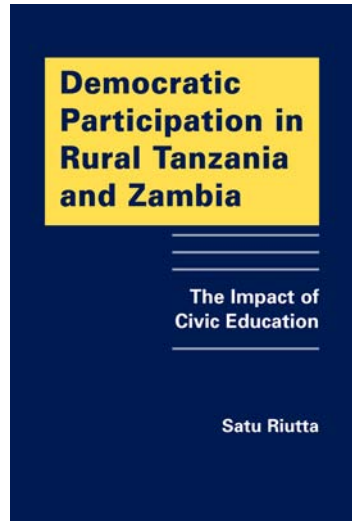


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Democratic Participation
in Rural Tanzania and Zambia:
The Impact of Civic Education

Satu Riutta

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1

Why Civic Education Matters

Many transitional countries today are in need of a “jump start”¹ to restore stalled democratization processes—similar to the shock therapy that is sometimes prescribed for struggling economies. Although the “third wave” was heralded by its inventor² as the most important political phenomenon of the late twentieth century, welcomed (understandably) by many people, and deciphered with enthusiasm in scholarly circles, the political development that took place during that era has not continued in much of the developing world. In February 2007 Freedom House reported that although “freedom was on the march” for much of the past thirty years, democracy’s expansion has come to a standstill, with the share of countries identified as free remaining stagnant for the past nine years.³ In fact already by 2002 most of the “transitional countries’ . . . ha[d] entered a political gray zone,” in which one characteristic is “low levels of political participation beyond voting” (Carothers 2002, 9). For example, Thomas Carothers, an analyst of democratization and democracy aid, has spoken of the former Soviet Union as a “democratic wasteland,” concluded that South America was experiencing a “crisis of democracy”; and observed that “[d]ozens of African countries have seen once-promising democratic openings deliver only weak pluralism at best” (2004, 412).

Why didn’t the third wave last? Though reasons are many, clearly one of the missing components in many transitional countries’ attempts at democratic consolidation is the existence of an active citizenry participating in the conduct of public affairs. Except for brief interludes of popular uprising and the “people power” associated with transitions, in few places have people really gained the power and position to be regularly—that is, not only at election time—included as meaningful participants in their societies with a real say in public affairs. So a crucial question for the prospect of consolidation seems, How could the masses—the poor—be better included and empowered?

Many past studies of democratization have focused on macro-level processes including international influences, domino effects, and transitions in general; on the other hand their focus has largely been on the elites. But these approaches alone do not promote a wholesome

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understanding of consolidation or well-rounded scholarship, as can be concluded from Geddes' persuasive remarks:

Among the methodological practices that most impede the development of a body of theoretical knowledge in comparative politics, I argue, is our standard approach to explaining these big, complicated outcomes [such as democratization, economic development, ethnic conflict]. I suggest an alternative approach. When trying to get some theoretical leverage on compound outcomes (otherwise known as big questions), it is often more useful to divide the big question into the multiple processes that contribute to it and propose explanations for the separate processes rather than the compound outcome as a whole. [In other words:] Outcomes such as democratization, the collapse of empires, and revolution result from the convergence of a number of different processes, some of which may occur independently of others (2003, 23, 37).

One implication of this is that the compound outcomes such as democratization and democratic consolidation should be examined on the micro level. Geddes continues:

In order to unpack these mechanisms [in processes contributing to the big phenomena], we need to focus on the fundamental unit of politics, in most cases individuals. We need to break up the traditional big questions into more precisely defined questions about what individuals do in specific situations that recur often enough to support generalizations about them A carefully constructed explanatory argument built up from fundamentals usually has multiple implications, at least some of which are testable (2003, 38).

In the research on democratic consolidation, this question of “what individuals do” is most neglected when it comes to the role of the poor. What do individuals on the grassroots level do—or what could they do—to contribute to democracy? This study tackles the question of how to enhance rural citizens' democratic participation, especially with regard to the role that civic education (CE) might play in it. How, if in any way, does this little-researched tool of democracy promotion boost citizen participation in new democracies? To what extent does educating citizens of their democratic rights and obligations actually empower them as participants in democracy? Does civic education increase civic awareness and/or elicit a change in democratic attitudes and patterns of behavior?

These questions are asked and answered at the local, community, level—the only arena in which, it is probably safe to say, the majority of

the rural poor will ever really be involved. It is on this level that a foundation for a civic culture is built. By examining the effects of rights education on local level participation in five villages in Tanzania and Zambia, this study contributes to the “emerging literature on the effects of civic education in new democracies” (Bratton et al. 2005, 40). The two countries are prototypes of the “hybrid”⁴ regimes that occupy the gray area between authoritarianism and democracy. But in a major difference to previous studies, this study examines civic education’s effects among the rural poor, a population which most extant studies have neglected, even as a great majority of people in many developing countries still lives in rural areas.⁵ The democratic orientations (or disorientations) of the (rural) poor really do matter for lasting democracy and stability. Also, in contrast to most other studies, the present one considers what *kind* of knowledge civic education promotes—and who specifically among the rural poor benefit the most from civic education. It is important to know how civic education, as any act of democracy promotion, affects different groups of people so as to know whether the consequences are likely to equalize or reinforce existing inequalities among them.

In dissecting these questions the study thus represents a contribution to our understanding about the level of awareness among the poor, and the cognitive and attitudinal changes that are necessary for democratic consolidation. Democracy requires a critical mass of cognitively aware citizens capable of critically evaluating policies and political representatives and holding the government to account. But we can expect such awareness to be limited among unschooled populations in rural areas. Ignorance and the exclusion of certain groups are often perpetuated by strong cultural norms and traditions, affecting women in particular. This is demonstrated by the following account of an NGO employee in southeastern Tanzania of the kinds of problems that women face in participating in public:

The village chairman arranged the meeting to be held at the market. . . . Everyone sitting in the chairs were men so we asked, “Where are the women?” Then we saw women coming to listen, but they went to hide... I went around, and found some of them, and when I went back to the meeting...

[Interviewer:] *You brought the women with you?*

I didn’t bring them, because . . . first time, you must not bring them. You have to talk to the men. So I went to the men; I said: “You know, my husband, he loves me very much. But he [lets] me come here, to

talk with you, work with you. Why don't you let your women sit with you here? Or at least sit somewhere else...[e.g., under] a tree nearby, so that the women can sit there".... [Then] they [the women] came.

So in the end the women did come?

There were not very many, like men, but those who were eager to come, they came. And I had to apologize, "Please – for these women who have come here, Mr. Chairman, please protect them, so that they are not beaten [by] their husbands because they came." . . . So you have to joke and say [something like] this...⁶

A Question for Democracy

To the extent that civic education helps change these kinds of mindsets and broaden participation, it is relevant to democracy. Broadening participation beyond elites is a prerequisite for democracy's survival. As Bratton et al. stress, "[a]bsent mass participation, the door is open for autocrats or embezzlers to seize power or, at best, for nonelected technocrats to assume responsibility for governance and economic management" (2005, 130). And in the words of Chaligha et al., "Democracy can only survive and mature where citizens take an active role in the governance of their country, for example by voting, contacting representatives, and taking part in community affairs" (2002, 29).

The inclusion of the poor is especially challenging in Africa, due to a combination of widespread corruption and poverty. Though the wave of democratization swept over several countries on the continent in the early 1990s—beginning in Zambia—by the mid-1990s the wave had come to a standstill, including in Zambia. Since then, many African countries have experienced retrenchment.⁷ Yet lack of inclusion, or "departicipation," has been a problem in African countries ever since independence (Hyden 1983; Weiner 1987), with some countries suffering from it more than others. In a recent Afrobarometer report the authors note, "half of the Africans . . . interviewed were psychologically disengaged from politics" (Mattes and Bratton 2003, 25), and in Mali, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and Zambia "the electorate is seriously disengaged from politics" (Bratton et al. 2005, 144). This does not apply only to participation between elections; even "voter turnout has declined across sub-Saharan Africa between founding and subsequent elections" (ibid, 144). Thus, while participation has understandably been less meaningful in single-party regimes, its absence continues to plague the continent's electoral democracies today. There is thus considerable ground for

democracy promoters, whether indigenous or foreign, to strive to deepen democracy in Africa. Solidifying citizen participation would be vital for the future of democracy, so as to ensure democracy's survival in economic conditions even as dismal as those of Zambia, one of the very few countries whose Human Development Index (HDI) today is lower than it was in the 1970s.⁸

To be sure, there are no easy or quick solutions to empower the poor so as to increase their participation in the democratic process, especially in the absence of economic prerequisites for democracy's survival. But certainly, any attempts at consolidation need to be accompanied by efforts to ensure the basic level of understanding among the population about citizens' rights and responsibilities—or else other attempts will likely not bear much fruit. Without such basic awareness, individuals cannot express their preferences, and thus participate meaningfully.

The CE scholarship is still too young to have created the kind of understanding about effects that is needed for effective utilization of civic education by practitioners. Indeed, the empirical evidence accumulated through research on the consequences of civic education on participation and other democratic attributes in emerging democracies, particularly in Africa, is very limited. In particular, while school-based civic education has been researched more, the effects of adult education are vastly under-researched—not to mention those on the rural poor. And even the processes involved in civics taught at school are not understood: “while there is abundant evidence for the existence of a strong positive relationship between educational attainment and a variety of civic orientations and behaviors . . . how schooling does it remains an enigma” (Ichilov 2002, 82). Therefore, “while we can point to a number of excellent studies on civic education and civic engagement over the past 4 decades,” note Dudley and Gitelson, “we still know relatively little about what knowledge, both qualitatively and quantitatively, is necessary and desirable for an informed and active citizenry” (2002, 180). Thus, there is an overall lack of comparative, international data on how CE is connected to democratic participation and the related cognitive abilities.

A Question for Donors

This lack of understanding also affects the prospects of international development aid, of which civic education is often a part. In fact most funds for the activity come from donors, who, especially since the early 1990s, have funded civic education as part of democracy aid.⁹ But, due to the lack of research based evidence, we have little understanding of

whether the investments made by international donors are bearing fruit. This study seeks to bridge this gap. Should donors continue to fund civic education? The lack of understanding of the effects of CE programs is symptomatic of the lack of understanding of what democracy aid, in general, achieves (Blair 2004). Though it may be true that foreign aid “can only claim to contribute marginally to the longer term impact of civil society building interventions” (Biekart 1999, 300), we need to understand what kind of contribution this is. If the effects of the processes which international actors fund are not understood, “donors will continue to apply discredited ideas likely to undercut their purposes” (Kasfir 1998, 138). Such points serve as the overall justification for the present study.

A Question for Domestic Actors in Developing Countries

Although the provision of civic education is conditioned by resources from, and even agendas of, developed countries—civic education, like the supply of democracy in general—is first and foremost a question for the domestic actors in developing countries. What role are the state and civil society playing, and what role should they play, in the provision of civic education? The state, while having the resources and being usually more able than others to reach all corners of a country, may not necessarily have the motivation to provide civic education. Because civic education has the potential to threaten some power holders’ positions and agendas, providing it may not be a popular activity for those in office. And so, although international aid is increasingly given in the form of budget support—in which donors pool their resources to support the government’s own plans—there may continue to be a role for donors to at least fund civic education in the future.

Indeed, it is the civil society that has clearly been more active in providing civic education, with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) often delivering CE messages in practice. Local NGOs in rural areas are normally in the closest contact with communities. According to the literature, the kinds of groups that are more likely to foster genuine participation are development groups rather than the more political groups involved in, for example, advocacy. This is because the latter tend to be narrowly based elite groups with sometimes little connection to the grassroots (Carothers and Ottaway 2000). These points about the involvement of donors, NGOs, and to a lesser extent, the state, serve to demonstrate that a better understanding of CE’s effects would affect several actors’ contributions to the lives of the rural poor.

Civic Education and Participation Defined

How is civic education defined? According to the literature it is that education which promotes recipients' understanding of the political system, their own interests, and options to contribute to government (Niemi and Junn 1998), or citizens' rights and obligations (Kanaev 2000). Here, civic education is defined as the latter: awareness raising about rights and responsibilities. While understanding the political system and knowing certain facts about it (such as who one's representatives are) are vital for effective participation, being aware of one's rights and responsibilities is more personal, and, it can be argued, a first step to taking action. What, then, are the most important sources of awareness? In rural parts of the developing world most citizens have not been formally schooled nor have they necessarily attended any CE program outside school. Yet this does not mean that they have not been exposed to "rights messages." In fact, according to a Tanzanian government employee interviewed for this study, "every organization is trying to participate in civic education." And according to a Tanzanian academic, "In societies in transition people are constantly bombarded with information on what is and is not expected of them." Among other things, people are targets of health campaigns and "how-to-avoid-corruption" messages (*ibid*).

Even community meetings can be arenas for learning civic knowledge. There, villagers discuss their rights, responsibilities, and topics of importance to them. In these contexts, what is shared and learnt is application oriented civic knowledge, as opposed to the more abstract information taught at school. It is "created by and through groups rather than by isolated individuals; its origin lies in collective attempts to solve problems, and its meaning is only realized through application in an organizational setting" (Field 2005, 4). This is a good description of what learning and civic education may often be in practice in developing countries. Another source of civic information for many people is the media, and particularly the radio; also, by raising awareness of it, even research on civic education can be civic education. The ubiquity and elusiveness of civic education in developing country contexts means it is better to adopt a subjective definition of CE exposure. Therefore, in contrast to past studies, this study does not examine specific (donor funded) programs, but—so as to capture all the relevant sources of CE—defines respondents exposure by each person's self-assessment.

There also exists a standard operationalization of participation found in the literature. It includes voting and voter registration, party and campaign work, community activity, contacting officials, protesting, and

communicating (Milbrath and Goel 1977). Of these, this study focuses on interelection activity at the local level: involvement in community groups, participation at community meetings, joining others to raise development issues, and contacting the ward councilor, the local elected representative. Thus both communing and contacting are included. Though voting activity is surveyed, it falls outside the main forms of participation investigated because most people vote anyway—especially in rural Africa (Bratton et al. 2005)—hence there is little variation to explain. Also, electoral timetable sets constraints on how often a person can participate (Milbrath and Goel 1977); and, voter turnout may better reflect organizational capacity of political groups than citizen interest in politics (Dalton 1996). In turn, protest activity is excluded because most rural respondents do not have any experience in it.

Lessons from Previous Studies

Civic Education Literature

Extant literature gives some clues about how civic education might influence the cognition and behavior of the rural poor; however, the absence of a specific body of research on this group makes formation of hypotheses challenging. Indeed it has only been since the 1990s that scholars have turned their attention to developing countries in civic education studies. Before then, from the late 1950s until the 1990s, CE studies were almost exclusively limited to school settings in the industrialized world. They examined the extent to which civic education might influence students' cognition—knowledge, values, and attitudes—being more pessimistic than the more recent studies have been about CE's potential value. The recent tide of optimism was ushered in by Niemi and Junn's seminal findings—for example, that recent civics courses alone increases political knowledge by four percent, making it a “significant part of political learning” (1998, 145).

Those CE studies that *have* examined developing countries have focused on out-of-school experiences, due to generally lower levels of formal schooling in these contexts. They have been conducted in the former Soviet bloc, Africa, and the Central America/Caribbean region, reporting findings not only on cognition but also behavior. Though scholars disagree about effects—reaffirming that a better understanding of CE in the developing world remains wanting—there seems to be agreement among most that knowledge is the easiest realm to influence. A study in Zambia found that civic education has “consistently greater

impact” on knowledge and values than on political behavior.¹⁰ The same cannot be said of democratic attitudes, in which there is less agreement about CE’s impact. Whereas a study on Senegal¹¹ found adult education to support the formation of democratic attitudes, such as self-esteem, research on South Africa,¹² the Dominican Republic, and Poland¹³ have found CE to exert little effect on efficacy, political tolerance, and trust in political institutions. In fact, some studies¹⁴ have found evidence of a negative impact on institutional trust. Beyond these, another important attitudinal factor, interest in politics, has received little attention in the literature, despite the fact that it is a prerequisite for “effective citizenship” (Bratton et al. 2005, 41). There simply is no clear understanding of the role that civic education plays in the formation of democratic attitudes.

Scholars are similarly in disagreement about whether CE promotes participation, or more fundamentally, whether knowledge promotes participation. On the one hand, there are those who argue that “accountable governance requires an educated and well-informed citizenry” (Bratton and Liatto-Katundu 1994, 545). This could be through the fact that well-informed citizens “take the trouble to express their views so that government is directed to do what the well-informed citizenry want” (Halpern 2005, 188-189). But does civic education help in the formation of such citizenry, and if so, how, if in any way, does knowledge translate into effective participation?

The literature suggests that any causal chain from civic education to participation would seem to be affected by, first, the kind of group that conducts the training, and the methods it uses, with hands-on, applied training having larger effects than more theoretical, classroom based instruction (Finkel 2002; Finkel and Ernst 2005). Second, effects hinge on certain recipient characteristics like education and status in society. But there is no consensus on whether the well-to-do or the relatively disadvantaged benefit more. The same applies to how sex and age mediate CE’s impact: some suggest that men are better able and positioned to “translate [CE] messages into actual behavior” (Finkel 2002, 1013), while others would maintain that women are more likely to benefit from learning new things and becoming aware of opportunities. The surroundings in which a CE recipient lives are also significant: CE messages are more likely to induce a change in behavior if also the recipient’s family and community reinforce the messages learnt, and do not contradict them (Kanaev 2000; Levinson 2004).

Literature on Democratic Participation

In attempting to understand the effects of civic education on participation, one needs, beyond reviewing studies on CE, to be aware of how civic education ties into the primary explanations of democratic participation: socio-economic status, institutions, and culture. Unless one places his/her investigation within this broader explanatory framework, claims about the contribution of civic education will likely not remain realistic. Of the three major explanations, socio-economic status is the one with the least amount of variation among this study's participants. Thus the study does not contrast this explanation with the other two. Instead, since a person's socio-economic status often largely determines his/her level of participation, what causes variation in levels of participation *among* the rural poor? The literature strongly suggests that people with low education and income are not expected to participate. What, then, causes some of them to participate? Does civic education play a role?

In contrast, one *can* expect to find variation in the poor's institutional affiliations, the second explanation of participation. This is true when institutions are defined in a micro sense, as they have to be when explaining different levels of participation *within* a nation-state. Institutional affiliations refer to citizens' connections to "organized bodies of formal rules"—often, political parties and voluntary associations (Bratton 1999, 554). The affiliations that are especially meaningful in promoting other forms of participation are those in "[g]roups organized around community, workplace, or religion [which] provide opportunities for individuals to sharpen citizenship skills including public speaking, running meetings, and communicating with outside agencies (Brady et al., 1995)" (Bratton 1999, 554). In turn, by aggregating individual preferences and mobilizing citizens, political parties link citizens with the state, thus promoting interaction with the government (Bratton 1999, Milbrath and Goel 1977; Verba et al. 1978). While this study does not analyze how these institutional affiliations come to exist *per se*, it does examine what role civic education has in propelling people to join parties and associations.

Finally, when explaining individual level differences in participation within single countries, culture must similarly be defined in a micro sense, as individuals' "psychological orientations" (Bratton 1999, 553), or, differently put, democratic attitudes. The most widely discussed in the literature seem to be political interest and efficacy. Though political interest and political participation seem to be almost tautological, Verba

et al. (1978) point out that it is possible to be interested, yet inactive, and conversely, not interested and still participating. But most of the time, interest coincides with participation. Does civic education contribute to increased participation by raising political interest? Second, does it enhance recipients' efficacy, and does efficacy then promote participation?

Thus, with institutional affiliations and democratic attitudes appearing as the likely major explanations of participation by the poor, it seems that one would need to target these domains when promoting this group's participation. The theoretical framework for this study therefore consists of the institutions-culture debate: which of these exerts a stronger influence on participation, and in particular, which of them—institutional affiliations or cultural dispositions—is civic education likely to affect more? While at the outset, culture (attitudes) would seem more amenable to manipulation than would institutional affiliations (behavior), we also know, based on extant studies, that attitudes are not necessarily always (positively) affected by CE. Again, the current scholarship cannot explain the role of civic education in the formation of democratic attitudes and patterns of behavior. The literature's inconclusiveness about both the magnitude and direction of, especially, attitudinal impact, and its lack of attention to some other aspects of impact form the backdrop for the study's hypotheses.

Hypotheses, Methods, and Approach

Hypotheses Advanced

Because CE's effects on participation are likely connected to (its effects on) knowledge and attitudes, this study hypothesizes in each of these areas. Its arguments are divided into the immediate effects—that is, on awareness and attitudes—and into the (indirect) ones on participation. This division does not constitute a formal proposition that effects are always mediated by awareness and attitudes, but it does symbolize the logical order or path along which they are likely to proceed in promoting democratic dispositions. While agreeing with past studies that the immediate effects are likely highest in awareness, this study points to a general shortcoming in them. That is, by failing to distinguish between different categories of civic knowledge, extant studies are not getting at the whole picture. It is not enough, or necessary, that citizens can correctly identify certain factual information about office holders. Rather, for knowledge to be translated into action, citizens first need to

understand the various types of rights to which they are entitled. Do they know that they have a right to express their opinions? Does CE contribute to the awareness of these kinds of “first generation” rights? It is anticipated that it does—more so than “second generation” rights. Therefore it is hypothesized:

H1. Civic education promotes the knowledge of civil, human, and political rights and responsibilities more than it promotes the knowledge of socioeconomic rights.

Gathering data required to test this hypothesis will allow one to know the extent to which poor people understand their rights to go beyond their immediate physical needs. Though not hypothesized, it is anticipated that “first generation” rights are more clearly linked to participation. People first need to know that they have a right to come together (freedom of assembly), voice their opinions (freedom of expression), and evaluate government performance (right to hold the government accountable), before they will be in a position to pursue specific socioeconomic rights.

The study also hypothesizes that though more difficult to achieve, attitudinal change is possible, and most likely to manifest in efficacy. It is intuitive that participation in a CE program would uplift and empower people, while it will not necessarily elevate institutional trust or raise interest in politics. Participants in these programs, which can only accommodate a limited number of people, may feel privileged and excited about the opportunity to participate. Also, learning about such important issues as rights, responsibilities, the political system, and/or government policies should boost people’s confidence in being able to tackle the challenges they face. Therefore it is hypothesized:

H2. Civic education increases efficacy.

If civic education does boost one’s sense of efficacy, this is likely to have implications for participation, especially among the disadvantaged and discriminated segments of the population.

In contrast, trust is expected to be impacted less, and possibly negatively. The reason is clear: civic education often reveals unflattering information about the government and its representatives and “rais[es] the standards to which citizens hold public institutions” (Bratton et al. 1999, 813).¹⁵ Along these lines, it is expected:

H3. Civic education decreases trust in politicians.

An important question is what kinds of consequences this lack of trust has. If civic education imparts distrust in politicians, does it do more harm than good by deepening the gulf between the poor and the elites? Or, “Will this mistrust lead to enhanced motivation to participate in, monitor or improve government?” (Torney-Purta et al. 2001, 96).¹⁶

Last of the cognitive elements, interest in politics is perhaps the one in which CE’s effects are the most uncertain. In the absence of clues from the literature, it is conceivable that civic education could be as likely to reduce one’s political interest as it is to raise it. But here, the scale tips in favor of expecting civic education to increase this interest because CE can help recipients understand better the options they have in resolving their problems. Therefore:

H4. Civic education increases interest in politics.

On whom are these effects the largest? When one wants to understand the participatory patterns of the rural poor, most of whom are relatively uneducated, it is not enough to know whether civic education has a greater effect on the educated or the less educated. This study looks into this overlooked aspect of impact: who among the mostly uneducated poor are likely to benefit the most from civic education? It argues that these are the underprivileged—here, women. They have more to gain from what civic education has to offer, and participation in civic education is often a unique experience to them. It is hypothesized:

H5. Civic education has the greatest positive effect on the cognition and behavior of the relatively disadvantaged.

This hypothesis applies not only to awareness and attitudes but also to participation. Therefore Hypothesis 5 differs from the others in that it will be tested both with regard to cognition, and in assessing CE’s effects on participation.

Finally, there is another previously overlooked aspect of CE’s impact on participation: what kind of participation is most likely to be affected? It is not at all clear why civic education should affect all participatory acts to the same extent: not all participation requires the same cognitive skills and dispositions. Benefits should be larger on individual forms of participation relying on individual initiative, that is, active participation at community meetings and contacting the ward councilor, while having less impact on collective forms of participation—that is, participation in community groups and raising

issues with others—or mobilized acts such as voting. Because CE's sphere of influence is individuals' cognitive skills and dispositions, civic education is expected to have a greater effect on participatory acts requiring these cognitive skills and dispositions than on those not requiring them. It is hypothesized:

H6. Civic education boosts individual forms of participation more than it boosts mobilized or collective participation.

If corroborated, this hypothesis would speak to the relevance that civic education has for the formation of a democratic orientation and identity based on individualism.

Below, Figure 1.1. presents the rough paths through which civic education is anticipated to affect democratic participation. Notice that it is only intended to give an overall picture of the main linkages between civic education, the various elements of cognition, and participation. Although the study does not hypothesize about these paths per se,¹⁷ Figure 1.1. suggests some routes by which civic education likely connects with participation, through democratic attitudes and institutional affiliations. It suggests, for example, that the primary determinants of participation are associational memberships, interest in politics, and efficacy.¹⁸ With the thickness of the arrows, it also suggests that behavioral change is most likely to result from a change in attitudes than from an increase in knowledge. The thickest arrow denotes the expected strong connection between associational membership and (other forms of) participation. Thus important questions for the study are: what is the relationship between civic education and memberships in associations? And: does civic education promote relatively more the associational memberships of the disadvantaged?

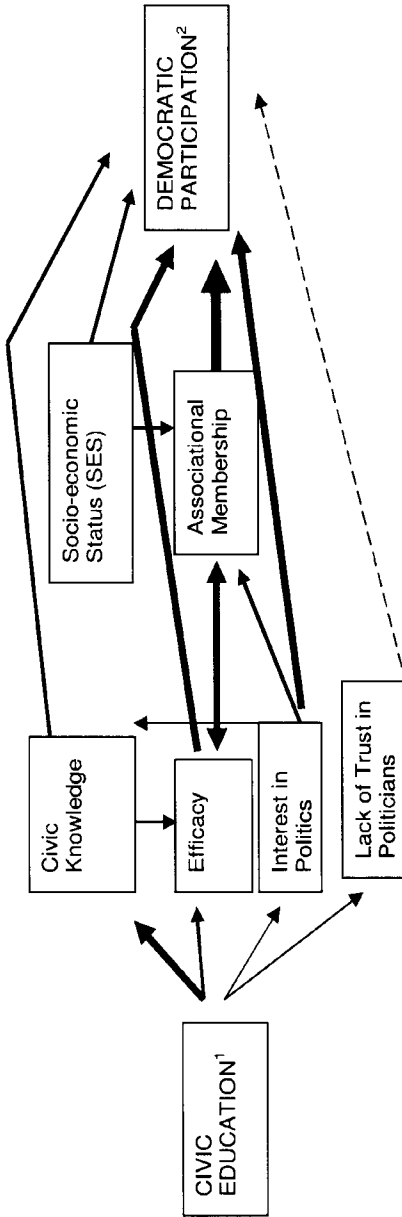


Figure 1.1. Expected Paths from Civic Education to Participation, via Effects on Civic Knowledge and Attitudinal Factors

Notes:

¹ Denotes awareness raising about citizens' rights and responsibilities.

² Especially on the local level.

- All the arrows in the figure describe an expected positive relationship in the direction shown, except that from lack of trust in politicians to participation, which could be either positive or negative (both trust and distrust may drive participation).

- Thickness of the arrows symbolizes the rough strength of the expected relationship (the figure has 4 thickness levels).

- As Bratton et al. (2005) point out, attitudes are also a consequence, not only a cause, of participation; thus in reality arrows run in more directions than those shown. There are also other relationships among the variables that are not depicted.

Methods and Approach

As its main instrument in gathering individual-level data on CE exposure and participation, the study used a semi-structured questionnaire administered to 280 respondents in their native language as a one-on-one oral interview lasting 25-45 minutes.¹⁹ There were 140 respondents per country. The survey questions and how they operationalized the dependent, independent, and control variables are described in Appendix A, with details on the distribution and mean values of key survey items given in Appendix B. Respondent selection is outlined in Appendix C. Interviews were oral because both countries have an oral communication culture and because many respondents were illiterate. They took place in respondents' home village or town, in an outdoor public place to which respondents had been asked to gather.²⁰ The interviewer posed the questions orally, marking the answers on the questionnaire. Several of the questions were open-ended. Data were gathered at one point in time during election year: October-November 2005 in Tanzania and February-March 2006 in Zambia. Because data collection coincided with voter education in both countries, results are expected to represent the most that civic education can achieve.

As has been a standard procedure in CE studies, interviews were conducted among treatment and control groups. However, as suggested, an important difference with most other studies is the target group: whereas others have analyzed data on students,²¹ or focused on elites,²² this study is restricted to the rural poor. In fact, in Bratton et al.'s (1999) study on Zambia—which used “quasi-experimental” interview methodology—most respondents were educated and 80 percent lived in urban areas. The authors found that “*none* of the civic education messages germinated” among those with low education and no media exposure—that is, the bulk of respondents in this study (817)!²³

In their analysis, all these studies, including the present one, utilize OLS (ordinary least squares) multiple regression methodology.²⁴ More specifically, this study uses hierarchical regression, in which groups of variables are entered into the model in stages, determined on theoretical grounds. This enables one to assess the unique contribution of various explanatory groups: social structure, cognitive awareness, institutional influences, and democratic attitudes. It thereby facilitates answering the question whether institutions matter more than culture. A summary of all variables considered for regression models can be found in Appendix D.²⁵ An additional method was to conduct in-depth interviews of key observers so as to enhance understanding of the context and enable a more accurate interpretation of results. This was done among NGO staff,

local government officials, donor representatives, church and community leaders, and others in district and national capitals.²⁶

By understanding civic education contextually, and defining exposure to it by respondents' self-assessment, this study aims to capture all the relevant CE activities in the regions in which data were gathered.²⁷ This concurs with the "decentred" or "arena" model of evaluating development aid (Seppälä 2000). In it, "the existing social processes in the given location are placed in focus, and aid is analysed only in relation to these on-going processes" (ibid, 17). The starting point should be the context, not the aid intervention. But when one examines civic education with a commitment to context sensitivity, it is all the more difficult to tell apart the role of various agents and identify real causal factors. For example, when CE is given as part of participatory development aid, it is very difficult to distinguish the impact of the aid intervention from the roles of indigenous actors and institutions. Context sensitivity also means that opportunities for citizen participation in each locale are taken into consideration. After all, if community meetings are not held, participation does not have the same meaning as it does when meetings are held regularly.

Self-assessment is used to determine not only CE exposure but also respondents' level of participation. That is, while in Tanzania each person's exposure to civic education is cross-checked against village government records,²⁸ the primary means of determining whether respondents had received civic education and to what extent they participate was by asking them. Though not perfect, self-assessment is important and arguably the only way to really get at a comprehensive picture of CE exposure and how respondents view their participation in the community. Yet employing this approach needs to be accompanied by the awareness that often, those interviewed tend toward positive comments to questions posed by foreigners (Carothers 1999).

Parameters and Organization of the Book

This study is located at an intersection of multiple disciplines. Though civic education is inherently political, that is, a question of power, it is obviously a subject matter in the field of education, but also intersects with sociologists' interest in social inequalities. It is furthermore related to anthropology, the discipline that houses most studies on development interventions.

The book is organized the following way. Chapter 2 describes in detail the types of contexts that Tanzania and Zambia represent for the testing of hypotheses. It shows that although at first glance, these

countries are probably more, or as, similar as any two countries in sub-Saharan Africa, important differences remain in variables crucial for participation. These have to do with: (1) historical patterns of participation (with, for example, community meetings being more institutionalized in Tanzania), and the prevalent (2) political orientations and (3) religious affiliations in the research sites. The Tanzanian site is a government stronghold and largely Muslim, while most people in the Zambian site are critical of the government and profess Christianity. Chapter 2 also outlines CE given in each location. It presents aggregate demographic and other data from the villages, giving the reader an idea of the kinds of communities in which participation is assessed.

Chapters 3 and 4 present research findings, with the former discussing CE's immediate effects on cognition and the latter explaining effects on participation. A comparison of data from the two countries reveals how very different levels of cognizance and participation can be among the rural poor. This supports the expectation that civic education has a varying impact on different individuals within the same socioeconomic stratum. Findings strongly suggest that CE does indeed promote democratic participation and cognitive skills conducive to it, though not always in ways expected. Results are most encouraging in that rights education seems to boost relatively more the participation of those that stand to gain the most from it, the disadvantaged. This suggests that civic education can help level the disparities within a population—and is good news for those seeking to broaden democratic participation and help jump-start consolidation where it has stagnated.

Notes

¹ The expression is borrowed from Blair (2003).

² Samuel Huntington (1991).

³ Article originally appearing in *National Post* (Canada), February 20, 2007 (and referenced at www.freedomhouse.org), by Jennifer Windsor and Arch Puddington.

⁴ Larry Diamond (2002).

⁵ In Tanzania this share is about 75 percent, while in Zambia it is about 65 percent (2005; Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, *World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision and World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision*, <http://esa.un.org/unup>).

⁶ Personal interview of a Tanzanian NGO employee in Mtwara (September 20, 2005).

⁷ According to Freedom House, in 1995-2000 the percentage of democracies in Africa declined from 19 to 17 (cited in Schraeder 2002).

Nevertheless, in general Tripp prefers not to speak of “reversals” of democratic gains in Africa: “it appears premature to talk about ‘reversal’ in many African countries when it is not clear that substantial gains were ever made beyond the holding of multiparty elections.” (2000, 212).

⁸ Whereas in 1975, Zambia’s HDI was 0.470, in 2005 it was 0.434 (http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_ZMB.html).

⁹ CE has also been a part of support for decentralization, a process underway in many developing countries, including Tanzania and Zambia. With most support coming from the U.S. and Europe, “the total investment in civic education activities in the 1990s reached over \$230 million (USAID Office of Budget, 2000)” (Finkel and Ernst 2005, footnote 1).

¹⁰ Bratton et al. (1999).

¹¹ Kuenzi (2005).

¹² USAID (2002), Finkel (2002, 2003), Blair (2003), and Finkel and Ernst (2005).

¹³ Finkel (2002) and USAID (2002).

¹⁴ Bratton et al. (2005) and USAID (2002).

¹⁵ Bratton et al. found that civic education tends to impart “healthy skepticism” toward leaders (2005, 250).

¹⁶ It should be noted that although Putnam (1993) found that *interpersonal* trust and participation in civic organizations go together, this is not evidence of causation (Peters 1998). Also, it is less clear how *institutional* trust (or trust in politicians) is related to participation.

¹⁷ That would be a topic for another study.

¹⁸ Though the figure only depicts associational memberships, institutional affiliations also include membership in political parties.

¹⁹ The languages were Kiswahili in Tanzania and Bemba in Zambia.

²⁰ The interviewer in most cases was a male, but about 15 interviews were conducted in the Zambian village of Mabumba with the help of a female interpreter (an educated, English speaking resident of the village).

²¹ For example, Finkel and Ernst (2005); Levinson (2004).

²² Blair (2003); Bratton et al. (1999).

²³ To be sure, there is one medium to which many respondents in this study reported having access: the radio (see media exposure in Appendix B).

²⁴ Data were analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

²⁵ The choice of the independent and control variables was made based on evaluating those used by others—especially Bratton (1999), Bratton et al. (1999), Bratton et al. (2005), Finkel and Ernst (2005), and Niemi and Junn (1998).

²⁶ See list of interviewees at the back of the book. Furthermore, in Zambia two cases of direct observation were part of the author’s learning about the context, including a CE lesson given by the NGO Anti-Voter Apathy Project (AVAP) at an elementary school, and a brief session of voter education by the same organization in a village from which data were otherwise not gathered.

²⁷ The downside of the contextual approach is that one cannot analyze CE interventions in the same level of detail as studies analyzing specific programs.

²⁸ In the Zambian research sites such records are not really kept.