to eight areas: the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, the achievement of universal primary education, the promotion of gender equality, the reduction of child mortality, the improvement of maternal health, combating HIV and malaria, the promotion of environmental sustainability, and the creation of a global partnership for development.⁷

We focus on the key educational measures of primary and secondary enrollment rates and how they respond to GPIs in equilibrium. Our GPI of interest is the Millennium Development Goal targeting universal primary education. Note that secondary education is not targeted by the MDGs, but may be influenced by them in unintended or unanticipated ways.

A rich literature on the relative importance of these public goods to long-run development outcomes motivates our focus on the relative provision of primary and secondary education. Writ large, education's impact has been charted directly (skill development, social network access, etc.) and indirectly (character traits such as motivation and self-discipline) which are crucial for social and economic outcomes.⁸

Evidence of unintended consequences of assessment in education reform at the micro level is ample. In the United States, policies such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and North Carolina's ABCs programs have been shown to diminish education outcomes for groups not included in assessment measures. Fuller and Ladd find that elementary schools transferred higher quality teachers from lower (non-evaluated)

⁵United Nations Millennium Declaration, A/RES/55/2, §11, 18 September 2000. <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>, last accessed 18 April 2016.

⁶Hulme 2009

⁷See <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml>, last accessed 18 April 2016.

⁸See Heckman, Stixrud, and Urzua 2006.

grades to higher (evaluated) grades in response to NCLB in order to improve their accountability metrics.⁹ Similarly, Hugh Macartney identifies a ratchet effect when accountability reforms are conditioned on prior student test scores, as teachers reduce contemporary effort in order to ensure room for improvement in the following year.¹⁰

Studies have also found more general evidence of unintended consequences of quantifiable goals. In sociology, the connection between evaluation and perverse outcomes is so widespread as to be labeled a “law”.¹¹ Le and Malesky demonstrate that provincial governments respond to performance ratings, they also find that these governments “teach to the test.”¹² Doshi, Kelley, and Simmons recount interviews with World Bank staff who describe the strategic responses to the Ease of Doing Business indicator, specifically optimizing their response to “score well” as evidenced by the negative relationship between regulatory “distance” and the number of reforms pursued.¹³ In this case, governments devote effort to reforms that lead to the greatest changes in rankings, for minimal effort, rather than those that necessarily have the largest economic impact. The literature on government accountability has documented related behavior, in which democratic governments focus their efforts on the provision of readily observable public goods in an attempt to claim credit,¹⁴ a tendency that has been particularly documented in the provision of education.¹⁵

In this paper, we formalize our intuition with a simple model of government accountability in the absence and presence of a GPI. This framework generates empirical propositions that we take to the data, exploring whether the tendency to focus on achieving measured targets induces governments to substitute effort, attention, and resources away from the provision of unmeasured public goods. Specifically, we examine cross national patterns in the provision of (assessed) primary and (unassessed) secondary education

⁹Fuller and Ladd 2013

¹⁰Macartney 2016

¹¹See Campbell 1979. Academia itself is replete with examples of sub-optimal equilibria as PhD students and tenure-track professors react to evaluation systems such as publications and cites (Edwards and Roy 2017).

¹²Le and Malesky 2017

¹³Kelley, Simmons, and Doshi 2019, p. 15

¹⁴Mani and Mukand 2007

¹⁵See Harding and Stasavage 2014. For a model that documents such distortions with regard to a very different policy area, see Bueno de Mesquita 2007.

enrollment rates following the passage of the MDGs.

The most direct mechanism connecting GPIs to substitution of resources is via directed aid flows. The Millennium Development Goals and the rich metrics associated with them are used by international actors to inform where to donate aid. Kijima and Lipsy show that participation in cross-national assessments of education influences flows of education aid.¹⁶ These flows of aid can yield substitution effects through the expansion of state budgets or via the incentives they carry for policy makers, although their results suggest that foreign aid inflows are not meaningfully associated with higher net secondary enrollment. Other channels of influence theorized to matter in global assessment elsewhere in this symposium (i.e., Hawthorn effects, activated civil society) can also pertain. We test competing channels of influence via mediation and moderation analyses, finding no evidence of a foreign aid channel and suggestive support for a role played by domestic politics.

We further argue that both the direct effect of international assessment (the promotion of primary education) and the indirect effect on the relationship between primary and secondary education will be moderated by the characteristics of targeted states. To be more precise, both effects should diminish as domestic accountability rises. In states with accountable governments – i.e., in democracies with high levels of government transparency – the composition of public goods should reflect the desires of the electorate, at least to a greater extent than in autocracies or opaque states. Accountable states thus have both less need, and less ability, to alter their menu of service provision in response to international pressure.

Our analysis stimulates what we believe are interesting questions about not just the MDGs, but GPIs more generally. On the one hand, we find evidence suggesting that states with healthier civil society and transparency are less susceptible to the substitution incentives associated with monitoring and assessment. However, we also find that these countries are less responsive to the stated goal of the GPI – the explicit incentives are also weaker. Our contribution is located at the end of the theoretical framework encompassing this symposium, reproduced in Figure 1. Our formal model is agnostic to the specific mechanisms by which GPIs induce policy change. We use mediation analysis on our data to test whether foreign aid plays a meaningful role in the context of MDG adoption.

¹⁶Kijima and Lipsy 2017

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Our contribution also poses questions about the rarity of these mechanisms and the associated normative implications. While we believe unintended consequences are common, if not a foregone conclusion when dealing with strategic actors, it's unclear whether they always subvert the implicit goals of the GPI. All governments are resource constrained, and all allocate these resources in a manner to maximize political support at minimal cost.¹⁷ Any increase in the political returns for the provision of a particular good will imply that the relative incentive to provide another will decline. The normative effects of such substitution, however, need not be negative. Governments' political incentives may induce them to focus on the provision of public goods valued most highly by a narrow elite, in the absence of external pressure. And spillovers in the production of public goods – e.g., the expansion of primary education opens access to further schooling to a broader array of students – may imply that a shift in resources is positive for total social welfare. In this paper, we bracket such critical welfare concerns to focus on the strategic incentives of governments facing GPIs. We acknowledge that such normative conclusions are crucial to the future research on GPIs, and are raised by other works in this symposium and in the ground-breaking research on this topic by Judith Kelley and Beth Simmons.¹⁸

2 The Millennium Development Goals

The MDGs consist of eight goals (see Table 1) which were promulgated by the UN, agreed to by such international financial institutions as the World Bank, and adopted by a variety of bilateral aid organizations. Each goal is mapped into one or more 'targets', which, in turn, is mapped into several numerical indicators which serve as a basis for assessment of progress. For instance, the goal we examine here – (2) universal primary education – is mapped into the task of "ensur[ing] that, by 2015, children everywhere ... will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling." Progress toward this target is assessed by primary education enrollment and completion rates, as well as the literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds, broken down by

¹⁷Bueno de Mesquita, Smith, Siverson et al. 2003

¹⁸Kelley and Simmons 2015

gender.¹⁹

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Many of these goals were drawn directly from the UN's Millennium Declaration, which the General Assembly issued and approved as the culmination of the Millennium Summit, held in September of 2000.²⁰ The more precise indicators, and several of the more general goals, were only agreed upon during a World Bank conference, 'From Consensus to Action: a Seminar on the International Development Goals,' held in 2001.²¹ The agenda for both the World Bank conference, and the UN Summit, however, was determined by a pre-existing set of development targets – the International Development Goals (IDGs).

The IDGs were originally promulgated by the OECD in 1996 as part of an effort to shape the aid policies of member-states. In content, they were very nearly identical to the MDGs. The targets were set by rich-world donors, with fairly minimal input from aid recipients, and were constructed to appeal to domestic audiences in the developed world.²² In particular, the goals were intended to focus on concrete measures that appealed to a broad audience (e.g., poverty reduction through economic growth, gender equality). Moreover, these goals were thought to advance a degree of *accountability* on the part of recipient states.²³

The aim of such precise numeric targets was explicitly to increase accountability, particularly for states that received development aid. (Only indicators for Goal 8, the 'global partnership for development,' did include measures of donor generosity.) In laying out these goals, the Secretary General's report noted: "In order to help focus national and international priority-setting, goals and targets should be limited in number, be stable over time and communicate clearly to a broad audience. Clear and stable numerical targets can help to trigger action and promote new alliances for development."²⁴

¹⁹UN Official List of MDG Indicators, 15 January 2008.

<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=Indicators/OfficialList.htm>, last accessed 18 April 2016.

²⁰<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>

²¹Hulme 2009

²²Hulme 2009

²³Hulme 2009

²⁴Annex to "Road Map Towards the Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Development Declaration," Report of the Secretary General. A/56/326, 6 September 2001. Page 56, §3. <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/sgreport2001.pdf>, last accessed 18 April 2016.

We examine the effects of the MDGs through the lens of existing theories of political accountability. We focus on the goal pertaining to primary education, in part because the mapping between this goal and a numeric indicator was particularly precise, and in part because measures of closely related public goods (secondary and tertiary enrollment rates) were *not* targeted by the MDGs.

3 Global Assessment Power and Public Goods Production

The MDGs represented a public international commitment by governments to achieve gains in the provision of *specific* public goods. They increased the incentives of government to provide these goods. Governments, therefore, would be likely to devote greater personnel, material resources, and effort toward providing these specific public goods once the MDGs were in effect. However, these incentives have a secondary effect – governments are likely to divert resources from the production of other public goods in order to achieve MDG goals.

First, consider the effect of the MDGs on government incentives. Kelley and Simmons argue that the dissemination of international standards may exert social pressure on governments to achieve certain policy outcomes, and that such standards are particularly likely to do so if “they are based on systematic monitoring, are comparative (and especially quantitative), are wielded by a respected actor or group/organization of actors, and are widely disseminated.”²⁵ Perhaps no set of international standards meet these criteria as well as the MDGs. These standards were (1) explicitly linked to precise statistical targets,²⁶ (2) were subject to annual monitoring by the UN and other donor organizations; (3) were initially linked to the Millennium Declaration, and thus approved by the UN General Assembly and its constituent member-states, and subsequently promulgated jointly by the World Bank, IMF and OECD;²⁷ and (4) were widely disseminated through public statements by these agencies as well as bilateral lenders.

As visualized in Figure 1 above, international standards like the MDGs may affect government behavior through a variety of channels, including international actors, domestic politics, and the personal or reputa-

²⁵Kelley and Simmons 2015, p. 55

²⁶See <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=Indicators/OfficialList.htm>, accessed 18 April 2016.

²⁷Hulme 2009

tional concerns of individual leaders themselves. Global standards may alter behaviors in the international or intergovernmental realm. The creation of a common set of international standards may facilitate decentralized enforcement through bilateral sanctioning or a withdrawal of bilateral benefits.²⁸ This was a particular risk with regard to the MDGs, given that the Goals were explicitly endorsed by most bilateral development agencies soon after their promulgation – with the US as a notable hold-out.²⁹ Alternatively, standards may be enforced through material sanctions (or withdrawal of benefits) by international bodies. Lebovic and Voeten, for instance, demonstrate that the World Bank enforced international standards of human rights, and was less willing to lend to countries that had been ‘shamed’ by the UNCHR.³⁰ This danger, again, would seem particularly acute for governments that failed to make progress on the MDGs, given the central role both the World Bank and IMF played in the construction of the Goals.

Global indicators may also serve to inform residents of monitored states, in a readily digestible manner, of the quality of their government’s performance with respect to certain policy goals. Individuals within these states might use such information to discipline government behavior either through the ballot box,³¹ or through protest or collective action.³² A well-developed literature finds that such information enables citizens to hold their leaders accountable for public goods provision,³³ which, in turn, induces leaders to more actively provide public goods.³⁴ Hence, government leaders should face greater domestic pressure to achieve specific public goods targets once the MDGs are promulgated.

Finally, international standards may alter government incentives by generating global norms of acceptable behavior.³⁵ In defining basic standards of ‘development,’ the MDGs may have altered leaders’ notions

²⁸Milgrom and North 1990, Johns 2012

²⁹Hulme 2009

³⁰Lebovic and Voeten 2009

³¹Besley and Burgess 2002

³²Hollyer, Rosendorff, and Vreeland 2015

³³See, for instance, Di Tella and Schargrotsky 2003, Ferraz and Finan 2008, Peters and Welch 1980

³⁴See, for instance, Adserà, Boix, and Payne 2003, Besley and Burgess 2002, Glaeser and Goldin 2006, Hollyer, Rosendorff, and Vreeland 2014, Reinikka and Svensson 2003. Though, Chong, De La O, Karlan et al. 2010 introduce a cautionary note as to these effects.

³⁵Risse and Sikkink 1999

of what constitutes ‘success’ and ‘failure.’ Such definitions may shape leaders’ primitive preferences over public goods allocations – or shift their strategies for regime legitimation.³⁶ Focusing on the MDG targeting maternal health and its impact in Zambia, Alice Evans documents extensive evidence of norm-adjustment among elites as the primary mechanism by which this particular GPI influenced policy.³⁷

It is our contention that the MDGs had the effect of increasing the incentive to provide the specific public goods delineated in the Goals. Any or all of these mechanisms may be effective, and other, unlisted, mechanisms may also be at work. Although our main focus in this paper is on the equilibrium provision of targeted and non-targeted public goods, we are able to test some channels of influence, including foreign aid and domestic politics. Our findings relate to similar work by Helena Skagerlind who conducts a detailed process tracing of the effects of the MDG with regard to the empowerment of women.³⁸ She finds some evidence that all three of these causal channels were in operation with the strongest results for aid conditionality and the socialization of government elites. Our findings for education indicate alternative channels of influence, highlighting the heterogeneity of these mechanisms across targets.

While we contend that the MDGs had the intended effect of increasing government incentives to provide specific public goods, we further contend that they had the unintended effect of causing governments to substitute away from efforts *not* delineated by the UN. As is argued by Holmstrom and Milgrom, when a given agent is faced with a multiplicity of tasks, some of which are monitored and others of which are not, the agent will rationally devote a disproportional level of effort to those goals which are subject to monitoring.³⁹ We therefore focus on government’s tendency to provide a public good listed in the MDGs – i.e., primary education – relative to its tendency to provide a public good that is not so-listed – i.e., secondary education. We argue that MDGs alter the relative provision of primary and secondary education, boosting the former relative to the latter. This tendency may be somewhat offset to the extent that various public goods are complements in production. For instance, increasing primary enrollment and completion rates perforce increases the pool of students eligible for secondary education. However, the substitution

³⁶Kapuściński 1989 is instructive on Emperor Haile Selassie’s obsession with a nebulously defined notion of ‘economic development.’

³⁷Evans 2017

³⁸Skagerlind 2017

³⁹Holmstrom and Milgrom 1991

effect should dominate provided these complementarities in production are not too large.

Ironically, the very characteristics that make the MDGs valuable in terms of increasing accountability also render them particularly prone to this substitution effect. Because they focus on precisely defined quantitative metrics of performance, with regard to very specific public goods, they are particularly vulnerable to ‘gaming.’ More nebulous or qualitative goals, which are less susceptible to monitoring and less useful for the types of comparisons that give global indicators their power,⁴⁰ are also likely to be less prone to substitution effects. However, such weak assessments are also less likely to alter government behavior at all.

4 The Moderating Role of Information and Institutions

We expect that the intuition described above may vary by context. Government institutions and the domestic informational environment moderate the effects of global assessment – both the direct effects on the provision of specific services and the indirect substitution effects on the provision of unassessed public goods. To be more precise, both effects are weakened in instances where governments are highly accountable to domestic audiences. Highly transparent states and democracies are less prone to alter the menu of public goods delivered by the government in response to global indicators than opaque autocracies.

The rationale for this contention is twofold: First, and most directly, domestic and international accountability are substitutes. Recall that one of the mechanisms through which global indicators might induce policy change works through such indicators’ effect on domestic politics. Global monitoring may serve to inform domestic interests of their government’s performance with regard to a particular policy area, inducing domestic demands for improved performance.⁴¹ Naturally, however, if the domestic information environment is relatively rich, such information is superfluous. Citizens are *already* aware of their government’s performance and any pressure to change policy as a result is likely to have already made itself manifest. Moreover, if the issue area in question is one of high public salience, or has important implications for domestic welfare, governments are likely to be induced to disclose information in response to

⁴⁰ Kelley and Simmons 2019

⁴¹ Kelley and Simmons 2019

electoral pressures in democratic political systems.⁴² Precisely because accountable governments face a strong domestic pressure to provide public goods, increased international demands are likely to have minor effects.

The second reason we expect global indicators to have a relatively minor effect on governments with a high level of domestic accountability is more subtle. Any shift in the composition of public goods in such regimes is likely to be politically costly. Governments in such states are *already* providing levels of public goods provision, in keeping with the demands of large swaths of the population, in order to stay in power. Any change in the composition of these public goods is likely to be politically costly, more so than for comparable autocracies, who rely less on public goods provision to retain power. Moreover, because accountable states provide higher levels of public goods than autocratic,⁴³ they will need alter service provision less to satisfy international demands even in the instances in which they choose to so comply with the MDGs.

5 Model

In what follows, we illustrate the claims of sections 3 and 4 formally. To do so, we adapt a variant of the selectorate model of Bueno de Mesquita et al.⁴⁴ We compare two game forms: one with and one without the MDGs. The model demonstrates that (1) the MDGs (weakly) increase the provision of primary education and (2) that wherever this increase is strictly positive there is a substitution away from secondary education provision. The formalization further demonstrates that the effects are more likely to be present in unaccountable (autocratic, opaque) than accountable (democratic, transparent) states.

5.1 Model without MDGs

Consider an infinite horizon discrete time interaction between a leader L and her selectorate. Normalize the size of the selectorate to one. In each period of play, L will face a challenger C .⁴⁵ To maintain her hold

⁴²Hollyer, Rosendorff, and Vreeland 2011

⁴³Bueno de Mesquita, Smith, Siverson et al. 2003

⁴⁴Bueno de Mesquita, Smith, Siverson et al. 2003

⁴⁵Throughout, we will adopt feminine pronouns for L and selectors. C will be given a male pronoun.

on power, L must maintain the support of a share $\omega \in (0, \frac{1}{2}]$ of her selectors – a ‘winning coalition.’ We conceive of ω as capturing the degree of accountability of L to the selectorate – the probability that L is accountable to (requires the support of) an individual selector randomly selected from the set of selectors.⁴⁶ In what follows, we will map the term ω into empirical measures of democracy, government transparency, and their interaction. All actors share a common discount factor, δ .

In each period, the leader and challenger make a simultaneous offers of public goods – here consisting of **p** primary (p) and **h** higher/secondary (h) education; they may also offer private transfers (t) to each member of the (potential or actual) winning coalition. A representative member of the selectorate has preferences across the p, h, t , according to the additively separable utility function $U(p, h, t) = U_p(p) + U_h(h) + U_t(t)$, with the standard assumptions: $U'_k > 0$, $U''_k < 0$, $U_k(0) = 0$, $U'_k(0) = \infty$, $U'_k(\infty) = 0$, $k \in \{p, h, t\}$.

L and C make a decision about how to allocate a budget of size $B > 0$ between p , h , and t . If in power, her utility is defined as the residual sum left over after this provision is made. If not in power, her utility is normalized to zero.

$$U_j(p, h, t) = \begin{cases} B - p - h - \omega t & \text{if in power} \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases} \quad \text{for } j \in \{L, C\}$$

At the start of each period of play, L and C makes their offers of p , h and t . Then there is an election – a decision is made by members of winning coalition whether to retain the leader L . To remain in power, L must retain the support of a share ω of the selectors.

Definition 1. *Define an equilibrium to this game as the pair of triples as the pair of triples, (p_C^*, h_C^*, t_C^*) for the challenger and (p^*, h^*, t^*) for the leader. Define $U_C^* = U_p(p_C^*) + U_h(h_C^*) + U_t(t_C^*)$.*

⁴⁶Membership in L 's winning coalition is fixed and common knowledge. Formally, denote $\sigma_{i,\tau} \in \{0, 1\}$ as an indicator function of such membership, where i indexes selectors and τ indexes time. L has lexicographic preferences for distributing private transfers to members of her winning coalition over any alternative selectors. In the event L is displaced, new values of $\sigma_{i,\tau+1}$ are drawn for all i , in which all selectors are equally likely to enter the new winning coalition. If L is retained in power, $\sigma_{i,\tau+1} = \sigma_{i,\tau} \forall i$. Values of $\sigma_{i,\tau}$ are common knowledge in each period τ and all actors condition their strategies on the realization of this value.

In equilibrium, C will tailor his offer to buy off members of the winning coalition – his entire budget will be devoted to this task. L will address this threat by offering a menu of public goods provision and transfers that guarantees members of the winning coalition a continuation value at least as high as that from backing C . This is feasible for the incumbent, because she can credibly commit to provide private transfers t to members of the winning coalition into the future. The offers of the challenger lack future credibility, and are discounted accordingly. The incumbent thus always retains her office.

In the appendix, we offer a model extension that relaxes the assumption that L 's promises are perfectly credible. We assume that members of her winning coalition may be replaced by members of the wider selectorate with a fixed probability in each period of play – though, the probability of being removed by the incumbent is less than the probability of losing one's place in the winning coalition if the incumbent is removed and the regime toppled. Our comparative statics are qualitatively unchanged by this model extension.

Lemma 1. *In any (Markov Perfect) equilibrium to this (no MDG) game, the fraction $\frac{p^*}{t^*}$ is rising in ω .*⁴⁷

Lemma 2. *Comparative statics: p^* rises and t^* falls with ω .*

As is standard in these games,⁴⁸ greater domestic accountability leads to greater public goods provision. This is true both relative to the amount of private transfers provided, and in absolute amounts. Having established these preliminaries and laid out the basic game form, we can now turn to the central question: How does the existence of the MDGs affect this domestic equilibrium?

Model with MDGs

To capture the role of the MDGs, we consider a model isomorphic to the one above. The only difference lies in L 's utility function. We now assume that the international community offers the leader a benefit for exceeding a certain threshold of primary education, as is specified by the MDGs. (We remain agnostic as to which of the theorized transmission mechanisms diagrammed in Figure 1 are at play. In our empirical results, we test the role of foreign aid via mediation analysis.) Let $\beta > 0$ denote this benefit and \bar{p} denote

⁴⁷All proofs are presented in the appendix.

⁴⁸Bueno de Mesquita, Smith, Siverson et al. 2003

the exogenously imposed threshold from the international community. We can then redefine the utility of the leader:

$$U_L(p, h, t) = \begin{cases} B - p - h - \omega t + \beta \mathcal{I}(p) & \text{if in power} \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

where

$$\mathcal{I}(p) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } p \geq \bar{p} \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

As before, the incumbent leader will always successfully buy-off her winning coalition and remain in power. Our focus is on her equilibrium offer of primary and secondary education levels, which we will denote p^{**} and h^{**} , respectively. Denote the equilibrium transfer to a given member of the winning coalition as t^{**} .

Before we can proceed further, we require some definitions. Recall that U_C^*, p^*, h^* and t^* are defined in Definition 1 and \bar{p} is the exogenous MDG threshold. The choice of the triple (p, h, t) is endogenous.

Definition 2.

1. Define the **retention constraint** as $U_h(h) + [1 + \frac{\delta}{1-\delta}(1-\omega)]U_t(t) \geq U_C^* - U_p(p)$.
2. Define the **residual constraint** as $h + \omega t \leq B + \beta - p$.
3. Define the **participation constraint** as $h + \omega t \leq h^* + p^* - \bar{p} + \omega t^* + \beta$.
4. Define the set $\Theta(\omega, \bar{p}, \beta, B)$ as the set of triples (p, h, t) that satisfy the three constraints above. That is $\Theta(\omega, \bar{p}, \beta, B) = \{(p, h, t) \in \mathbb{R}_+^3 \mid U_h(h) + [1 + \frac{\delta}{1-\delta}(1-\omega)]U_t(t) \geq U_C^* - U_p(p) \text{ and } h + \omega t \leq B + \beta - p \text{ and } h + \omega t \leq h^* + p^* - \bar{p} + \omega t^* + \beta\}$. Note that this set is parameterized by the exogenous variables, including \bar{p} .
5. Let \hat{p} be the largest value of p among all the triples in $\Theta(\omega, \bar{p}, \beta, B)$. That is $\hat{p} = \sup\{p \mid (p, h, t) \in \Theta(\omega, \bar{p}, \beta, B)\}$.

The retention constraint is, as its name suggests, a restriction on the values of the menu of goods offered to the selectorate which must be satisfied by the incumbent if she is to retain office. In particular the benefits to the selectorate must be larger than those on offer from the challenger. The residual constraint requires the leader to offer a menu that spends no more than the available budget. The participation constraint recognizes that the leader's decision to adopt the MDGs is voluntary, in the sense that the leader pockets a (weakly) larger residual after adopting the MDG \bar{p} and receiving the bonus β than was the case absent the MDG (and choosing p^*, h^*, t^*). The set of all possible triples (p, h, t) that satisfy all three of these constraints is denoted $\Theta(\cdot)$, and is parameterized by the exogenous variables of the model.

If the benefits the international community offers for attaining the MDG goals are not too large, there is a maximal target the international community can set and expect compliance. If this target for primary education provision \bar{p} is set too high, L will recognize that she cannot possibly satisfy international demands, her residual and participation constraints, and the need to stay in power. We define this value of the MDG goal as \hat{p} .

This of course for “modest” values of the international reward β . If the international reward is large enough, then the leader can buy off the winning coalition, and satisfy the international community and have plenty left over. In order to ensure that the equilibrium to MDG game is not degenerate – in the sense that the parameter space where the MDGs can potentially affect behavior – is not empty, we adopt the following restriction:

Lemma 3. *A sufficient condition for $\Theta(\omega, \bar{p}, \beta, B)$ to be non-empty is $\beta \geq \bar{p} - p^*$.*

Given that the feasible set $\Theta(\cdot)$ is not empty (and convex), we can find the element in this set (the optimal choice of t and h) that maximizes the leader's utility in the case that the leader chooses to adopt the MDG, \bar{p} :

Definition 3. *For any exogenous \bar{p} , define the triple $(\bar{p}, \bar{h}, \bar{t}) = \arg \max_{(\bar{p}, h, t) \in \Theta(\omega, \bar{p}, \beta, B)} B + \beta - \bar{p} - h - \omega t$*

We are now ready to characterize the equilibrium to the MDG game. Let the equilibrium to the MDG game be denoted $\{(p_C^{**}, h_C^{**}, t_C^{**}); (p^{**}, h^{**}, t^{**})\}$. Recall the equilibrium to the No MDG game is denoted $\{(p_C^*, h_C^*, t_C^*); (p^*, h^*, t^*)\}$.

Proposition 1. Given an exogenous MDG goal of \bar{p} , the equilibrium to the MDG game is:

For C , $(p_C^{**}, h_C^{**}, t_C^{**}) = (p_C^*, h_C^*, t_C^*)$. For L ,

$$(p^{**}, h^{**}, t^{**}) = \begin{cases} (p^*, h^*, t^*) & \text{if } \bar{p} \leq p^* \\ (\bar{p}, \bar{h}, \bar{t}) & \text{if } \bar{p} \in (p^*, \hat{p}) \\ (p^*, h^*, t^*) & \text{if } \bar{p} \geq \hat{p} \end{cases}$$

The promulgation of the MDGs thus can affect primary education provision, but will only do so for certain configurations of parameter values. Straightforwardly, if the government were already meeting the international community's demand that primary education exceed a certain threshold, the MDGs will have no effect on state behavior. Compliance was given *ex ante*. Contrastingly, if international standards are too high, the government will find it impossible to comply while simultaneously meeting her domestic constraints. Since failing to satisfy these domestic considerations will entail a loss of office, the government will disregard the international target.

But, for intermediate values of \bar{p} – those that exceed the prior provision of primary education but are not so onerous that they inhibit the government's ability to satisfy domestic audiences – the MDGs induce a change in behavior. The government will meet the international community's demand and set $p^{**} = \bar{p}$.

Comparison Across the Two Cases

We are now in a position to compare the equilibrium provision of primary and secondary education under the two different equilibria, which we interpret as the effect of the MDGs. Specifically, we will examine how this effect is moderated by the level of domestic accountability – i.e., how this effect varies with ω .

While the MDG level \bar{p} is exogenous with respect to the game form above, we should bear in mind that the level is in fact set by the international community. It would make little sense for the community to set an MDG level that is in fact out of reach of the very countries and leaders that it is designed to incentivize. That is for the low ω countries, it makes little practical sense to consider any $\bar{p} > \hat{p}$. In what follows we make the following assumption :

Assumption 1. $\bar{p} \leq \hat{p} \forall \omega$.

Intuitively, this means that the MDGs are attainable for all countries (given the size of the reward, β) without causing failure in office.⁴⁹ For any country, if β is large enough, Assumption 1 is satisfied.

Let us begin by looking at the direct effect of the MDGs – the effect on primary education provision. Formally, this is defined as the difference in the equilibrium primary education provision across the two models $p^{**} - p^*$.

Proposition 2. *The MDGs weakly increase the provision of primary education $p^{**} - p^* \geq 0$. The size of this effect is (weakly) decreasing in domestic accountability ω .*

The provision of primary education is weakly higher when the MDGs are present relative to when they are absent. Some set of polities increase their provision up to the standard set by the international community (\bar{p}). Others leave their level of primary education unchanged.

Systematically, the effect of the introduction of the MDGs is smaller in more accountable (higher ω) states. Primary education provision is higher in states with greater domestic accountability *ex ante*. Some such states will meet international standards with or without the MDGs, and so the introduction of global performance indicators will have no effect. Other accountable governments may fall a little short of international standards, but they will do so by less than their less accountable contemporaries. Meeting the goals set by the international community requires less of such states.

We can now turn our attention to the substitution effect, discussed in Section 3. We begin by documenting that, whenever the effect of the MDGs on primary education is strictly positive (i.e., where the effect is non-zero), their effect on the provision of secondary education is negative. When governments respond to the MDGs they do so by increasing primary, and reducing secondary, education provision. Everywhere else, the MDGs have no effect on public goods provision.

⁴⁹Substantively, we believe this restriction on the parameter space to be reasonable. While the goals (\bar{p}) specified by the MDGs (universal primary education) applied to all states, the material benefits β used to achieve these goals vary across countries. Given the backing of major multilateral and bilateral development agencies, resources could be expected to be allocated such that the MDGs were achievable for all states. Theoretically, we put this restriction in place because the sign of $\frac{\partial \bar{p}}{\partial \omega}$ is ambiguous, limiting our ability to make predictions outside the portion of the parameter space defined by Assumption 1. More definitively pinning down predictions for this term would require stricter functional form restrictions on $U_k(\cdot)$, $k \in \{p, h, t\}$.

Proposition 3. *In all instances where the MDGs increase primary education ($p^{**} > p^*$), equilibrium levels of secondary education provision fall ($h^{**} < h^*$). We term this the **substitution effect**.*

We can go further, and characterize the circumstances under which the substitution effect is likely to emerge. Systematically, less accountable states are more likely to experience substitution than more accountable states.⁵⁰ Recall from Proposition 2 that polities with higher levels of domestic accountability are less responsive to the MDGs with regard to primary education provision. When there is no direct effect of the MDGs on primary education, there can be no substitution effect on secondary education. By contrast, less accountable states have greater leeway to respond to international incentives. Because their provision of primary education is more responsive to the MDGs, they are more inclined to engage in substitution.

Lemma 4. *For any value of \bar{p} that satisfies Assumption 1, there exists a corresponding threshold $\hat{\omega}$ such that the substitution effect is present for $\omega < \hat{\omega}$ and absent for values of $\omega \geq \hat{\omega}$.*

In what follows, we empirically test Propositions 2 and 3 and Lemma 4. We anticipate that MDG adoption increased the provision of primary education, and this effect was most evident in the least domestically accountable states (autocracies with low levels of transparency). This effect should be smallest in more accountable polities (democracies with high government transparency). We further test the existence of a substitution effect – a decline in the relative provision of secondary education following the promulgation of the MDGs. This substitution effect should likewise be most evident in the least accountable states.

⁵⁰This is not equivalent to stating that everywhere the magnitude of the substitution effect $h^* - h^{**}$ is falling in ω . There are two competing effects here: First, less accountable states must boost primary education provision by more to meet international standards. This would tend to increase the tendency toward substitution. Second, and contrastingly, secondary education provision is lower *ex ante* in less accountable states than in more. The concavity of $U_h(\cdot)$ then implies that cutting secondary education provision reduces the utility of members of the winning coalition by more as ω falls, making substitution more costly. We loosely say that an increase in ω diminishes the size of the substitution effect so long as $U_h(\cdot)$ is not ‘too concave.’ More formally, if we let $U_h(h) = h^\alpha$, $\alpha \in (0, 1)$, then in the limit as $\alpha \rightarrow 1$ the substitution effect is falling in ω for all parameter values.

6 Empirics

We test our formal intuition on a cross-national panel of country-level primary and secondary enrollment rates measured between 1980 and 2010. Our empirical tests of the relationship between MDG adoption and enrollment use several methods to reduce bias and spurious associations, including country and year random effects, county-specific time trends, and first-differenced and lagged measures of our dependent variables. Nevertheless, our empirical approach relies on documenting evidence consistent with our theoretical predictions, and not making causal claims about MDG adoption.

Data

We draw our definitions of primary and secondary enrollment rates from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics.⁵¹ Primary enrollment rates are defined as the total number of children of official primary school age who are enrolled in primary education divided by the total population of official primary school age. Secondary and tertiary enrollment rates are defined as analogously and are combined in our data (and our analysis). The UNESCO data contain a non-trivial number of missing observations. We drop country panels with fewer than 10 years of data and impute missing values for the remaining country panels using the *Amelia II* package for R. We implement multiple imputation techniques to account for uncertainty across imputed datasets.⁵²

After dropping countries with fewer than 10 years of data, we are left with 114 countries with data from 1980 to 2010. We merge this dataset with the HRV index of transparency from Hollyer, Rosendorff and Vreeland⁵³ which includes additional information – importantly the annual change in real GDP – drawn originally from the Penn World Table version 6.3⁵⁴ – and a measure of democracy – drawn originally from Cheibub, Gandhi and Vreeland.⁵⁵ The latter measure extends only through 2008 so we impute the values for 2009 and 2010 from this value for each country. We also include a measure of per capita GDP

⁵¹ See <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Pages/default.aspx>. Last accessed on 1 March 2016.

⁵² Honaker, King, Blackwell et al. 2011

⁵³ Hollyer, Rosendorff, and Vreeland 2014

⁵⁴ Heston, Summers, and Aten 2009

⁵⁵ Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland 2010

(current USD) from the World Bank⁵⁶ as well as three different measures of aid: total aid, aid targeting primary education, and aid targeting secondary education. All measures of aid are transformed to reflect logged *per capita* estimates. Table 2 presents summary statistics of our key variables, separated by the full sample, countries with GDP per capita in 2000 under \$1,000, and those with GDP per capita in 2000 under \$13,000.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

One issue with both the primary and secondary enrollment rate data is that they are subject to ceiling effects. While neither enrollment figure is strictly bounded above by 100% – if, for instance, children enroll in primary education at ages below 6 years, the primary enrollment figure may exceed 100% – in practice, neither figure can substantially exceed 100%. To diminish the risk that ceiling effects may produce nonlinearities in our relationships of interest, we first scale all enrollment figures relative to their maximum values (such that all fall on the $[0, 1]$ interval) and then apply a logistic transformation to these data.⁵⁷ We apply this transformation to all enrollment figures in our dataset.

To measure government accountability, we rely on two measures. The first of these captures political institutions, namely democracy. We draw our measure of democracy from the *Democracy and Development Revisited* dataset,⁵⁸ which codes a binary indicator $democracy \in \{0, 1\}$ equal to one if both legislative and executive posts are filled by meaningful elections.

Our second measure of accountability measures the informational environment of a given country-year. Our measure of this concept is the HRV index of government transparency.⁵⁹ The HRV index is a continuous measure, derived from an item-response model of data missingness. It captures the tendency of the government to disclose credible information, pertinent to economics and citizen welfare, to the public.⁶⁰

⁵⁶<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>. Last accessed on 14 April 2016.

⁵⁷Denote $p \in [0, 1]$ as the rescaled enrollment figure. We transform this measure by $\ln(\frac{p}{1-p})$.

⁵⁸Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland 2010

⁵⁹Hollyer, Rosendorff, and Vreeland 2014

⁶⁰Note that we use a narrow measure of a specific facet of transparency: the dissemination of data. We view this measure as most appropriate for this study, given that MDGs are measured by some of the very same variables used to construct the HRV index. That said, we acknowledge that in other theoretical settings, measures that capture alternative facets of transparency may

Estimating the Direct Effect of the MDGs

We begin by estimating the direct effect of the MDGs on primary enrollment rates. That is, we start by parsing the evidence that the MDGs increased the growth rate of primary enrollment, across countries. Proposition 2 contends that the effect of the MDGs should be positive, and should be larger in unaccountable states. To conduct this estimation, we estimate a varying intercepts multi-level model of the following form:

$$\begin{aligned} \Delta P_{i,t} = & \alpha_i + \beta_1 Transparency_{i,t} + \beta_2 Democracy_{i,t} \\ & + I(t \geq 2000)[\gamma_1 + \gamma_2 Transparency_{i,t} + \gamma_3 Democracy_{i,t}] \\ & + \beta_3 \Delta rGDP_{i,t} + \beta_4 Aid_{i,t-1} + \tau_t + \epsilon_{i,t} \end{aligned} \quad (1)$$

where

$$\alpha_i \sim \mathcal{N}(\mu_a, \sigma_a)$$

$$\tau_t \sim \mathcal{N}(\mu_\tau, \sigma_\tau)$$

where Δ denotes the difference operator, i indexes country, and t indexes year. By first differencing the outcome term, we eliminate country specific factors that drive the level of primary education as potential confounds from the specification. In controlling for country (α_i) and year (τ_t) random effects, we help to adjust for random variations in the growth rate in enrollment figures across countries and time. Our results are robust to the inclusion of linear and quadratic time trends.

Our hypotheses are reflected in the γ_j coefficients. Proposition 2 holds that $\gamma_1 > 0$. Our moderating hypotheses, also stated in Proposition 2 – that any such effect of the MDGs should diminish in transparent and democratic polities – imply that $\gamma_2, \gamma_3 < 0$. Results from the model specified in equation 1 are presented in Table 3.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Table 3 reveals that coefficients on the MDG indicator is consistently positive and statistically signif-

be more appropriate (see e.g., Adserà, Boix, and Payne 2003, Berliner and Erlich 2015, Berliner 2014, Besley and Burgess 2002, Bremmer 2006, Broz 2002, Brunetti and Weder 2003, Copelovitch, Gandrud, and Hallerberg 2015, Djankov, McLiesh, Nenova et al. 2003, Grief 2006, Habyarimana, Humphreys, Posner et al. 2009, Islam 2006, Kosack and Fung 2014).

icant at conventional levels. Descriptively, these results indicate that the change in primary enrollment rates was, year-on-year, consistently more positive following the Millennium Declaration, conditioning on countries, years, and country-specific cubic trends. However, our motivating theory would posit that, failing to control for the confounding effects of transparency and electoral accountability, our estimating equation is inaccurate.

Column 2 updates the specification with these controls. Specifically, we control for transparency and accountability linearly, along with the change in real GDP per capita (not shown) as well as measures of aid, including total aid received, and aid targeting primary and secondary education. The resulting estimate on the MDG indicator maintains its significance and magnitude. However, we still are not properly specifying a linear model in line with our theoretical motivation. To accurately reflect our intuition, we turn to interaction effects, as displayed in columns 3 through 5.

Here we see suggestive evidence supporting our theoretical framework. Namely, across specifications the MDG indicator is significant and positive. We further note that the conditional effect of MDGs declines with both accountability and transparency. Figure 2 displays the marginal effects associated with the relationship between the Millennium Declaration and primary enrollment rates over different values of transparency and among democracies and non-democracies. Column (5) combines the specifications and finds statistically significant relationships only for transparency.

[FIGURE ?? ABOUT HERE]

Results from equation 1 are thus consistent with our Proposition 2: (1) The MDGs are associated with an increase in primary enrollment rates, (2) this effect is diminished in accountable (and particularly in transparent) states.

As an additional test, we replicate the model specified in equation 1, substituting secondary and tertiary enrollment rates for primary. These results offer some preliminary evidence as to Proposition 3 and Lemma 4. Table 4 presents the results, with no evidence of a relationship between enrollment rates at higher levels of education and MDG adoption after controlling for aid flows.

[TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

The coefficient on MDGs is noisily estimated but commensurate in magnitude to the coefficient from the primary enrollment rate regression. Interestingly, we still see negative coefficients on the interaction

terms with transparency although these are marginally significant and only half the size of the primary enrollment results.

Although these results are consistent with our theoretical expectations, they do not demonstrate that the *same* countries that increase their primary enrollment rates post-2000 also increase their secondary enrollment rates. To test this relationship, we turn to characterizing the country-level substitution from secondary enrollment to primary in our data.

Estimating the Substitution Effect of the MDGs

Method 1: Estimating the Difference between Primary and Secondary Enrollment Rates

We begin our analysis of substitution by employing a parsimonious measure of the relationship between primary and secondary education within a given country-year: the difference between secondary and primary enrollment rates ($P_{i,t} - S_{i,t}$). If our substitution claim is correct, this measure should increase following the promulgation of the MDGs – i.e., the primary enrollment rate should increase relative to the secondary enrollment rate.

We thus estimate a model of the form:

$$(P_{i,t} - S_{i,t}) = \alpha_i + I(\text{year} \geq 2000)[\gamma_1 + \gamma_2 \text{Transparency}_{i,t} + \gamma_3 \text{Democracy}_{i,t}] + \mathbf{X}_{i,t}\beta + \epsilon_{i,t} \quad (2)$$

where i denotes country, t year, α_i is a country random effect, and $\mathbf{X}_{i,t}\beta$ is a data vector and associated coefficients. Included as controls are the transparency and democracy measures, GDP *per capita*, and the aforementioned measures of aid.

Our hypotheses hold that $\gamma_1 > 0$, and $\gamma_2, \gamma_3 < 0$.

We present results from the model specified in equation 2 in Table 5.

[TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE]

Consistent with our theoretical expectations, γ_1 is positive across all specifications and significant at conventional thresholds, indicating that MDG adoption is associated with an increase in the enrollment rates separating primary and secondary students.

Unlike the results presented for primary enrollment in isolation, we note that the transparency index interaction is no longer significant while democracy appears as a highly significant moderator when estimated in the fully-interacted specification (column 6). In addition, aid for primary education is also significant and positive while the estimate for secondary education aid is a precisely estimated zero.

However, the use of the difference between primary and secondary enrollment as an outcome measure induces considerable loss of information. We are unable to tell, for instance, whether the changes in the measure are driven by an absolute decline in secondary rates, by a surge in primary enrollment rates, or some combination of the two factors.

Given these concerns, we turn to two alternative specifications: the first is an error correction model presented below and the second is a vector autoregression discussed in our appendix.

Method 2: Error Correction Specification

First, we turn to an error correction model (ECM). Developed to deal with cointegrated time-series, ECMs postulate a long-term equilibrium relationship between covariates – here primary and secondary education.⁶¹ We are interested in changes in this long-term equilibrium. Specifically, we estimate a model of the form:

$$\Delta P_{i,M,t} = \gamma[P_{i,M,t-1} - \beta_{i,M}S_{i,M,t-1}] + \delta_{i,M}\Delta S_{i,M,t-1} + \epsilon_{i,M,t} \quad (3)$$

where, as in equation 1, Δ is the difference operator, i denotes country, t denotes year, P is the primary enrollment rate, and S the secondary. $M \in \{0, 1\}$ is an indicator taking the value 1 after the year 2000.

The expression $P_{i,M,t-1} - \beta_{i,M}S_{i,M,t-1}$ denotes the equilibrium relationship between primary and secondary education. When $P_{i,M,t-1} = \beta_{i,M}S_{i,M,t-1}$, the system is in equilibrium, and primary enrollment rates will not tend to adjust. Given $\gamma < 0$ (which is the case in all estimates), when primary education exceeds its equilibrium target ($P_{i,M,t-1} > \beta_{i,M}S_{i,M,t-1}$) it will tend to decline. By contrast, when primary education falls below its equilibrium level ($P_{i,M,t-1} < \beta_{i,M}S_{i,M,t-1}$), primary enrollment rates will tend to rise.

⁶¹Beck and Katz 2011

Since we are interested in changes in the equilibrium relationship between primary and secondary education, we examine changes in the $\beta_{i,M}$ parameter before and after the introduction of the MDGs, and variation in this term across countries, as given by:⁶²

$$\begin{aligned}\beta_{i,M} = & \alpha + \pi_1 Trans_i + \pi_2 Dem_i + \pi_3 Trans_i \times Dem_i \\ & + I(year \geq 2000)[\omega_1 + \omega_2 Trans_i + \omega_3 Dem_i] \\ & + \ln(GDPpc_{2000})_i + \eta_{i,M}\end{aligned}\tag{5}$$

Proposition 3 holds that $\omega_1 > 0$, implying that the equilibrium level of secondary education, relative to primary, declines once the MDGs go into effect. Lemma 4 holds that $\omega_j, j \in \{2, 3\} < 0$ – the substitution effect is diminished in accountable polities. Estimates from equation 5 are presented in Table 6.

[TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE]

As suggested by Table 6, the Millennium Declaration corresponds to a divergence of primary and secondary enrollment rates, suggesting a substitution effect (as indicated by the statistically significant coefficient in column (1)).

However, this substitution effect is mitigated by democratic accountability, with the interaction term in column (2) entering negative and marginally significant. A similar effect is documented with transparency, where the substitution effect is reduced in countries with higher levels of transparency. Interestingly, the coefficient on the transparency term is positive, indicating that, before the MDGs, transparent governments had a higher equilibrium level of primary relative to secondary education than unaccountable states. This

⁶²We do so via a two-stage process. First, we estimate an untransformed version of equation 3 given by:

$$\begin{aligned}\Delta P_{i,M,t} = & \gamma P_{i,M,t-1} + \zeta_{i,M} S_{i,M,t-1} + \delta_{i,M} \Delta S_{i,M,t-1} + \epsilon_{i,M,t} \\ \zeta_{i,M} = & \omega_{0,i} + \omega_{1,i} M_i + E_i\end{aligned}\tag{4}$$

where,

$$\omega_{0,i} \sim \mathcal{N}(\alpha_{0,i}, U_{0,i})$$

$$\omega_{1,i} \sim \mathcal{N}(\alpha_{1,i}, U_{1,i})$$

which gives us estimated values of $\beta_{i,M}$. We then regress these parameters as described in equation 5.

is consistent with existing claims, notably by David Stasavage.⁶³ Combining these specifications suggests that the moderating effect is driven primarily by transparency, not electoral accountability.

ECM models, however, impose strong parametric assumptions. We merely posit that primary and secondary enrollment rates exhibit a long-term structural relationship of the form documented by equation 3, and rely heavily on this equilibrium in our interpretation. In particular, Grant and Lebo argue that such general error correction models will be biased if the respective time-series – here primary and secondary enrollment rates – are either not co-integrated, or are co-integrated of different orders.⁶⁴ The coefficient γ , in that instance, will be inconsistent – hence so too will our parameters of interest β .

To address this concern, we first examine the co-integration of these two time series. While the series appear co-integrated in global tests, running these tests country-by-country only supports co-integration in roughly half our sample of states. We therefore re-estimate our models, restricting our sample only to those states where the evidence clearly indicates that primary and secondary enrollment are co-integrated. Results are substantively similar to those in the full sample.

6.1 Mechanisms

Thus far we have developed a model which predicts GPIs can lead to unintended substitution behavior and have presented empirical evidence consistent with our predictions. First, we have shown that MDG adoption prompted an increase in primary school enrollment as was its intention but that the magnitude of this relationship is strongest in the least accountable polities in our data. Second, we have shown that this increase in primary enrollment was accompanied by a decline in secondary enrollment, consistent with our theoretical prediction for substitution effects. Again, evidence of this substitution effect is strongest in the least accountable polities.

However, our formal model is agnostic with respect to the specific mechanisms by which GPIs operate (see Figure 1). We are uncertain as to whether these results obtain due to the budgetary impacts of foreign aid and investment which may respond to GPIs (“transnational pressures”), due to the activation of civil society (“domestic politics”), or due to direct effect on policy makers themselves (“elite shaming”). The

⁶³Stasavage 2005

⁶⁴Grant and Lebo 2016

moderating effects of accountability documented above suggest a possible channel via domestic politics. In the following section, we test whether a transnational pressure channel via foreign aid also operates.

To conduct this analysis, we treat foreign aid as a mediating variable and use a two-stage regression framework as in Baron and Kenney.⁶⁵ The first stage predicts changes in foreign aid flows as a function of MDG adoption, given in equation 6. We interact MDG adoption with the primary enrollment rate in the year 2000, reflecting the intuition that performance assessments like the Millennium Development Goals impact aid flows specifically for under-performers.

$$\begin{aligned} \Delta Aid_{i,t} = & \alpha_i + \beta_1 Primary_{i,2000} \\ & + I(t \geq 2000)[\rho_1 + \rho_2 Primary_{i,2000}] \\ & + \beta_1 \Delta rGDP_{i,t} + \beta_2 GDP_{i,2000} + \beta_3 Transparency_{i,t} + \beta_4 Democracy_{i,t} + \tau_t + \epsilon_{i,t} \quad (6) \end{aligned}$$

where

$$\alpha_i \sim \mathcal{N}(\mu_a, \sigma_a)$$

$$\tau_t \sim \mathcal{N}(\mu_\tau, \sigma_\tau)$$

We save the coefficient on MDG adoption (ρ_1) for use in our second stage analysis. We test a number of different measures of foreign aid, plotted in the left panel of Figure 3. As illustrated, aid targeting primary education increases following MDG adoption, particularly toward countries with low initial primary enrollment rates. This first-stage pattern is consistent with the theorized mechanism of “transnational pressures” discussed in the introduction to this symposium and illustrated in Figure 1 – aid flows do respond to the MDGs.

In the second stage, we regress the change in primary enrollment on MDG adoption and the same aid measure, replicating the specification described above in equation 1 and saving the β_4 coefficient. Under restrictive assumptions,⁶⁶ the product of these coefficients captures the average mediation effect between MDG adoption and primary enrollment rates that travels via changes in aid flows. To accommodate the

⁶⁵Baron and Kenny 1986

⁶⁶Our empirical endeavor is purely observational and we make no causal claims that would necessitate more sophisticated causal mediation methods such as those pioneered by Imai, Keele, and Yamamoto 2010.

multiply-imputed data, we bootstrap these estimates and plot the distribution of the results in the right panel of Figure 3. Pseudo p-values are calculated as the share of bootstrapped estimates greater than zero.

[FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE]

As illustrated, mediation analysis offers no robust support for the theorized mechanism of foreign aid, despite the first-stage channel being active. While foreign aid targeting primary enrollment does respond to the assessments provided by the MDGs (left panel of Figure 3), there is no evidence that this is the mechanism by which policy-makers reallocate resources. The magnitude of the average mediation effect (AME) is only a fraction of the overall coefficient and is only marginally significant for the full data. Our null finding is consistent with the results of Kijima and Lipsy who also find that, while assessment participation is associated with higher foreign aid inflows, these sources of aid are not meaningfully associated with higher net secondary enrollment.⁶⁷ As such, we conclude that – in the context of education and the MDGs – transnational pressures are not the primary mechanism by which this particular GPI induces change.

7 Conclusion

To what extent can international initiatives alter country behavior? This special issue adds to the literature by addressing the topic holistically, starting with how GPIs are produced, charting the mechanisms, and assessing their impact. Our contribution expands our understanding of how GPIs influence state behavior by exploring how these initiatives impact not just their specific target but the larger equilibrium levels of public goods provision. We argue that countries with finite resources must trade-off between different public goods and that their ability to do so is constrained by their institutions. We develop a formal model expressing our argument and take the comparative statics it generates to the data.

In our empirical context, we document evidence of a substitution effect between secondary and primary education in response to the Millennium Development Goals targeting universal primary enrollment. We further find that this substitution effect is stronger in less accountable countries. We argue that our findings support the simple premise that resource-constrained governments (1) do respond to international initiatives but (2) may do so by reallocating away from other, potentially desirable, outcomes.

⁶⁷Kijima and Lipsy 2017

Our moderation results highlight an important role played by domestic society. We find that both the direct and substitution effects of MDGs are strongest in less accountable polities. Contrastingly, our mediation analysis suggests a limited role for international actors directly influencing government decision-making through aid allocation. The robustness of our results using the HRV index of transparency, particularly when compared to the weak findings for democracy, suggest that GPIs like the Millennium Development Goals are most effective as information conduits.

Neither of these findings precludes other mechanisms, such as the reputational concerns documented in Zambia by Alice Evans or other types of international actors beyond donors.⁶⁸ Further research is required to identify the mechanisms connecting the MDGs to increasing primary enrollment rates and substitution between secondary and primary outcomes.

Our findings offer a mixed take-away for policy-makers: On the one hand, we find evidence that global assessment can alter government behavior, and particularly increase the provision of public goods (i.e., primary education). Moreover, these effects are likely to be strongest in the countries that need it most – opaque autocracies which under-provide public goods absent international pressure. However, we also find that global accountability can have unintended second-order effects: Resource constrained leaders, intent on their own political survival, will diminish the provision of goods and services for which the international community does not hold them accountable, even as they increase those emphasized through global assessment programs.

We are careful, however, not to draw broader normative conclusions from our analysis. Although the counter-factual conclusion is that secondary enrollment would have been even higher in the absence of the MDGs, this ignores the positive spill-overs between primary and secondary enrollment.

Our findings connect with the special issue by expanding the range of outcome behavior to include non-targeted public goods. By accounting for strategic trade-offs and equilibrium behavior, we present a more rounded view of the effects of GPIs, both intended and not. Our findings echo educational program evaluation elsewhere, in which targeted schools make trade-offs in order to attain desired metrics.⁶⁹ While our results do not identify the specific mechanisms by which these trade-offs occur, they highlight a fruitful

⁶⁸Evans 2017

⁶⁹See Macartney 2016 and Fuller and Ladd 2013.

area for research on GPIs writ large and MDGs specifically.

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Table 1: Millennium Development Goals

(1)	eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
(2)	achieve universal primary education
(3)	promote gender equality and empower women
(4)	reduce child mortality
(5)	improve maternal health
(6)	combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
(7)	ensure environmental sustainability
(8)	develop a global partnership for development

Table 2: Summary Statistics for pre- and post-Millennium Declaration by Sample

	Full Sample		GDP ₂₀₀₀ ≤ \$1,000		GDP ₂₀₀₀ ≤ \$13,000	
	Pre-MDG	Post-MDG	Pre-MDG	Post-MDG	Pre-MDG	Post-MDG
Primary Enrollment	96.09	102.64	80.66	95.54	94.95	102.35
(% of Eligible)	(22.80)	(15.48)	(29.40)	(21.71)	(24.88)	(16.93)
Sec. / Ter. Enrollment	58.74	72.24	31.70	43.43	50.55	64.72
(% of Eligible)	(33.01)	(31.14)	(27.67)	(26.74)	(30.17)	(28.95)
GDP	4,789	9,853	1,233	2,701	2,411	5,199
(2000 USD pc)	(7,278)	(13,029)	(2,963)	(4,471)	(3,525)	(5,400)
Transparency Index	0.86	2.01	-0.04	0.55	0.54	1.61
	(1.73)	(2.20)	(1.22)	(1.40)	(1.53)	(1.99)
Democracy	0.46	0.58	0.24	0.42	0.38	0.52
	(0.44)	(0.43)	(0.37)	(0.45)	(0.42)	(0.44)
Total Aid	48.91	53.18	51.74	53.39	53.74	62.11
(2011 USD pc)	(109.03)	(131.93)	(70.25)	(63.03)	(81.95)	(121.33)
Primary Educ. Aid	0.48	0.79	0.66	1.27	0.59	0.97
(2011 USD pc)	(3.40)	(2.80)	(4.04)	(3.41)	(3.76)	(3.08)
Secondary Educ. Aid	0.24	0.20	0.28	0.19	0.26	0.25
(2011 USD pc)	(1.91)	(1.46)	(1.92)	(0.63)	(1.99)	(1.62)
N	3,300	1,815	1,120	616	2,680	1,474

Table 3: The relationship between the Millennium Declaration to the primary school enrollment rate.

		<i>Dependent Variable:</i>				
		Δ Primary Enrollment				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
MDG	0.069*** (0.013)	0.073*** (0.014)	0.094*** (0.017)	0.067*** (0.011)	0.084*** (0.016)	
Trans		-0.025*** (0.007)	-0.024*** (0.007)	-0.014* (0.008)	-0.018** (0.009)	
Dem		0.055*** (0.015)	0.077*** (0.019)	0.071*** (0.017)	0.083*** (0.019)	
Total Aid		-0.003 (0.009)	-0.003 (0.009)	-0.017* (0.009)	-0.017* (0.009)	
Aid Primary		0.008* (0.005)	0.008* (0.005)	0.009* (0.005)	0.009* (0.005)	
Aid Secondary		0.001 (0.004)	0.001 (0.004)	0.0003 (0.004)	0.0003 (0.004)	
MDG*Trans				-0.030*** (0.009)	-0.023** (0.010)	
MDG*Dem			-0.045** (0.021)		-0.034 (0.023)	
Constant	-0.074*** (0.018)	-0.111*** (0.020)	-0.124*** (0.021)	-0.111*** (0.018)	-0.118*** (0.019)	
Observations	4,950	4,950	4,950	4,950	4,950	

Notes: Multi-level model analysis allowing for random effects by country and year. Lagged primary enrollment rate and country-specific time trends not shown. Standard errors presented in parentheses.
* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.

Table 4: The relationship between the Millennium Declaration to the secondary school enrollment rate.

		<i>Dependent Variable:</i>				
		Δ Secondary Enrollment				
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
MDG		0.005** (0.002)	0.007 (0.010)	0.010 (0.010)	0.011 (0.010)	0.011 (0.010)
Trans			0.002 (0.002)	0.003 (0.002)	0.005** (0.002)	0.005** (0.002)
Dem			0.006** (0.003)	0.008*** (0.003)	0.006** (0.003)	0.007* (0.003)
Total Aid			-0.003 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.004 (0.004)	-0.004 (0.004)
Aid Primary			0.00003 (0.001)	-0.00001 (0.001)	-0.00003 (0.001)	-0.00003 (0.001)
Aid Secondary			0.0003 (0.001)	0.0003 (0.001)	0.0003 (0.001)	0.0003 (0.001)
MDG*Trans					-0.005** (0.002)	-0.005* (0.003)
MDG*Dem				-0.006 (0.004)		-0.0004 (0.005)
Constant		0.020*** (0.003)	0.039 (0.043)	0.038 (0.042)	0.054 (0.048)	0.054 (0.048)
Observations		4,950	4,950	4,950	4,950	4,950

Notes: Multi-level model analysis allowing for random effects by country and year. Lagged secondary enrollment rate and country-specific time trends not shown. Standard errors presented in parentheses.

* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.

Table 5: Coefficients relating the Millennium Declaration to the difference between primary and secondary enrollment rates across countries.

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>					
	Primary - Secondary					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
MDG	1.882** (0.743)	2.517*** (0.700)	2.120*** (0.710)	2.512*** (0.720)	4.433*** (0.951)	4.785*** (0.871)
Trans		-2.995*** (0.613)	-3.092*** (0.624)	-2.273*** (0.747)	-2.993*** (0.622)	-3.109*** (0.406)
Dem		4.224*** (0.951)	3.700*** (1.001)	3.712*** (0.992)	5.144*** (1.044)	5.312*** (0.816)
Total Aid			2.647*** (0.554)	2.543*** (0.552)	2.519*** (0.551)	2.623*** (0.535)
Aid Primary			1.154*** (0.231)	1.087*** (0.231)	1.138*** (0.230)	1.124*** (0.218)
Aid Secondary			0.123 (0.208)	0.117 (0.208)	0.123 (0.208)	0.153 (0.193)
MDG*Trans				-1.536*** (0.557)		-0.723 (0.465)
MDG*Dem					-4.161*** (1.035)	-4.046*** (1.042)
Constant	49.995*** (1.911)	46.114*** (2.000)	45.823*** (1.972)	45.687*** (1.987)	44.808*** (2.023)	44.127*** (1.947)
Observations	4,950	4,950	4,950	4,950	4,950	4,950

Notes: Multi-level model analysis allowing for random effects by country and year. Change in real GDP per capita and country-specific time trends not shown. Standard errors presented in parentheses.
* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.

Table 6: β substitution tests for equilibrium levels of secondary and primary education.

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>			
	$\beta_{i,M}$			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
MDG	0.080*** (0.026)	0.130*** (0.030)	0.136*** (0.037)	0.145*** (0.033)
Trans			0.013* (0.007)	0.011 (0.008)
Dem		0.043** (0.021)		0.014 (0.025)
Total Aid	0.016 (0.016)	0.014 (0.016)	0.009 (0.016)	0.009 (0.016)
Aid Primary	-0.014 (0.016)	-0.015 (0.016)	-0.009 (0.015)	-0.010 (0.016)
Aid Secondary	-0.004 (0.020)	-0.002 (0.020)	-0.002 (0.019)	-0.002 (0.018)
MDG*Trans			-0.028*** (0.007)	-0.026*** (0.009)
MDG*Dem		-0.087*** (0.029)		-0.023 (0.037)
Constant	0.066 (0.216)	0.040 (0.214)	0.021 (0.208)	0.017 (0.204)
Observations	228	228	228	228

Notes: Multi-level model analysis allowing for random effects by country and year. Change in real GDP per capita and country-specific time trends not shown. Standard errors presented in parentheses.

* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.

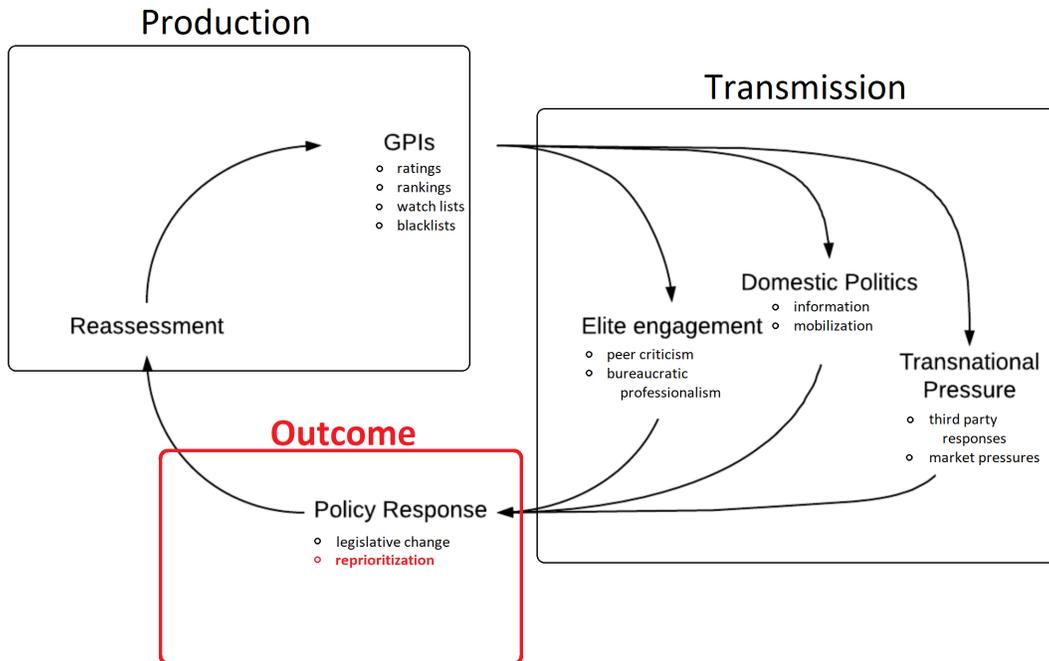


Figure 1: The pathways of GPIs to policy change. Our paper focuses on the unintended consequences of reprioritization can have on state behavior (highlighted in red).

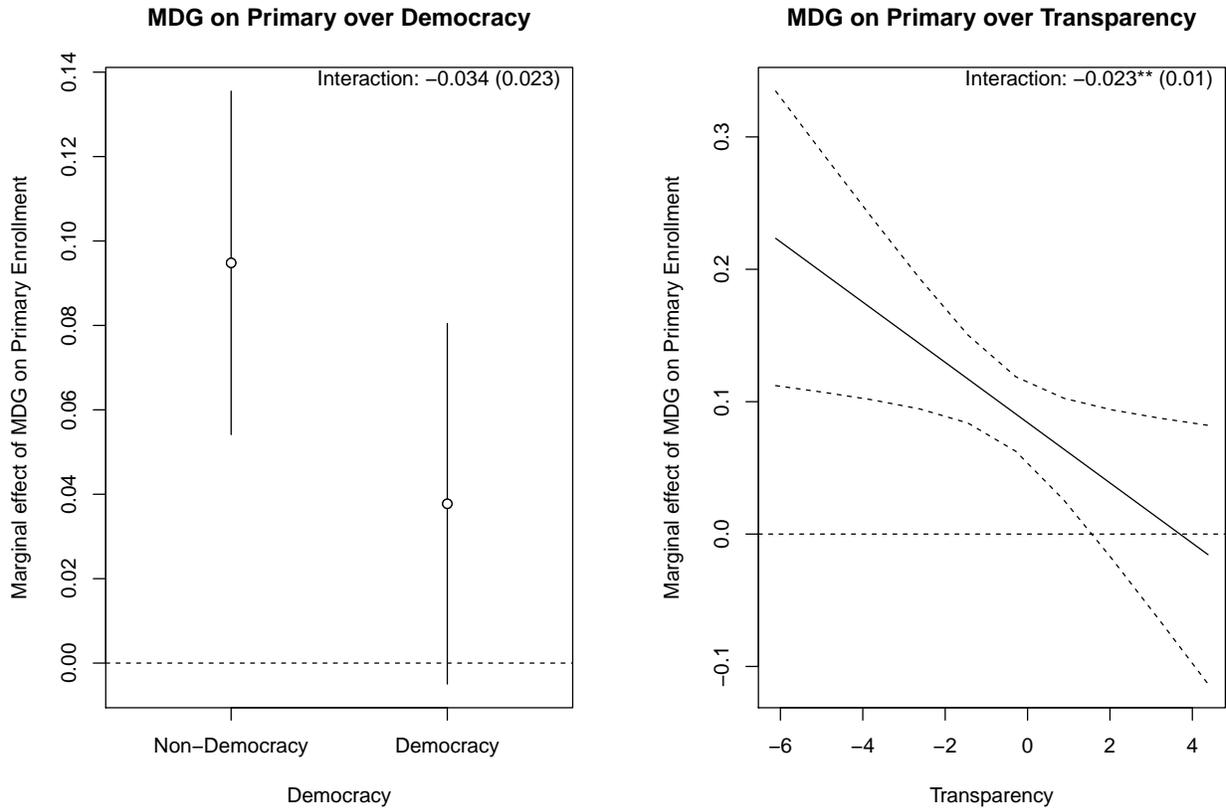


Figure 2: Linear marginal effects plots characterizing heterogeneity in effect of MDG on primary enrollment rates over values of democracy (left) and transparency index (right).

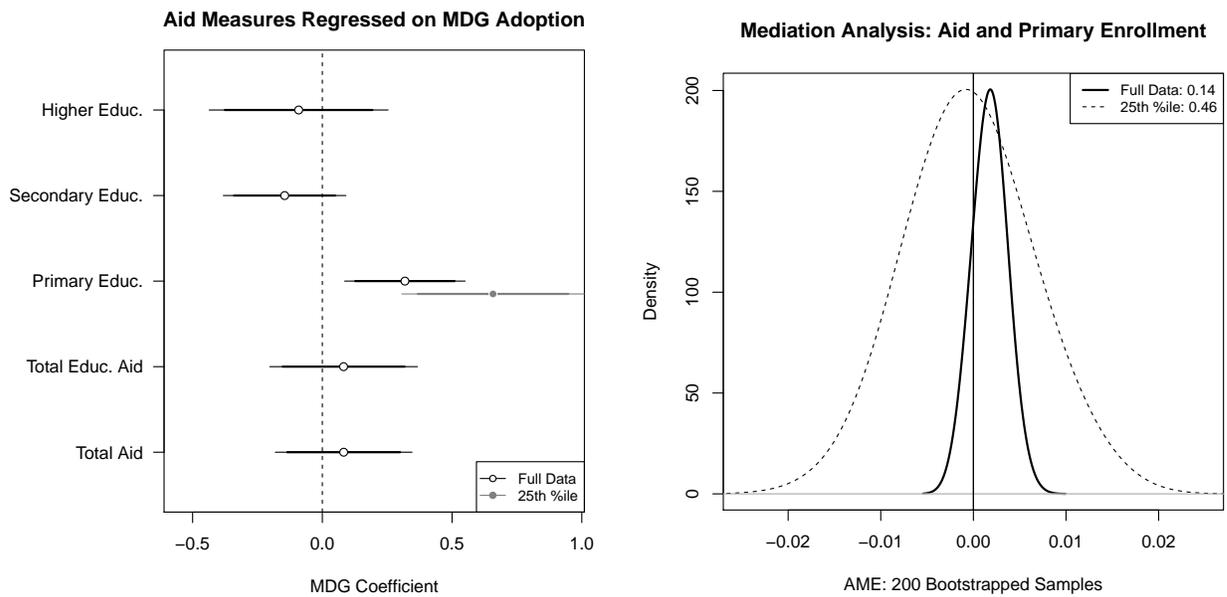


Figure 3: First stage (left panel) and overall (right panel) results from mediation analysis on the mechanism of foreign aid. The first stage results show that foreign aid for primary education increases following MDG adoption, particularly for countries with low initial enrollment rates. However, the overall results are only marginally significant (pseudo p-values presented in the legend) and represent a small fraction of the overall relationship, suggesting that this mechanism is inactive.