

SECOND DRAFT REVISED

**CAN DEMOCRACY BE TAUGHT?
CIVIC EDUCATION IN THREE COUNTRIES**

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Prefatory note

This report represents a synthesis and extension of two earlier studies conducted for the USAID Global Bureau's Democracy and Governance Center on civic education. These reports sought to answer the question of what actual impact have USAID-supported civic education programs had on their participants? Before these studies commenced in 1996, there had been no systematic attempt to provide an answer to this query, despite the quite significant role that civic education had come to play in Agency assistance to democratization.

These country studies, consequently, were pioneering efforts to gauge civic education program impact. The first study, finished in 1998, focused on the Dominican Republic and Poland, was conducted by Christopher Sabatini, Steven Finkel, and Gwendolyn Bevis. The second one, completed two years later, analyzed programs in South Africa, and was conducted by Steven Finkel and Sheryl Stumbras. The contractor for both assessments was Management Systems International, of Washington, DC. Along with Dennis Wendel, the USAID officer initially managing the assessment (and presently at USAID's Europe and Eurasia Bureau) and Gary Hansen, the head of the civil society team at G/DG, Chris Sabatini (now at the National Endowment for Democracy) deserves much credit for conceiving the study and seeing the work on the first two countries through to completion. Steve Finkel of the University of Virginia's Political Science Department provided expertise to the work in both the survey and analytical dimensions of the project. The considerable methodological rigor the studies can claim is essentially due to his endeavors. He also served as principal investigator for the South Africa assessment. All five of the country study authors should be recognized for their efforts – heroic at times – to render a quantitative research enterprise into readable reports expressed in understandable language.

The present synthesis report has benefited greatly from their work, and the author is most appreciative. In addition, useful critiques were provided at a December workshop by Michael Bratton of Michigan State University and Richard Niemi of the University of Rochester. Finally, Sarah Bouchie of the Academy for Educational Development also offered much helpful commentary.

This report has been produced for USAID, but interpretations and conclusions in it do not necessarily reflect USAID policy. They are the responsibility of the author, as are any errors or shortcomings in the report.

CONTENTS

Prefatory note	ii
Acronyms	iv
Executive summary	v
I. The relevance of this assessment	1
Introduction	1
Importance of civic education	1
The jump-start model	2
What this study is and is not	2
A major USAID initiative	4
Range and examples	4
Two basic types of civic education programs	5
The state of knowledge on civic education impact	5
II. The study design	8
A three-country study	8
The programs assessed	10
Dominican Republic	10
Poland	10
South Africa	11
The sample and survey	11
Measuring impact	12
The survey instrument	12
Participatory behaviors	13
Civic competence	13
Democratic values and trust	14
Reliability	14
Focus groups	14
The data analysis	15
III. Main findings	17
The democratic orientations	18
Political participation	18
Citizen competence	19
Democratic values	19
Democratic support	20
Intervening factors affecting civic education support	21
Gender	22
Educational background	23
Group membership	24
Fade-out effects	25
How much impact is enough?	25
IV. Lessons learned and implications	30
Figures 1-13	33
Tables 1-7	40
Annex A. Methodology	46
Annex B. Impact of good quality instruction in civic education on democratic orientations	54
Annex C. Case studies included in G/DG report (Brilliant 1999)	55
References	56

ACRONYMS

CDIE	Center for Development Information and Evaluation
DG	Democracy and governance
G/DG	Global Bureau, Center for Democracy and Governance
PPC	Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination, USAID
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIS	Newly Independent States (former Soviet states)
SES	Socio-economic status
TOT	Training of trainers

CAN DEMOCRACY BE TAUGHT? CIVIC EDUCATION IN THREE COUNTRIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. INTRODUCTION

This report endeavors to synthesize three country-level impact assessments of USAID-supported adult civic education initiatives in the Dominican Republic, Poland and South Africa during the 1990s. The origins of the exercise lie in the fact that, although civic education has over the decade become a major democracy program component (receiving yearly allocations exceeding \$30 million by the end of the 1990s), we had little idea of what impact these programs were having. The three country studies and this synthesis report are intended to fill that gap.

Our first major conclusion is that, when well implemented with quality instruction, civic education initiatives do have a meaningful impact, particularly on political participation. A second major finding is that, although this impact is modest in absolute terms, when the low and declining rates of participation generally across the globe are taken into account, the increases associated with civic education efforts take on more impressive dimensions. Third, civic education tends to do more for men than women, and for those with more educational background than those with less, though in the latter case there appear to be opportunities for catching up.

Civic education as a jump-start. In the Western countries, citizens absorb democratic beliefs and practices as part of growing up. Family, school, childhood experiences and the general process of socialization all contribute. But in countries recently emerging from authoritarianism, this preparation is in large part missing. If people there are to become engaged citizens, the process must somehow be jump-started, which is the basic purpose of civic education programming.

The democratic character. The present exercise aims to gain an understanding of the *impact* of civic education efforts on program participants with respect to three dimensions, which are generally considered to be the critical characteristics of the democratic citizen:

- *democratic competence* (e.g., political knowledge, civic skills, sense of political efficacy);
- *democratic values/support* (e.g., tolerance of divergent views, support for a democratic polity);
- *democratic behavior* (e.g., participation in local and national politics).

A civic education model. In the model of civic education effects we have employed, the principal objective of civic education is to increase participation (defined not as mere voting but as a group of activities including working in campaigns, contacting officials, attending meetings, lodging complaints, and contributing money). But the *quality* of participation is surely equally important, and democratic competence and values contribute directly to that quality. Accordingly, we have tried to assess civic education impact on all three of these core characteristics.

The state of knowledge. Despite the substantial investment in civic education by USAID and other donors, relatively little is known about program impact, even in the United States. Available studies have tended to show that impact as rather modest in school-based programs, though more recent research has indicated that high school efforts, if well taught, can add appreciably to civics knowledge. For developing and transitional countries the record is even thinner. Exceptions are a Zambian study showing a positive civic education impact among adults and a Bosnian assessment indicating similar results with school programs.

II. STUDY DESIGN

Countries assessed. Each of the three countries included in this assessment were undergoing a democratic transition and so presumably provided a political setting with substantial incentive for citizens to benefit from civic education initiatives. The Dominican Republic was coming out of what amounted to several decades of intermittent “thin authoritarianism,” while Poland and South Africa were emerging from substantially heavier eras of authoritarian rule under Communism and apartheid respectively.

Programs. In each country several USAID-supported programs were selected for analysis. This report includes data from four adult civic education initiatives in the Dominican Republic and three each in Poland and South Africa. Our earlier country studies included school-centered civic education efforts for 8th graders in the Dominican Republic and Poland, but found relatively little discernable impact for them. The South Africa study featured an assessment of school-based programs for 12th graders, which did uncover some significant impact, but in almost all cases considerably less than for the adult programs. It became clear that the DG Center’s comparative advantage and value added in assessing civic education lies more with the less-studied adult programs and less with the formal school initiatives (which have received evaluational attention from others), and so this synthesis report is confined to the adult assessments.

Surveys. The data used for this report were gathered through large-scale surveys using the classic treatment-and-control group approach. Altogether in the three countries, some 4,400 adults were interviewed, half of them participants in the various civic education programs analyzed (the “treatment” groups) and the other half a sample of people who had not participated but were similar to the treatment respondents in terms of residence, educational background, gender and the like (the “control”).

Our survey instrument included eight measures or orientations intended to gauge the impact of civic education efforts. Following our model, these “dependent variables” were political participation (both local and more generalized), civic competence (political knowledge and sense of political efficacy), and democratic values/support (political tolerance, support for regular elections, trust in institutions, and satisfaction with democracy).

Analysis. The principal data analysis tool used was regression analysis, from which a more straightforward variant was derived for this report in the form of our “percent in highest category” measure. This statistic gauges the proportion of treatment group respondents scoring in the highest category on one of the democratic orientation variables as opposed to the proportion

doing so from the control group. Early on in the analysis, it became apparent that the presence (or absence) of good instructional qualities (such as more frequent civic education sessions and participatory teaching methods) enhanced impact – in fact these qualities are the principal factor explaining program impact, rather than mere program involvement per se.

III. MAIN FINDINGS

General patterns. Across our three countries, civic education programs had the greatest impact on political participation, with appreciable impact on citizen competence measures and less but still significant effect on the values/support dimensions. When good instructional qualities are taken into account, the impact is measurably increased on most (if not all) of these dimensions.

Intervening factors. Civic education programming by itself, even with good instructional qualities, does not explain all increases in democratic orientations by any means. There are any number of other factors that also have considerable relationship to an individual's political participation, sense of efficacy, tolerance and so on. Among these are educational level, income, gender, length of time at present residence, time elapsed since training, group memberships, age, and even household size. In the interview schedules employed in our three country surveys, we asked each respondent about a battery of such possible influences, and included them in our statistical analyses. Several of these factors have potential civic education program implications. Four in particular are analyzed in some depth.

1. **Gender** does play a significant role in civic education. Men in the control group score higher on virtually all the democratic dimensions than do women, and in almost all cases gain more from high quality civic education programming, although this is less so in South Africa than in the other two countries. Such differences imply that civic education is somehow more effective with men than with women, certainly for the Dominican Republic and Poland. They also imply that more attention should be devoted to gender issues in designing and implementing civic education programs.
2. When **educational level** is considered, the pattern is somewhat different than for gender. In the control group the more educated score higher on the democratic dimensions, and in the good-instructional-qualities treatment group they maintain that lead. But in more cases than not, the less educated have benefited more from civic education than their more highly educated counterparts. In particular, South African adults with less education notched higher increases on all the democratic dimensions. These findings are especially interesting in that educational level can serve as a proxy for socio-economic status, which has long been observed to have a strong relationship with political participation in the United States and elsewhere. The implication is that civic education when well managed can help in attenuating some of the political advantages enjoyed by citizens of higher status.
3. **Group membership**, which can serve as a proxy for social capital accumulation, also confers an advantage in terms of democratic orientations, in that respondents belonging to more groups scored higher than those in fewer groups. But there was no consistent pattern for high quality civic education. It increased the advantage in some cases (mostly in Poland and South Africa) but not in others (chiefly the Dominican Republic). Interestingly, political tol-

erance improved more among those belonging to fewer groups in all three countries, perhaps because the groups themselves tended to reinforce the links between people of similar background rather than include people of diverse backgrounds.

4. A problem with many if not most short-term learning experiences, especially among adults, is “fade-out” – the tendency for program impact to dissipate over time. For most of our democratic dimensions there was some fade-out, but even so the net effects were positive. In Poland, for instance, some 36% of participants getting good instructional quality scored in the high category on political efficacy, as against 19% in the control group – almost a doubling. After six months, the proportion dropped – though only slightly – to 32%.

The question of impact. In an overall sense, civic education programming does demonstrate a positive impact on participants’ democratic orientations, particularly when good instructional qualities are taken into account. But how much impact is required to justify program investments by donor agencies like USAID? Such a question of course is difficult to answer for any foreign assistance initiative, and civic education is no exception. But it is possible to gain a purchase on providing an answer by first observing some comparative data from the United States and other countries. American surveys in recent decades have shown quite low levels of participation, and there is good reason to think that these levels have declined over time, as Robert Putnam (2000) asserts in his book *Bowling Alone*.

Other Western democracies tend to be quite similar to the American pattern, especially when non-voting participation is considered. In such circumstances, just modest gains from civic education would be significant, perhaps even transformative. Developing political systems in Latin America and India are not much different regarding participation rates. In the former Communist bloc the picture is if anything more depressing. Surveys in Poland indicate, for instance, that respondents attending a political meeting slid from 13% in 1990 to 7% in 1995, while those cooperating with other citizens on common problems dropped from 13 to 6%.

A good investment. Against the backdrop sketched out just above, our civic education programs performed quite well in the participation dimension, especially on the local participation measure. Here the average score increase (in number of activities in which respondents participated) for those involved in civic education programs with the maximum number of good instructional qualities was 11% for the Dominican Republic, 27% for Poland, and 21% for South Africa. Given the Polish data noted just above (similar information is not available for the other two countries), this kind of increase would be quite substantial indeed. Civic education initiatives at the upper end of instructional quality, in short, would appear to be very much worth investing in.

IV. LESSONS LEARNED AND IMPLICATIONS

1. Given the low rates of participation in most political systems, **even moderate increases connected with good civic education programming can make a significant contribution to democratization.** This benefit by itself makes a strong case for supporting civic education initiatives.

2. **Teaching methods matter.** Civic education programs without frequent sessions, lacking participatory components and failing to field inspiring instructors tend to be of little value, but those embodying these good instructional qualities make a significant contribution in improving democratic orientations.
3. **Training of trainers** to provide good instruction is worth the investment. Absent such training (or the use of instructors who had received similar training elsewhere), it would probably be preferable not to launch a program at all.
4. **One size does not fit all in civic education programming.** Good instructional qualities contribute much more to impact on some of our democratic dimensions than on others. External factors like gender and prior group membership also affect civic education impact differentially across our three countries. Pretesting participants on democratic orientations might help civic education designers to tailor programs to address particular needs.
5. **Gender does make a difference and should be taken into account in programming.** For the most part, men not only start out at higher levels on the democratic orientations we have measured, but they also gain more from high-quality civic education programs.
6. **The political advantages conferred by educational background can be compensated for to a modest extent by good civic education.** Higher educational levels not surprisingly correlate with better scores on the democratic orientations employed in this study. But good quality civic education can help make up for a portion of these differences.
7. Since participants already belonging to groups tend to gain greater benefit from civic education programs, **group membership may be a useful screening device for recruiting participants.** Such an approach would have the added attraction of providing civic education to those who (being group members) would be most likely to spread what they had learned.
8. **Fade-out problems do exist, but high quality civic education programming appears to withstand them.** There is some drop-off over time in how much trainees retain, but for the most part, these fade-out effects appear to be relatively slight among those enjoying good quality instruction.
9. **Better assessment methods should be employed to gauge program impact.** This assessment has answered many questions about civic education programming impact, showing how respondents in the treatment group differ from the control component. But there remains a question as to whether program participants may have differed in some ways at the outset from the control group; if so, what appears to be program impact may have been in truth due to these initial differences. The best way to resolve this issue would be to do a before-and-after survey that would capture differences between control and treatment groups before programs begin and after they are completed. Hopefully this method can be used in a future study.

CAN DEMOCRACY BE TAUGHT? CIVIC EDUCATION IN THREE COUNTRIES

This report. The present exercise aims to gain an understanding of the impact of adult civic education on the democratic knowledge, values and behavior of USAID-assisted program participants during the 1990s in three countries: the Dominican Republic, Poland and South Africa. To this end, we report on survey research conducted in all three countries with program participants in adult, informal civic education initiatives. Because this report is essentially a quantitative analysis, it will present a good deal of statistical information, but it has been written with a view to making itself understandable to readers with little background in quantitative work as well as convincing to experts and scholars in the field. It reflects a belief that these two goals are not incompatible.

Genesis and major findings. The origins of the exercise lie in the fact that, although civic education over the past decade became a major democracy program component (receiving yearly allocations exceeding \$30 million by the end of the 1990s), we have had little idea of what impact these programs were having. The three country studies and this synthesis report are intended to fill that gap.

Our first major conclusion is that, when well implemented with quality instruction, civic education initiatives do have a meaningful impact, particularly on political participation. Accordingly, serious attention should be given to designing program instruction. A second major finding is that, although this impact is modest in absolute terms, when the low and declining rates of participation generally across the globe are taken into account, increases associated with civic education efforts take on more impressive dimensions – sufficiently so to make such programs a worthwhile investment in supporting democratization. Third, civic education tends to do more for men than women, and for those with more educational background than those with less. But under some circumstances program participants with less education gain more from civic education instruction.

I. THE RELEVANCE OF THIS ASSESSMENT

Importance of civic education. If citizens are to practice democracy effectively, they must possess the skills, embody the values and manifest the behaviors that accord with democracy. In the industrialized democracies, people absorb these virtues over a lifetime, beginning in their formative years as they participate in family and neighborhood life, join local organizations like scouts and churches, move through the educational system, and partake of the media. Citizens, in short, become socialized in the mores of a democratic culture as part of growing up.

But in countries that have just recently emerged from long periods of authoritarian rule – or are only now doing so – that whole preparatory experience is missing. If these new democracies are to endure, their people will have to possess and display political qualities similar to those long extant in the developed countries. Leaders must be elected, political rights and civil liberties must be respected, government must be accessible to citizen input, and the state must be held accountable for what it does and doesn't do. How is all this to happen without the many years of grounding in democratic political culture that have been a fundamental part of the systemic fabric for so long in the West?

Moreover a democratic culture is required not only to socialize the citizenry into appropriate roles but also to sustain the basic democratic enterprise itself – to insulate it against coups d'état, to protect freedom of speech against those who would curtail it, to protest against electoral fraud, and so on. Again, these are values – reflexive orientations, one might say – learned over decades and even generations in the West. How to instill them in the new democracies can be a daunting challenge.

The jump-start model. One answer to this question is civic education programming, which in effect seeks to jump-start the long democratic socialization process by rapidly enhancing the skills, values and behaviors which citizens will need if their newly democratic polities are to survive. For adults, the timeframe is generally short. Donor-sponsored civic education programming tends to be implemented in connection with an upcoming election or a recent transition from authoritarianism to a precarious democracy seen to be in immediate need of reinforcement. In either case, the time for program impact is relatively momentary, and so the civic education jump-starting must be even more quick-acting. It is for these reasons that USAID has provided extensive support to civic education as a pillar of its overall assistance in the democracy sector over the past 15 years or so.

What this study is and is not. The present exercise aims to gain an understanding of the *impact* of civic education efforts in three dimensions with respect to program participants:

- *democratic competence* (e.g., political knowledge, civic skills, sense of political efficacy);
- *democratic values* (e.g., tolerance of divergent views, support for a democratic polity);
- *democratic behavior* (e.g., participation in local and national politics).

Why these three central foci? The predominant view in political science as to what should be the outcome of civic education efforts so far as impact is concerned has centered on these as the critical variables (Langton and Jennings 1968, Schachter 1998). Taken together, these three dimensions form the essential characteristics of what the participating citizen in a democracy should be (see, e.g., Almond and Verba 1963, which is generally considered the essential work in the field). Accordingly, a good civic education program should be expected to enhance performance in these areas. The illustration in Figure 1 offers a model of these linkages. The overall goal is improved democratic participation, and we would hope for a good civic education program to exert some direct impact inspiring people to take part in politics. But the quality of that participation is as important as the participation itself, and is affected by the competence and

values that citizens bring to the participatory process. Thus enhancing competence and values will also improve the kind of participation as well as its level.¹

[Figure 1 about here]

We are, in sum, concentrating on what *changes* get induced in civic education program participants regarding their capacity to engage the political universe as active citizens. The present report constitutes a synthesis of earlier and more detailed analyses of civic education program impact in our three countries. Sabatini, Finkel and Bevis (1998) provided an assessment of civic education initiatives in the Dominican Republic and Poland, while Finkel and Stumbras (2000) offered a similar report on South Africa. Readers interested in a more finely gauged analysis concerning specific countries or programs will find it in these two reports.²

A word should be also included at this point about what we are *not* looking at with respect to civic education. First, this report will concentrate only on adult programs in the three countries. The original reports covered formal school-based programs as well as those aimed at adults, but here we will omit the former in order to concentrate our attention to the latter. Our reasons for doing so are two:

- Our data for the school-based programs appeared to be less reliable than for adult initiatives. This was especially the case for the programs in the Dominican Republic and Poland (where we assessed programs for 8th graders), as shows up in the consistently lower reliability coefficients reported in Table A1 of Annex A. For the South African student programs (looking at 12th graders), the data were better (cf. Table A1), but still lower than those recorded for adults. The reasons behind this reduced reliability could lie in less effective data gathering on our part, or it could be that it is just inherently more difficult with children to measure the kind of impact data that we were seeking.³
- Our comparative advantage in this assessment lies in our analysis of the adult programs, which aside from one study of Zambia (Bratton et al. 1999) have not been analyzed for impact anywhere to our knowledge. School-based civic education efforts, on the contrary, have been subjected to at least some serious statistical analysis (though more would certainly be welcome), as will be evident in the succeeding pages of this section.⁴

In keeping with this concentration on adult programs, a second area we will not address as such deals with the *process* of civic education – pedagogical approaches, instructor training, program management and the like – as opposed to impact. These process issues are important, to be sure, but they are not our principal concern when we are searching for program outcomes as opposed

¹ There is probably some reverse flow as well in Figure 1 from behavior (participation) to competence and values, for people are after all the product of their experiences. But with civic education, we are focusing on the impact of the educational experience, not that in the applied world of political reality.

² Both reports will be available on the G/DG webpage at <<http://www.usaid.gov/democracy/pubsindex.html>>

³ See the discussion under “measuring impact” in the next section.

⁴ Readers interested in our findings for the school-based programs are invited to consult the two country-level studies (Sabatini et al. 1998: 60-85; Finkel and Stumbras 2000: 65-96).

to program approaches and activities.⁵ We will find ourselves indirectly interested in some of these matters, however, especially instructional methods, for we will discover that they have a highly significant effect on program impact for all types of civic education activities.

Thirdly, it should also be stated that this report, like the country-level assessments, does not constitute a formal evaluation of the various USAID-assisted activities it examines. We are concerned only with program impact on the participants, not with asking to what extent these initiatives achieved their project objectives, goals and the like.⁶

A major USAID initiative. During the 1990s, USAID has allocated significant and increasing investments to civic education. In the early 1990s, annual allocations in this subsector totaled in the \$10-20 million range, and by the end of the decade they exceeded \$30 million a year. As a proportion of the total democracy budget in the Agency, however, allocations have been declining somewhat, from a high of 8.4% in FY 1992 to the 5-6% range in the late 1990s. Altogether, civic education investment over the decade totaled some \$232 million. Figure 2 shows the regional pattern, in which it can be observed that there was a good deal of volatility in most regions. Asia and the Near East received the largest allocation in FY 1991, then Africa became the largest recipient for several years, to be replaced by the Europe and Eurasia region at the decade's end. The Latin America and Caribbean region remained fairly steady throughout the period, ranging between roughly \$2 and \$5 million. Over the decade as a whole, just under 37% of civic education funding went to Africa, 28% to Europe and Eurasia, a bit more than 20% to Latin America and the Caribbean, and about 11% to Asia and the Near East.⁷

[Figure 2 about here]

Range and examples. The Agency's investments in civil society have funded a wide variety of civic education programs, and we have tried to give some sense of their range in a parallel exercise to the present one, in which ten civic education programs are analyzed in considerable detail (Brilliant 2000). Brilliant's study also includes a much briefer sketch of some 40 separate program activities stretching between the later 1980s and the end of the 1990s that entailed a heavy adult civic education component and could be traced through the CDIE archive.⁸ These programs varied between a \$120k grant in Israel to produce a set of videos elucidating democratic principles and a \$25m project in the NIS countries to promote democratic political practices.

⁵ There have been recent USAID-sponsored studies of civic education processes, but they have focused on pre-school and primary school programs rather than the programs for older students that were the focus of our country-level assessments. See Brady et al. (1999 and 2000).

⁶ Unfortunately, none of the program activities we assessed received either a mid-term or a final evaluation, at least as of the time of our own field work.

⁷ Data in this paragraph are from USAID's Office of Budget in the Management Bureau. They reflect yearly reports sent in from all Agency operating units indicating the sectors and subsectors to which USAID funds were obligated. All funds so obligated are listed under only one heading in this annual reporting system, and so the "civic education" category necessarily will include some money that actually went to other subsectors (e.g., civil society, election support). And by the same token some funding shown under other headings (e.g., rule of law) doubtless was in fact spent on civic education. Despite these shortcomings, however, the trends shown in Figure 1 should be reasonably accurate.

⁸ These activities were all those for which sufficient data were available in the PPC/CDIE archive (generally project papers, evaluations and the like). It should be noted that the CDIE archive essentially consists of project and program documentation sent in from the Agency's field missions and is thus far from complete.

The average life-of-project allocation among the 40 initiatives was just under \$4.8m and the median was about \$2.9m. For an overview of Brilliant's ten case studies, see Annex C to this report.⁹

Two basic types of civic education programs. There is a basic divide between efforts focusing on adult civic education and those concentrating on the formal education system. The adult programs take in a wide variety of concerns, ranging from voter orientation to human rights knowledge to citizen leadership training, and from informal neighborhood sessions held just once to quite elaborate and structured programs lasting many months. What they have in common is that they are for adults and participation is voluntary.

The school-based programs also comprise a wide range, between kindergarten initiatives concentrating more on teaching methods than on content to senior high school programs very much concerned with imparting specific democratic skills. But they all work through the formal education system and accordingly they focus on children. At the lower grade levels they generally form part of the curriculum where adopted, and hence participation is not voluntary, while for high schoolers it may be entirely voluntary. This assessment report focuses only on the adult programs.

The state of knowledge on civic education impact.

Perhaps surprisingly for an initiative that has seen such a heavy investment, relatively little is known about the impact of civic education programs. Even in the United States, where civic education has long been a theme in our educational system, the research on impact has been rather less than one might expect. And in the developing world, it is miniscule. The latter lacuna is doubtless in part owing to the recent origin of civic education efforts as part of donor-funded democracy assistance initiatives, but it is striking nonetheless. The present assessment, in other words, represents something of a pioneering enterprise both as a research initiative and as a practical application in managing for results in the democracy sector.

To say that there are few studies, however, scarcely means there are none. In the United States, the classic study in the political science field by Langton and Jennings (1968) is now more than three decades old. These researchers found that high school civic education programs in the 1960s had virtually no overall impact on student democratic knowledge, values or behavior, with one exception. It is noteworthy that Langton and Jennings did find a significant impact among some black high schoolers.¹⁰

⁹ Brilliant's full report will be published as a G/DG Occasional Paper and will also be available on the G/DG webpage at <http://www.usaid.gov/democracy/pubsindex.html>.

¹⁰ Specifically, Langton and Jennings found a greater impact among black high school seniors in the South whose parents themselves had a high school or – with even higher statistical linkage – elementary school education. When it is recalled that in the mid-1960s (when the research was conducted) the civil rights movement was then sweeping the country generally but especially the South, it is reasonable to infer that it was the changing democratic context of that era that provided an incentive for these students (whose families had thitherto been on the short end of the democratic stick) to benefit from civic education. In this respect, they resembled to some extent citizens in today's newly democratic countries. By contrast, for the rest of the population the civics curriculum was probably largely redundant and unproductive. In any event, there was no significant relationship between their taking civic education courses and impact on knowledge, values or behavior (Langton and Jennings 1968).

Several more recent studies are worth mentioning here. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), begun in the 1970s, included an extensive test of civics knowledge for some 11,000 4th, 8th and 12th graders in its 1988 version, and was repeated in 1998 with 22,000 students in the same grades. In general, the findings were disappointing and even disheartening. Students at all levels tested understood much less about the basic American political system than was hoped.¹¹ Given the nationwide coverage of the survey and the almost infinite variety of civic education programs thus included, it was impossible to introduce any control-group design, so the classic treatment-vs-control group analysis could not be carried out. What particular civics curricula or programs might have been more or less effective than others, could not be determined.

But this constraint has not made impact analysis impossible. For example, Niemi and Junn (1998) show, using the 1988 NAEP data that civic education for 12th graders, if well taught and offering opportunity to participate politically, can add 10-15% to civics knowledge (though much less to system trust measures).¹² And in at least one case, an assessment was conducted with control groups, indicating that for high school students in the "We the People..." program, civics knowledge and democratic values were higher for program participants than for the control group (Brody 1994).¹³

For the United States, then, we have a considerable amount of data indicating (and generally lamenting) the low state of American knowledge about and orientation toward politics, particularly among the young.¹⁴ But there is some evidence that, when well implemented, civic education can have some impact on political knowledge and even values.

For developing countries, the research on civic education's impact is much thinner. Most of what has been done amounts to qualitative assessments that can be useful in determining outputs and connecting them to context but offer no information about program impact. For example, an evaluation sponsored by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) analyzed nine civic education initiatives in the Latin American region during the early 1990s, six of them adult-

¹¹ The results of the 1998 study are reported in Lutkus et al. (1999). The report has occasioned some attention and response, e.g., Cooper (1999), Quigley (1999). This kind of bad civic news continues to unfold. A spring 2000 survey of graduating seniors at leading American colleges and universities yielded an average score of 53% on a high-school level American history test that could serve as a qualifier examination for a civic education course. See Neal et al. (2000), also Broder (2000) and Veale (2000).

¹² Niemi and Junn (1998). The authors found that civics education per se could add as much as 10.6% to political knowledge scores (when background factors were controlled for statistically), and participation in mock elections/-student government another 5.2%. For political system trust measures, the value-added was much less, though still statistically significant. Their methodology was to ascertain from the survey data the amount of time spent studying civics, the variety of topics covered in such study, and the degree to which current events were discussed in class.

¹³ In addition, a very ambitious study sponsored by the International Education Association got underway in 1999 with a survey of some 120,000 students in 30 countries (mostly advanced Western states but including several USAID recipient countries in Eastern Europe). The project does include background data similar to Niemi and Junn's work, but no control groups unexposed to the civic education initiatives under scrutiny in the study. Unfortunately for our own inquiry, the survey results will not become available until 2001. A report on an earlier qualitative study has been released (Torney-Purta et al. 1999a); for a brief description of the quantitative research, see Torney-Purta et al. (1999b).

¹⁴ Nor do those in other countries necessarily do much better; see Niemi and Junn on the lack of political knowledge in the United States and elsewhere (1999: 5 &ff.).

oriented and three school-based (Yudelman and Conger 1997). Another NED study looked at six Russian programs working with the formal education system (Johnson 1998). Neither study attempted any quantitative analysis of program impact. There are also more speculative appraisals, such as Taylor's (1999) analysis of a new Salvadoran program for 10-12-year olds.¹⁵

One singular exception to this pattern comes in a study of civic education in Zambia, analyzed by Bratton et al. (1999). In comparing participants from two adult civic education efforts with a control group, the authors looked for evidence of program impact on citizen knowledge/skills, values/preferences, and behavior – essentially the same outcomes that our own studies have been targeting. The researchers found that program participants scored significantly higher on knowledge of the governmental system and of citizen rights and responsibilities, on sense of political efficacy,¹⁶ and on political tolerance of views opposing their own, as well as on participatory measures such as voting and attending campaign rallies. Interestingly, the participants exhibited considerably less trust in political institutions (at both national and local levels) than the control group, perhaps because they had become more capable of discerning the flaws in both national and local governmental bodies. This finding in particular will have some resonance for our own assessment, as will become clear later on.

A less happy finding was that these program benefits accrued largely to people already more educated and more politically informed through media exposure. Participants who were less well educated were less likely to score high on the measures used. In other words, civic education had much less effect on citizens with the least education and media exposure. The Zambia findings provide some interesting points of comparison with our own analysis, so we shall return to them later on.

One interesting addition to this very slim genre comes from the Center for Civic Education, which conducted a survey of treatment-and-control groups for a school-based civic education program in Bosnia for both junior-high and high schoolers (Soule 2000). The author finds statistically significant differences between the treatment and control groups for all the dimensions we will be exploring in the present report – knowledge/skills, values and participation. It is not clear from this study's initial draft in which of these three dimensions civic education has brought about the most change, although the author hints (Soule 2000: 16) that values proved the most difficult to change. She also finds that more participatory and action-oriented teaching methods (e.g., students selecting the topic to study, developing a policy portfolio, competing with other class teams, trying to implement their policy ideas) lead to more change in most of these dimensions. We will arrive at similar conclusions on instructional methodology in our own country assessments.

¹⁵ Or more generally see Villegas-Riemers (1994), who argues prospectively for the impact civic education could have in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

¹⁶ The political efficacy findings hint at the before-and-after methodology problem to be taken up later in this report. Program participants saw themselves as much more likely either to speak publicly at a community meeting (82% said so, as against 43% of the control group) or to organize a community meeting (73% vs. 25%). See Bratton et al. (1999: 814). It is hard to believe that differences of such magnitude could have resulted solely from civic education program participation; they suggest the possibility that the participants may have been different (in this case more inclined to community involvement) in the first place. For example, 52% of the participants reported themselves to be community leaders, as opposed to only 32% of the control group (ibid., 815). But this kind of question can only be answered by a pre-and-post assessment. See Annex A for more on this topic.

II. THE STUDY DESIGN

A three-country study.

There were several reasons for selecting the three countries involved in this assessment. Most obviously, they represent the three regions in which USAID has been most active over the 1990s in supporting civic education (cf. Figure 2). Secondly, these three countries provide an excellent range of environments within which USAID has supported civic education initiatives. Each of the three was in political transition in the mid-1990s – exactly the sort of situation in which civic education could be thought to have a maximum impact. It would have something valuable to offer at a key moment in a country's democratic trajectory, and program participants would have a strong incentive to benefit from it as they pondered the prospects of the new political system in which they would be living. Each of these three countries, in other words, was seen to have a need for a jump-start approach to democratic politics. Figure 3 provides data from Freedom House to serve as a backdrop for the discussion below.

[Figure 3 about here]

The **Dominican Republic** in the mid-1990s was undergoing a democratic transition, but one of a more subtle kind than what the other two countries were then experiencing. It was just coming out from what might be described as a period of "thin authoritarianism" under President Joaquin Balaguer, who had been in power for most of the preceding three decades, much of the time through elections of highly dubious validity. Balaguer himself had earlier served as the protégé of President Rafael Trujillo, the notorious dictator who had ruled the Dominican Republic for the three previous decades, ending with his assassination in 1961. Amid considerable instability and American intervention, Balaguer dominated the scene for most of the 1960s and 1970s, but the system opened up and enjoyed a period of relatively free democratic governance through the 1980s.

Balaguer returned to power toward the end of the decade and democracy sagged (cf. Figure 3). But after winning a 1994 election generally agreed to be fraudulent, he agreed to step down two years hence in favor of a president to be democratically elected in 1996. Thus there was a window during 1994-96 for putting together an effort to provide some quick tutelage in democracy to the citizens who would soon be called upon to practice. And presumably citizen interest in learning about democracy should also have been high at precisely that time. The Dominican programs surveyed for this report all operated during this 1994-96 window when impact should have been at its highest.

By the mid-1990s **Poland** had already shed its decades-long Communist rule and had become a democratic polity. But the Communist period was of sufficient length and harshness (note the low Freedom House rankings shown in Figure 3 for the 1970s, improving gradually in the 1980s and then abruptly toward the end of the decade as the Communist era ended) that democracy was still very much a new and untried approach as of mid-decade. At the same time, as one of the "northern tier" of formerly Communist Eastern European states, Poland had made considerable

progress in democratization, so it could be assumed that civic education programs were working in generally receptive terrain. As with the Dominican Republic, our survey was aimed at programs that should have been working under highly favorable circumstances.

South Africa in the mid-1990s was also transitioning from a long period of authoritarian rule over the vast majority of its population in the form of the apartheid system, which had been in place since 1948 – roughly the same duration as the Communist domination of Poland. Its democratic passage, however, came a good half-decade behind that experienced in Poland (cf. Figure 3), and so the memory of authoritarianism was more recent at the time of USAID-supported civic education efforts. Consequently, the programs, which were conducted among the black and coloured populations who had been on the receiving end of apartheid, should have been expected to encounter fertile ground.

An additional factor worth noting is that while all three countries recently had to deal with prolonged authoritarian periods of varying intensity, each of them also had experiences of less harsh political systems, some of them more distant while others were more recent. The Dominican Republic had elections regarded as essentially fair in the early 1960s and again in the late 1970s. Poland had enjoyed a more or less open political system in the years just before World War II, and had already experienced democratic elections in the early 1990s. Finally, South Africans had lived with a much less oppressive (if nonetheless inegalitarian) regime before the advent of apartheid in the late 1940s, and had already experienced one democratic national election in 1994 after the dissolution of the apartheid system. For Poles and South Africans, of course, these more favorable times were so far in the past that few citizens alive in the mid-1990s had any direct memory of them, but indirectly they formed part of the political culture serving as the backdrop for civic education initiatives. Citizens of each country, in other words, had better governmental times to look back upon as well to look forward to when these USAID-sponsored initiatives were under way. Presumably these national historical experiences added at least some dimension to citizen interest in getting the political system firmly onto a democratic track.

Other comparative data are also relevant, as evidenced in Table 1. Here we see some remarkable similarities between the Dominican Republic and South Africa, with Poland considerably more advanced in most respects. The first two countries are quite close in literacy and per capita income, and are fairly close in life expectancy – enough so that on the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI – which includes all three of these indicators) they measure very closely indeed, ranking in 88th and 89th place respectively out of 174 countries included in the mid-1990s. Poland ranked well ahead in 52nd place in the HDI. On the Gini index of income inequality (where zero is complete equality and one complete inequality), the first two countries again differ markedly from Poland, this time in the direction of far more inequality in distribution. The Dominican Republic's relatively high Gini figure is representative of the Latin American region generally, while South Africa's even higher index reflects the aftermath of the vastly unequal apartheid system. Likewise, Poland's very low (and thus more equal) index represents the legacy of almost a half-century of Communist rule. In sum, we have two countries much alike on most indicators and one rather distinct. This pattern will show up in some of our civic education analyses below.

[Table 1 about here]

The programs assessed.

In each country studied, several civic education programs were selected for analysis, in order to cover the range of initiatives USAID had been supporting. In the discussion that follows, the programs will be aggregated together, so as to give an overall picture of American assistance to civic education. This report would of course be richer if we could conduct a separate analysis of each program against its control group, but doing so would mean foreclosing any remote possibility of a reasonably brief treatment of the data. Consequently, the programs for each country will be treated as a unit in the present assessment.¹⁷ These programs, along with the number of respondents from each, are listed in Table 2.

[Table 2 about here]

Dominican Republic. Here there were four civic education initiatives for which participants were surveyed, each one at least a bit different from the others.

- Radio Santa Maria (RSM) emphasized general democracy. It first trained intermediaries, who then conducted civic education training in their communities, largely in a lecture-and-handouts format. RSM ran two complete cycles in the mid-1990s. Despite its name, RSM was not a broadcast-based program.
- Grupo Acción por la Democracia (GAD) operated in a two-step fashion, first lecturing participants on democratic rights/obligations, then holding a series of national and local fora to discuss political issues and solutions up until December 1996. GAD operated largely outside the capital city of Santo Domingo.
- Asociación Dominicana para el Desarrollo de la Mujer (ADOPEM) was a women's NGO that trained community leaders in democracy and women's rights, using a classroom/workshop format. The program operated through calendar year 1996 up until January 1997.
- Participación Ciudadana was a national NGO that created an ad hoc group to train observers for the 1996 elections. Like RSM, PC first trained local leaders, who then trained people in their communities in democratic values as well as election mechanics. The program ran up until mid-1996.

Poland. Whereas in the Dominican Republic our programs had a number of different foci, in Poland all three of those analyzed here emphasized democratic community problem solving and local governance. All three also followed a similar methodology, beginning with problem identification and proceeding through community meetings and problem-solving activities. Each had a two-stage approach, first identifying and training local leaders, then moving on to include wider groups of citizens. It was the latter constituency that constituted the sample frame for this report.

¹⁷ For analyses of each of the Dominican and Polish programs separately, see the original report (Sabatini et al. 1999). The South African programs were analyzed collectively in the report on that country (Finkel and Stumbras 2000).

- Foundation for Support of Local Democracy (FSLD) operated in 23 relatively small towns over the 1994-95 period. Our sample included leaders and participants from all 23 sites.
- The Dialogue Project was also run by FSLD, but worked in seven larger cities (all of which we sampled), emphasizing skills in local governance. It started in 1991 and ran through 1995.
- The Lublin Neighborhood Revitalization Program had a much narrower target clientele, functioning in two lower-income areas (both included here) of the city of Lublin, beginning in 1991. Its methodology centered on regular neighborhood meetings rather than training per se.

In addition, the original study on Poland included a sample from the program run by the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, but this initiative – a 240-hour, six-month course targeted on professional elites – was so distinct that it could not be reasonably included with the other civic education efforts in any of our three countries. As a result, it is not part of the present analysis.¹⁸

South Africa. Like the Polish programs incorporated in this study, the South African civic education efforts were in most respects alike, a factor that makes analysis more straightforward. All concentrated on general democracy and legal rights, with the exception that one also included a significant emphasis on women's rights. The participants comprised black and coloured South Africans, both of which groups were denied political participation during the apartheid regime. All three programs were conducted during 1996-98.

- The National Institute for Public Interest Law (NPILAR) is part of a consortium promoting human/legal rights and democratic practice, with an added concentration on women's rights. Our sample covered five provinces.
- The Community Law Center-Durban (CLC) is another member of this consortium, operating largely in KwaZulu Natal province, where NPILAR is not presently active. Our sample was drawn exclusively from this province.
- Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR) operates nationally through an extensive series of workshops each year, with a political participation receiving added emphasis in the year our sample was taken. Unlike all the other programs included in our assessment, LHR was not funded by USAID; the USAID mission in South Africa wanted to incorporate one non-USAID-supported program among those analyzed there. Our sample came from eight provinces.

The sample and survey. In all three countries, local polling survey firms were contracted to conduct the survey samples and conduct the interviews. For some programs, accurate lists had been maintained for both trainers and participants, while for others only partial lists were available. In these latter cases, a "snowball" approach was used to gather potential respondents for the treatment group from successive waves of interviewees, and then a random sample of the people so named were selected for subsequent interviews. The control group was then chosen on a random basis to match the treatment group as closely as possible on important measures (see n19 for more details). In selecting the control group in this fashion, we in effect matched the

¹⁸ Interested readers may consult the original study (Sabatini et al. 1999).

control group to the treatment group, meaning that the former cannot be seen as a national probability sample representative of the entire adult population. But the fact that the two groups are matched enables us to assert (within some limits as explained elsewhere in this report) that civic education accounts for differences between them on the three dimensions we are measuring.

Surveys administered by our contracting organizations formed the principal database for our analysis in the country studies. These were the Instituto de Estudios de Población y Desarrollo in the Dominican Republic, the OVRodek Badania Opinii Publicznes in Poland, and Markinor in South Africa. All had considerable experience in surveys and sampling.

Measuring impact. To measure the impact of adult civic education activities constitutes a relatively straightforward process. First, program participants can be identified (the “treatment group” in statistical parlance), and then a matched (“control”) group of non-participants can be identified who are the same in most demographic respects (location, age, income, sex, educational background, etc.) except that they have not taken part in the program. A questionnaire is used with both groups of respondents, and their answers are compared. The use of the participating and the non-participating groups, plus statistical controls,¹⁹ makes it possible to determine statistically whether the treatment group differs from the control group, i.e., whether it can be inferred that the program had a discernable impact. This basic design is tried and true, and it has been used countless times under all sorts of circumstances (medical, educational, etc.). When well done, it provides a reasonable answer to the question, “What are we getting for our program dollar?”²⁰

The survey instrument

In the surveys, some 25 measures were used to gauge democratic qualities along various dimensions. Of these, eight are used in the present analysis to cover several aspects of the three primary qualities we are interested in – participatory behaviors, democratic knowledge/skills, and values/evaluations. The questions employed in the surveys were drawn from the long literature dealing with surveys of civic culture, citizenship and participation.²¹ A brief sketch of each of the eight impact variables follows.

¹⁹ There are two types of “control” at work here. First there is the “control group” of non-participants, who are matched as closely as possible with the participating or “treatment” group by location, ethnicity, educational level, etc. Then there are statistical controls that isolate out other factors (e.g., church attendance, household size, income level) that did not get included in selecting the sample groups. This second type of control is needed, because it is not possible to match the two survey groups exactly in all the particulars that might be relevant to ascertaining program impact (at least not to do so and also stay within the budget allocated to the assessment). In the South Africa study it proved feasible to obtain a better match between the participants and non-participant sample groups than in either of the two earlier studies. Accordingly, it was less necessary to rely on statistical controls in the analysis.

²⁰ There remain problems, of course, in that it’s not possible to determine whether the treatment and control groups were exactly the same before the program began. But given limited funding and time, the treatment-and-control method used here is as good as it is possible to do. It is also the approach generally used in studies of this kind (for more on these issues, see Annex A).

²¹ This tradition dates back to Almond and Verba (1963) and Verba and Nie (1972); more recent studies drawn upon include Putnam (1993), Brady, Verba and Schlozman (1995), and Seligson (1995). For a more complete list of the work drawn upon, see Sabatini et al. (1998: 20).

Participatory behaviors. Here the surveys asked a battery of twelve to fourteen questions (depending on the country) dealing with political participation within the past year.²² A statistical factor analysis technique was used to sort the questions into two groups or principal dimensions, and the questions falling into each dimension were then aggregated into a scale.

- **Local participation** included four behaviors: taking part in organized community problem-solving activity; attending a local government meeting; working in a local election campaign; contacting a local elected official. The scale used in our analysis thus comprised five points, running from zero (no behaviors) to four (all behaviors). This particular measure proved to have the strongest link to civic education programming across all the three countries.
- **General participation** included most of the other behaviors among those surveyed: contacting various types of leaders or officials; participating in political protests or the like; contributing money to a party or candidate; lodging a complaint with a government agency. The scale on this question varied from zero to six for the Dominican Republic, zero to five for Poland, and zero to eight for South Africa. This was the only variable for which the scale varied from one country to another.²³

Civic competence. Two composite items were used here as measures of political knowledge and skills.

- **Political knowledge** was tapped through four questions about the political system, so the scale ranged from zero to four.
- **Political efficacy** represents an attempt to assess citizens' sense of their own influence on the political system. It traces back to the earliest work on civic culture (cf. Almond and Verba 1963) and is generally regarded as central to the functioning of a healthy democracy. Respondents were asked to agree/disagree on a four-point scale with statements that politics was too complicated to understand, that people like them had no say in government activity, that they felt prepared to participate politically, and that they knew how to contact government officials to discuss political views. Answers indicating greater sense of efficacy were counted as one and the scores for the successive answers were summed to form an index between zero and four.

²² Even though it is the most common act of political participation for most people, we did not include voting per se as one of our behaviors measured, principally because it meant widely divergent things across our three countries. The types of elections (local/national, presidential/parliamentary, before/after civic education) varied considerably, whereas the other measures (e.g., contacting a local official) were more nearly constant.

²³ Intuitively "national participation" would make a better measure than the "general participation" employed here. But as noted in the text, the two participation measures were derived through a statistical factor analysis, which sorted the 12-14 questions into two principal components. The four clearly local questions all sorted into one component, while the others clustered into a second one. This latter component included a number of items that were not differentiated between national and local in the surveys and thus could have been either (e.g., contributing money to a candidate, participating in a protest). Consequently, the second participatory variable had to be labeled "general."

Democratic values and trust. We found it convenient to break this third dimension among our democratic qualities into two parts, dealing respectively with values and trust in democracy. Each of these sub-dimensions consisted of two items. On the values side the measures were:

- **Political tolerance.** Along with political efficacy, tolerance of different groups in the political arena has for some time been considered a key factor in sustainable democracy.²⁴ To gauge tolerance, respondents were asked nine standard questions regarding their willingness to allow freedom of association, voting and speech to each of three generally unpopular groups.²⁵ Answers were combined into a 1-4 point scale.
- **Support for regular elections.** This item consisted of a single question asking how willing respondents would be to give up elections to live under a non-elected regime that could impose law and order, and could deliver housing and jobs. Answers were coded in a 1-4 range from most willing to least willing.

The democratic trust measures used in this analysis are:

- **Institutional trust.** Respondents were asked how much they trusted each of ten political and social institutions, including the president, highest court, legislature, church, media, etc. The number of answers at the high end (“a good deal” of trust in the specific institution) was totaled to yield a scale of 0-7.
- **Satisfaction with democracy.** This measure comprised a single question asking people’s level of satisfaction with the way democracy was functioning in their country. The answers were coded from one (“very dissatisfied”) to four (“very satisfied”).

Reliability is always a question for surveys employing composite indices like ours has done. How do we know that the nine questions used to gauge political tolerance, for example, are related to each other and thus indicative of a single dimension of tolerance? The measure customarily used to answer this question is Cronbach’s alpha (also called a “reliability coefficient”), which takes the average correlation of the question answers among themselves. The alpha coefficients for our three adult surveys fall generally within the .6-.8 range thought suitable for this kind of research. For more detail, readers should see Annex A to this report.

Focus groups provided an additional methodology to flesh out information obtained from the surveys, in particular to get more in-depth information about participants’ experiences in the training sessions and their attitudes toward various aspects of democracy such as participation and trust. Several focus groups were conducted in Poland and South Africa, and it had been hoped to do so in the Dominican Republic as well, but polling delays prevented this.

²⁴ See, for instance, Finkel (1999) as well as Seligson and Booth (1993).

²⁵ In the Dominican Republic and Poland, the groups were atheists, militarists and communists, while in South Africa they were atheists, racists, and anti-female sexists.

The data analysis.

The principal tool for assessing program impact in this study is multiple regression analysis (using the ordinary least squares or OLS method). This approach, along with some examples, is explained at some length in the Annex A to this report. The regression technique yields a range of statistics used in analyses like the present one, and several such measures will be employed in this report. The one that we shall be using most in this assessment is also a straightforward one to understand. This is a measure of the dependent variable that we label “percent in high category,” which will be shown

apparent in the middle section of Figure 5 on political efficacy. Again we see an increase in those scoring in the high category, but in this case it is more gradual than for sessions attended, as can be seen by comparing the sets of bars in the middle and on the left of Figure 5. For participatory methods, the overall pattern is not so much a “threshold” as a “step effect,” in which including none to a few methods raised the high scorers from 21% to 25% and then more methods increased the reading to 32%.

[Figure 5 about here]

A third instructional aspect was participants’ perception of instructor quality. They were asked how well a number of number of adjectives described their trainers – “very well,” “well,” or “not very well.” These qualities comprised being knowledgeable, inspiring, likeable, interesting, and understandable. Those who chose the “very well” answer were labeled “high” on instructor perception, while those who responded only “well” or “not very well” were categorized as low. The result is shown in the right-hand set of bars in Figure 5. High scorers among those with low instructor perception were only slightly higher than the control group (23% vs. 21%), while those regarding their trainers more highly scored a good deal better (31%).

It should be emphasized here that “perception of instructor quality” is only that – a perception; this is not a measure of actual quality of instruction, which would be impossible to assess in this kind of *ex post* study. And certainly student evaluations of instructors can be off the mark on details, as is well known to those in higher education involved in the American enthusiasm for such exercises. But as is also well known, this kind of evaluation also proves quite effective in providing a broad picture of whether an instructor is basically good or bad at his/her work. And to the extent that perception of instructor quality correlates with program impact, as we see in Figure 5, it appears to be a valid indicator of program quality.²⁷ Unfortunately, we did not think to include it in the first two country studies, so it is available only for South Africa.

We’ve seen thus far how the various instructional qualities relate *individually* to program impact. The obvious next question is, how do they relate *collectively* to improving democratic orientations? Figure 6 uses the example of political efficacy to illustrate this linkage. Here we see that, as in Figures 4 and 5, for the control group 21% of respondents fell in the high category on the political efficacy score. For those in the treatment group but reporting no good instructional qualities (that is, people reporting only one or two sessions, less than three participatory methods, and unimpressive instructors), there was no increase in those scoring in the high category. Instead there was a slight decrease to 20%. When one good quality was present – whether it was session frequency, participatory methods, or instructor quality – the high category increased to 28%. For two good qualities, it was 30%, and for three it grew to 43%. Thus we find a noteworthy advance when one or two good qualities are introduced and a real jump when three are present.

[Figure 6 about here]

²⁷ Though as pointed out just above, such perception cannot be a measure of actual instructor quality, in that there is no way to assess this aside from participants’ perceptions. In other words, we cannot observe the instruction itself; we must rely on others’ perceptions of that phenomenon.

The approach used for Figure 6 will serve as the principal vehicle for presenting our findings for civic education in our three countries – showing the impact of civic education in general and good instructional qualities in particular upon democratic orientations. For the Dominican Republic and Poland, we have two such qualities – frequency of sessions and participatory methods. For South African adults, we were able to add a third in the form of perceived instructor quality.

III. MAIN FINDINGS

In this section, we will present the central findings from our three-country civic education assessment. As observed just above, the major tool for doing so will be the “good instructional qualities” approach, and the principal presentation will be in Table 3, which puts in one place the major findings of our work. A glance at the fourth row of numbers in Table 3 (on political efficacy) for the series of columns labeled “South Africa” at the top will show that it is essentially a reprise of what was shown in Figure 6, except that the latter’s bars for “2 good qualities” and “3 good qualities” have been collapsed into one datum. This is to facilitate comparison with the Dominican Republic and Poland (where, it will be recalled, perceived instructor quality had not been included in our questionnaire). Some of the data from Table 3 will be presented graphically, along the lines indicated in Figure 6, but in the interests of brevity, not all.

[Table 3 about here]

Before beginning our analysis of the data in Table 3, we must introduce the notion of “span difference,” which represents an attempt to capture the increase in high category scores between the control group and the treatment group receiving the maximum number of good instructional qualities. Thus, to continue with our example of political efficacy for South African adults, while 21% of the control group had scores in the high category, for program participants enjoying 2 or 3 good instructional qualities, that number goes up to 34% – a “span difference” of 13 percentage points. For the Dominican Republic the analogous span difference on political efficacy is 11 points, and for Poland it comes to 14 points.

A fairly consistent difference across the democratic orientations shown in Table 3 divides Poland from the other two countries. Larger Polish span differences on four of the eight variables presented in the table would appear to reflect a greater efficacy for civic education with good instructional qualities. And perhaps more importantly, in Poland civic education by itself with no good qualities brings about considerable improvement along several dimensions (e.g., 21 points for local participation, 15 for political efficacy, 9 for elections support), while it increases those in the high category by only 5 points at the most for any dimension in the other two countries (local participation in South Africa, which rose from 30 to 35% with no good instructional qualities). Surely a part of the difference here can be accounted for by Poland’s higher level of development, as shown in Table 1. The implication across countries is that, other things being equal, a more educated population with higher income would likely benefit more immediately from in-

structional stimulus – whether well or badly delivered – than a citizenry less favored in these ways.²⁸

The democratic orientations

Political participation. The most immediately obvious aspect of Table 3 is that civic education had the largest impact on political participation, mainly at the local level. For adults in Poland and South Africa, this was the dimension with the biggest span difference (twice as high as the next largest such difference in Poland). In the Dominican Republic, where program impact in general was more modest than in the other two countries, it had less impact but even so did increase the proportion of people in the high category by some 10 percent. Figure 7 shows these differences more clearly for local participation. Here we see civic education by itself (with no good instructional qualities) having no impact on local participation in the Dominican Republic, but exercising some threshold effect when one or two good qualities are added. In Poland, just taking part in a civic education program without any good instructional qualities raised the percentage of high category respondents from 25 to 46%, and then adding in two good instructional qualities provided another boost to 60%. For South Africa, there was a steady improvement across the scale in step fashion, from 30 to 48%.

[Figure 7 about here]

It is gratifying to find participation at the top of the democratic orientations affected by civic education, inasmuch as increasing this component of democracy has been the primary end objective of the enterprise all along (cf. the earlier discussion centering on Figure 1). Improving democratic participation, after all, has been the main goal of most civic education programming, with civic competence and democratic values seen as necessary adjuncts to that end. And it should be recalled that “democratic participation” does not mean voting²⁹ but rather refers to deeper participatory dimensions: four different behaviors for local participation and a larger number for the general participation³⁰ – none of which include voting in elections.

It is clear from Table 3 that, except for the Dominican Republic, impact was much greater for local than for general participation.³¹ This may have been because the civic education programs emphasized local activities, particularly in the participatory methods used in training. The bars

²⁸ The differences in fact are a good deal greater than the per capita income figures suggest. Using the UNDP’s “purchasing power parity” (PPP\$) income concept, which adjusts for different purchasing power between national currencies, at PPP\$ 5442 per capita, Poland is a good 25-35% ahead of the other two countries (cf. Table 1). But the Gini index indicates a much more unevenly *distributed* income in the Dominican Republic and South Africa, such that the *median* income is a great deal more than 25-35% larger in Poland. To the extent that citizens enjoying higher incomes participate more politically in most countries, Poland presents a potentially more receptive audience for civic education programming. Whether a program recruits people at the median level of socio-economic status (SES) or even more elite strata (say, at the 75th percentile of SES), it’s likely to do better in Poland than in the other two countries.

²⁹ On the exclusion of voting as a component in the participation measures, see n22.

³⁰ As noted in Table 3, the general participation measure included 6 behaviors in the Dominican Republic, 5 in Poland, and 7 in South Africa.

³¹ It should be recalled that the two adult political participation measures are distinguished between local and *general*, rather than local and *national*. This is the outcome of a factor analysis sorting the 12-14 questions covering participation into two components.

in Figure 8 appear to support such a notion, in that the respondents whose training included more good qualities were more likely to have engaged in more local participatory behaviors. Why there was so little program impact on the general participation measure in South Africa (a span difference of only 2%) is less clear, especially when compared to Poland (17%) and even the Dominican Republic (11%). Perhaps the South African training focused even more on the local level than was the case in the other two countries. It could also be that South Africa's multiethnic/federal system, local politics carries more importance for many people than national politics, and thus instruction designed to spur political involvement would have more impact at the local level. The relatively homogeneous populations and unitary political structures of the other two countries might well give national politics a comparatively greater salience.

Citizen competence. The two measures included here are political knowledge and political efficacy. Knowledge showed a significant improvement in the Dominican Republic, some in Poland and relatively little in South Africa. The apparent gain in South Africa becomes even less when it is pointed out that the criterion for being included in the "high category" is correct answers to 3 of 4 questions about the political system in the Dominican Republic and Poland, but only one correct answer out of 4 for South Africa. Some 25% of South African control group respondents could give one correct answer, and even training with two or three good qualities could only raise that to 30%. Imparting facts about political institutions may not have been emphasized in the South African programs.³²

Political efficacy showed similar gains across all three countries – 11 to 14 points in terms of span difference – although it started from a higher base in the Dominican Republic, where almost twice as many in the control group scored 3 or more on our 4-point scale as in Poland or South Africa. For those respondents in our civic education programs, Figure 8 shows two distinct patterns. In the Dominican Republic and South Africa, taking part in a civic education initiative by itself adds virtually nothing to political efficacy (in fact South Africa registers a one-point loss), but good instruction does yield significant returns. Two good instructional qualities in the Dominican Republic, and two or more in South Africa will increase those in the high category considerably. In Poland, on the other hand, civic education instruction per se is enough to increase high category scorers 21 to 35%, but then things plateau and good quality instruction adds nothing further.

[Figure 8 about here]

Democratic values. Both the measures employed to gauge civic education impact on democratic values show somewhat mixed results. For political tolerance, good instructional qualities did give an added impact, as presented in Figure 9, but that impact was not steadily upward ("monotonic" in statistical terminology). For the Dominican Republic, there was an increase of

³² But of course one cannot tell from merely looking at results. Still, one is reminded of current trends in American pedagogy, which tends to emphasize participatory approaches and processes over lectures and factual knowledge. Interestingly, knowledge about political rights – which were arguably of greater practical importance in immediately post-apartheid South Africa – was considerably higher, with 40-50% of respondents answering correctly at least 8 of 11 questions; interestingly, program participation had little effect on the percentage of respondents in this high category (see Finkel and Stumbras 2000: 30-32). But these results are not shown in Table 3, where the purpose was to show comparability across the three countries. Political rights were not such a major program focus in the other two survey sites.

12% in the high category when one good quality was introduced into instruction, but then a slight decline with two good qualities. In Poland, one good quality largely wiped out the gains from merely taking part in the program, and then two good qualities restored things. Then finally, while South Africa shows some decrease for program participants without any good instructional qualities (from 26 to 22% scoring in the high category), it indicates a healthy step up (to 30%) when one good quality is present, and then another one (to 40%) with two or three good qualities. Support for elections manifests a similar up-and-down pattern in Table 3. There is some overall gain in Poland (14 points on the span difference), less in the other two countries (6 and 7 points), and as with tolerance the trend is not monotonic in any of our cases.

[Figure 9 about here]

Democratic support. Here also there are two measures – trust in institutions and satisfaction with the democratic system currently in place. Institutional trust manifests distinctly negative patterns in the Dominican Republic and Poland, while showing a slight positive trend in South Africa. Dominican program participants become less trusting upon any exposure to civic education, while in Poland they do so to any extent only when two good instructional qualities are employed. South Africa reverses the Polish pattern, with little change just from program exposure or one good quality, and then an upward bump with two or three good qualities. Civic education's negative impact on trust is especially interesting, and has been the subject of additional inquiry by the authors of our first report (Sabatini et al. 1998). Analyzing the Dominican case specifically, they conclude that the principal explanation behind these negative effects was the opposition bias of the civic education program instructors (Finkel et al., 2000). It stands to reason that the civic education instructors in the South African programs, working as they did in the first blush of the post-apartheid era, would have been more enthusiastic about the political system than perhaps their Dominican (or Polish) counterparts were, and this difference is reflected in the results depicted in Figure 10.

More generally, it makes good sense that citizens develop a healthy skepticism towards their governments as they learn more about democracy. They should demand that these institutions perform well, but the gap between what citizens want and what they see themselves getting may well increase as their understanding of democratic politics deepens. Indeed, this gap could well be seen as the spur to involvement in politics, such that we might expect our indicators for participation (particularly at the local level) and for institutional trust to move in at least modestly opposite directions (if trust decreases too far, the result may well lead to violent opposition rather than to constructive civic involvement). By this reasoning, the Dominican and Polish cases would be cause for some satisfaction with civic education, and we might wonder about the South African instance in which trust increased. The explanation for such a seeming anomaly could well be a post-apartheid instructor enthusiasm for democracy of the sort mentioned in the previous paragraph.

[Figure 10 about here]

Satisfaction with democracy, our second democratic support measure, registered very favorably, with 70% of the control group pronouncing itself "quite satisfied" with the democratic system in the Dominican Republic and fully 80% in South Africa. In Poland, the analogous figure was a

good deal less at 52%, but still a majority of the respondents. Program participation made little impact, however, as is evident in Table 3, where we find that it variously increased or decreased satisfaction, but only by small degrees.

Considering all our impact variables together, we see that civic education has had a serious impact (18-35 span difference points) on local participation in Poland and South Africa and on general participation in the former (17 points). In the Dominican Republic, it has had some impact (10-11 points) on both kinds of participation. Our citizen competence measures registered smaller but fairly uniform impact (11-14 points) across all three countries for political efficacy. Improvement was about the same for political knowledge in the Dominican Republic (13 points), with rather less in Poland (9 points) and South Africa (5 points).

Our values/support indicators, which are generally recognized as being the hardest to change (see, e.g., Niemi and Junn 1998: 140-142 et passim), don't do as well with civic education. Political tolerance and election support improve somewhat (6-14 points), but seem less subject to good instructional qualities than the participation and competence indicators. Our other two measures – institutional trust and democratic satisfaction – manifest even more erratic patterns, with a largely negative program impact emerging for the former and virtually no impact at all for the latter.

Intervening factors affecting civic education impact.

Taking part in civic education programs does have at least a modest impact on democratic orientations; more importantly, good instructional qualities enhance that impact considerably, as this report has shown in some detail above. Indeed, civic education when implemented with several good instructional qualities makes enough difference to justify USAID support, as will be argued later on. But as we have alluded to at various points in the report, civic education programming does not account for all increases in democratic orientation by any means. There are any number of other factors that also have considerable relationship to an individual's political participation, sense of efficacy, tolerance and so on. Among these are educational level, income, gender, length of present residence, group memberships, age, and even household size. In the interview schedules employed in our three country surveys, we asked each respondent about a battery of such possible influences, and included them in our statistical analyses. The discussion and regression table in Annex A lists all these intervening "control variables."

Several of these "interactive effects" (in statistical terminology) have potential civic education program implications. If civic education programs help men improve their democratic orientations significantly more than women, are such initiatives then helping to widen gender disparities in the political arena? If more educated participants are doing better than those with less schooling, is civic education in effect enhancing elite dominance in the society?³³ What about group memberships? If participants already belonging to more social groups benefit more from civic education efforts, the implication is that people with higher stocks of social capital will be more politically effective with civic education training.

³³ An association between previous educational level and civic education program impact was a central finding in Bratton et al. (1999), so the question is especially germane to the present assessment.

Beyond these demographic variables lies another potentially constraining factor, which is often called “fade-out” in educational circles – the idea that over time impact dissipates, even disappears for all practical purposes. This can be especially true of skills quickly learned but generally not exercised after training, such as cardio-pulmonary resuscitation as taught in first-aid classes in the United States, which must be renewed periodically to remain effective. To the extent that civic education impact fades out over time, there may be serious implications for programming. What may be useful in helping voters prepare for an upcoming election, in other words, may disappear and be of little use in promoting democratic participation over the longer term.

Tables 4a through 5 present our findings on these four potentially critical intervening factors: gender; educational background; group membership; and fade-out. In each case data are shown for local participation, political efficacy and political tolerance as representative democratic orientations.³⁴ Figures 11 and 12 illustrate some of these findings.

Gender. The most obvious pattern in Table 4a shows men scoring higher in all three countries and on all three democratic orientations offered in the table, both in the control groups and among civic education participants enjoying the most good instructional qualities. More significantly, men appear to benefit more from high quality civic education than women do, although this is less the case in South Africa than in the other two countries.

Figure 11 illustrates this imbalance for local participation. Here we see that in the Dominican Republic some 35% of men in the control group appear in the high category by involving themselves in at least two local political behaviors, while only 23% of women do so. Good quality civic education improves things for both sexes, but more so for men, whose numbers in the high category grow by 20 points from 35 to 55%, while women increase by 5 points from 23 to 28%. In Poland, these gender differences become more pronounced. Men, who in the control group have a six-point advantage over women (28 to 22%), increase that to 17 points (69 to 52%) when they receive civic education with two good instructional qualities. Only in South Africa do women improve by the same margin as men (19 points each), but in consequence the gender imbalance present in the control group carries over to the high-end treatment group, i.e., men are ahead by 13 points (38 to 25%) in the control group, and are ahead by the same 13 points among those in the best quality instruction group (57 to 44%). Only in political tolerance among South African civic education participants do women show a higher rate of improvement (13% against 12%), and the difference here is very slight indeed.

[Table 4a and Figure 11 about here]

These differences imply that, at least for the Dominican Republic and Poland, civic education programs somehow are more effective with women than with men. The reasons could lie in cultural context (e.g., the prevalence of *machismo* in the Dominican Republic), a majority of

³⁴ Similar interactive effects were found for the other democratic orientations analyzed in Table 3, but to present them all would in the fashion of Tables 4a through 5 would be rather overwhelming. The three orientations shown should be sufficient to illustrate. It should also be noted that – again in the interests of avoiding too much data – in these tables results are shown only for the control group and the group with the most good instructional qualities, which correspond to the first and last bars shown for each of the successive countries in Figures 7, 8 or 9.

male instructors, a male bias to the curriculum used, or even the very instructional qualities themselves that we have been lauding in this report. The respective genders of interviewer and respondent could also have had some influence here (e.g., male-to-male may have elicited more positive responses than male-to-female, and so on).

Equally interesting is the relatively less influential role of gender in South African civic education. Why should women do essentially as well as men in South Africa but not in the other two countries? Unfortunately, our data don't permit answering this question in any detail, but our findings strongly imply that future civic education programming should pay attention to gender concerns. A program that helps energize males toward political participation substantially more than females, as in Poland, might with careful attention be modified to have a more equal impact on both genders, more like the track record in South Africa.

Educational background. As with gender, the initial distribution within the control group is not unexpected. Those with more education (in this case, high school graduation or more) score better on all three measures portrayed in Table 4b. And after participating in civic education training with at least two good qualities, the more educated maintain their lead. In some cases, they even widen it, but in more instances (six of the nine comparisons shown in Table 4b, as indicated by the shaded cells), those with less education benefited more. This comes across clearly in Figure 12, which takes the same local participation variable as was used in Figure 11 for the gender analysis.

In Figure 12, comparing the first two bars for each country (showing improvement for those with less than a completed high school education) with the right two bars (for respondents with at least a high school diploma) indicates that for the Dominican Republic and South Africa, the less educated manifested substantially more progress. In the Dominican Republic, those with less than high school but two good instructional qualities outpaced the control group by 16 points (38 to 22%), while the high school graduates went up by only 5 points (from 38 to 43%). In South Africa the analogous increases were 21 points and 15 points. Only in Poland did the high school finishers do better, but this was the case by a substantial margin (38 point gain, as against 22 points for those not completing a secondary education).

[Table 4b and Figure 12 about here]

These findings for educational level are especially interesting, in that education can serve as a proxy for socio-economic status (SES), which has long been observed to have a strong relationship with political participation in the United States (see Brady et al. 1995: esp. n. 4). Bratton et al. (1999) found that prior education relates to civic education effectiveness as well in Zambia, where participants with more schooling benefited significantly more from their training than their less well educated counterparts. In contrast, our own assessments provide evidence that civic education involving good instructional qualities can help those with less education catch up with their fellow citizens who have had more formal school experience. The catching up, of course, is only partial. The better educated respondents still do better on all measures, both with and without civic education training, but the gap can be reduced. By implication, then, civic education can offer a partial remedy for some of the traditional advantages enjoyed in political life by people with higher SES.

It is important here to underline the positive implication of our finding. Many development strategies arguably tend to reinforce the hand of already dominant elites. Decentralization, for instance, has had a long track record of benefiting locally dominant elements at the expense of the average citizen, a legacy that democratization support initiatives often must take extra efforts to avoid repeating. Or strengthening the rule of law can provide more benefit to elites with greater access to legal remedies than to more ordinary people lacking such connections. It would not be surprising, then, if civic education tended to have the same effect. That at least in some circumstances it does not is worth noting. And insofar as civic education can be targeted to specific populations (e.g., the poor, the less educated) more easily than decentralization or rule of law initiatives, it could be deployed as part of a strategy intended to reduce socio-economic inequalities.

Group membership. Just as educational level can act as a proxy for SES, group membership can provide a similar function with respect to social capital accumulation.³⁵ People who belong to more groups can be inferred to enjoy higher stocks of social capital than those involved in fewer groups,³⁶ and it would be reasonable to expect them to benefit more from civic education.³⁷ The results shown in Table 4c are interestingly mixed, however. On local participation, as might be expected, those who were participating more in the first place (i.e., belonged to more groups) seemed to increase their involvement in the local political arena more, at least in two of our countries. In the Dominican Republic, respondents belonging to two or more groups and having two good qualities in their civic education instruction had 25% more representation in the high category (54% vs. 39%), while those involved with just one group or none showed only an 8-point gain (from 16 to 24%). South Africa displays a similar pattern, though in Poland, increases were higher (41 percentage points) for those in fewer groups than for those in more (31 points).

[Table 4c about here]

For political tolerance, in contrast, those with fewer group memberships appear to do slightly better with good quality civic education, as indicated by the shaded cells in Table 4c. The differences are not great (in the Dominican Republic, respondents belonging to two or more groups improved by 9 points – from 26 to 35% – while their counterparts in 0-1 groups increased by 11, a difference of 2; in both the other two countries, the analogous differences were 5 points in favor of respondents belonging to fewer groups). But that the data should point this way at all raises some intriguing issues. Good quality civic education seems to lead to more political tolerance, but social capital appears to have little to do with the relationship. Could it be that political tolerance is not a function of social capital? Perhaps the kind of social capital that is being tap-

³⁵ “Social capital” refers to the networks or interpersonal “glue” that brings and holds people together in groups that are the basic requisite for any purposeful social, economic or – most importantly for the present inquiry – political undertaking. See Putnam (1993 and 2000).

³⁶ Respondents were asked if they belonged to any of a number of specific groups (e.g., religious, recreational, women’s, union, community, cultural organizations) and then were asked about any other organizations they belonged to, so the universe of possible groups was well canvassed.

³⁷ Brady et al. (1995), for example, find that for the United States at the onset of the 1990s, civic skills built largely through group memberships were strongly associated with political participation – even more strongly than the SES measures.

ped in our surveys is what Putnam (2000) refers to as “bonding” links bringing together people of similar background (and of little use in promoting tolerance), rather than “bridging” links joining individuals of different types (and hopefully improving tolerance in the process). If this were so, then those involved in more groups might well have a more difficult time in improving political tolerance than people who are more socially isolated.

Fade-out effects. It is a truism that the effects of most experiences – certainly relatively brief ones encountered in adult life – tend to wear off over time. There is no good reason to expect that civic education would not display a similar pattern to some extent, and indeed this emerged in our first civic education country report, which reported a substantial decline in Polish participation among those more than six months out of civic education training, with a considerably smaller drop-off for the Dominican Republic (Sabatini et al. 1998: 37-40).³⁸ For South Africa, in contrast, fade-out effects were negligible on this measure (Finkel and Stumbras 2000: 29-30). Both these findings may be observed in the rows of figures for local participation in Table 5. For local participation in the Poland, there’s a decline of 14 points (from 64% in the high category among those who completed civic education training within six months to 50% among those over six months), but for the Dominican Republic and South Africa, the fall-off figures are only three and one points respectively. Political efficacy shows some decline in South Africa (7 points, from 33 to 26%), less in Poland (4 points) and the Dominican Republic (2 points). In all cases, however, even where fade-out effects did diminish some program gain, the net effects after six months or more were still positive. Thus in our worst instance in Table 5, high political efficacy scorers dropped over time from 33% of those sampled to 26%, but the latter still represented an advance of 5 points over the control group figure of 21%.

[Table 5 about here]

As it did with group memberships, political tolerance proves counter-intuitive when examined through the lens offered here by time elapsed since civic education training. For all three countries, the longer the time since training, the higher the political tolerance. The gains are modest – eight, five and four points reading across the entries in Table 5 – but still sufficient to raise some speculation. Could it be that the development of political tolerance requires some passage of time to exercise an impact? Might there be some process by which good civic education training leads indirectly to greater political tolerance by first encouraging more participation which in turns encourages people to become more tolerant of divergent views? The depth of inquiry allowed by our assessments has not permitted the detailed parsing of data that would be needed to tackle such an indirect question in the present report, but the provocative findings presented here might usefully pose a topic for future research of this complex and many-faceted phenomenon (see Finkel 1999).

How much impact is enough?

Thus far, we have shown that civic education programming in our three countries has had an impact on most of the democratic orientations (though not all of them) in most of our countries (but again not all of them all of the time). Referring back to Table 3, we can recall that while local

³⁸ It should be pointed out that for all three countries there was only one interview per respondent. For some a period of more than six months had elapsed since their civic education training, while for others it was less.

participation and political efficacy, for instance, improved in all countries, satisfaction with democracy changed scarcely at all. And while the general participation measure increased notably in the Dominican Republic and Poland, it showed virtually no change in South Africa. So granting that it doesn't seem to take hold for all orientations or in all places, what about when and where it does appear to have a demonstrable impact? Is it enough to raise the proportion of high scorers on local participation in the Dominican Republic from 28% in the control group to 38% when two good instructional qualities are employed? Or to raise corresponding measures for political efficacy in Poland from 20 to 34%? In other words, how can we get some grip on deciding that a civic education program is really giving a serious payoff when it appears to be having some impact on its participants? How much impact is enough to justify supporting a civic education program?

These would have been important questions to answer at any time in the history of foreign assistance. They constitute questions of much larger importance in the present era of managing for results in USAID programming against a general background of declining public enthusiasm in the United States as well as the donor community generally for supporting the overall development enterprise. In short, if civic education is to be supported as a foreign aid component, a serious case must be made for it in terms of politically meaningful (as opposed to only statistically significant) impact. Our findings indicate that such a case can be made, but to make it will require a brief excursion into comparative data from the United States and elsewhere.

Using extensive data collected by the U.S. Department of Education on some 4,275 high American school seniors in the late 1980s,³⁹ Niemi and Junn (1998) conducted a study of civic education along lines somewhat similar to our own (indeed, a number of aspects in our own studies were inspired by the Niemi-Junn team). They found that employing more participatory approaches, taking more frequent classes and covering a wider variety of topics all constituted practices linking directly to higher scores on civics knowledge tests. Collectively these good instructional qualities accounted for an average 15.8% increase in scores.⁴⁰ An improvement of not quite 16% might seem modest in some ways, but given the embarrassingly low levels of civic knowledge continually being revealed in the United States, an increase of that magnitude must be regarded as a meaningful accomplishment – worth investing in if we as a nation are concerned about creating a responsible citizenry for the future.

Our own data are quite different in form and purpose from the Niemi-Junn dataset, and so problems necessarily arise in making comparisons, but it is possible to review at least some of the findings from our three countries with a view to matching them up with the American picture. Table 6 presents data from several of our questions in a form that can be compared with the Niemi-Junn findings. Each of the four democratic orientations presented in Table 6 is a composite scale made up of a series of discrete binary items, so that it is possible to derive a percentage-point improvement measure.⁴¹

³⁹ This was the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Civics Assessment conducted in 1988, which like its counterpart a decade later (cf. Lutkus et al., 1999) found the state of civic education to be embarrassingly low.

⁴⁰ Smaller but still statistically significant linkages appeared on perceptual value questions such as how much attention is paid by government to the citizenry and to what extent government is accountable through elections.

⁴¹ The other four democratic orientations used throughout this report are made up of items that asked for “fuzzy” answers to a single question, such as “strongly agree,” “somewhat agree,” etc. A scale can be constructed from such

In Table 6, we see that for local participation in the Dominican Republic, a respondent who had the benefit of both good instructional qualities would – other things being equal (i.e., controlling for all other factors) – score on average 11.3% higher than someone who had not participated in the civic education program at all.⁴² For Poland, a civic education participant enjoying all good instructional qualities would tend to score 27% higher (the highest gain for any democratic orientation measure in the entire three-country study), and in South Africa the analogous gain would be 21%. General participation is impressive for Poland (12%), though less so for the other two countries. Figure 13 presents these increases in a three-dimensional format for both general and local participation. Improvements for other democratic orientations portrayed in Table 6 are not so high, but political knowledge in the Dominican Republic (over 8%) merits attention. On institutional trust, we again see the negative impact (almost 10%) of good instructional qualities in the Dominican Republic that we noticed earlier.

[Table 6 and Figure 13 about here]

As noted above, for our other democratic orientations it is difficult to get an intuitively satisfactory measure of impact like the “percent improvement” data on scores presented in Table 6 and Figure 13. Fortunately, however, we can get a good sense of improvement from the data on proportion of groups in high categories that we used for Table 3 (as well as Figures 4 through 12). The “span differences” from Table 3 are shown separately in Table 7, where it will be seen that they compare reasonably well with the “percent improvement” data presented in Table 6. In particular, the numerical data on local and general participation will be observed to be quite similar in magnitude and proportion to the bars shown in Figure 13.⁴³

Especially noteworthy in Table 7 is that the span differences for political efficacy and political tolerance are quite comparable with those shown for the two kinds of participation (except for

answers, and we have done so for the present report (e.g., for Table 3), but it cannot reasonably be interpreted in strict percentage terms. For the dimensions used in Table 6, on the other hand, this is feasible. For instance, trust in institutions is the sum of positive answers to queries whether the respondent had “a good deal” of trust in each of seven institutions. Accordingly, the scale here consists of the *number* of institutions in which the respondent expresses trust, rather than the *amount* of agreement with a statement as with political efficacy or tolerance. Thus having trust in six of the seven institutions can be seen as being 14% (i.e., one-seventh) higher than having trust in five institutions. In comparing our findings with those of Niemi and Junn, it should also be noted that they used a 150-answer test (in which most students answered about 75) on political knowledge as their main vehicle for analysis, whereas we are employing at most 8-point scales in Table 6. For a complete presentation of the statistics in Table 6, see Annex B.

⁴² That is, the regression equation derived for civic education in the Dominican Republic predicts that with two good instructional qualities and other factors controlled for (cf. the “control variables” in Table A2 in Annex A), a respondent would score 11.2% higher than one not enjoying any good instructional qualities.

⁴³ For all the democratic orientation variables included in Table 7, Cohen’s *d* is a better measure than the “percent in high category” approach taken here, and it is also superior to the regression coefficients used to make up Table 6 in that it can be applied to all our orientation variables rather than just some of them. But Cohen’s *d* is neither as familiar as the regression coefficients used for Table 6 nor as intuitively understandable as the high category measures employed throughout this report. See the methodological annex, esp. Table 3A, where it will be noted that the *d* values for several of the “fuzzy” variables – in particular, political efficacy and, to a slightly lesser extent, political tolerance – compare closely with those shown for the variables included in Table 6. In other words, even though they cannot reasonably be portrayed in percentage terms, these “fuzzier” variables manifest similar civic education impact.

local participation in Poland, which far exceeded – essentially by twice – any other gain on any dimension for any country). In other words, civic education instruction with a maximum number of good instructional qualities has shown itself to be very roughly as capable of improving adult citizen orientations in political efficacy and tolerance as it has with direct political participation. If we leave out local participation in Poland and general participation in South Africa on the high and low ends respectively, the increases in percentage points shown in Table 7 are fairly close, with political knowledge lagging not too far behind.

[Table 7 about here]

But what does this mean? To answer the question, we need some kind of benchmark against which to make comparisons. Happily, there are a number of such yardsticks available, in particular those developed by Sidney Verba and his colleagues over the past several decades. In their initial landmark study of American political participation, based on some 2,500 interviews conducted in 1967, Verba and Nie (1972) reported that while 47% of those surveyed claimed to vote in local elections,⁴⁴ only 19% asserted that they had attended a political meeting or rally in the previous three or four years. Other figures were also low; 13% reported having contributed money, 14% having worked in “some or most” elections, and 13% that they had contacted a local official (Verba and Nie 1972: 350-352). Since then, participation appears to have fallen off markedly, though evidence is somewhat mixed.⁴⁵

We must of course ask how representative is the United States in these matters. Other Western democracies have tended to have higher voting rates than the United States, but the proportions of citizens active in such activities as campaign work, contacting officials and attending political meetings have been significantly lower (Verba et al. 1995: 69-70, citing data from the late 1970s). Data on developing countries are harder to come by, but some countries with longer democratic traditions have been the subject of surveys similar to those conducted in the Western democracies and can give some indication. A four-state survey in India during the late 1960s showed 42% of respondents claiming to have voted in local elections, but only 14% having attended political meetings or rallies, and 12% having contacted a local official – figures quite similar to those recorded for the United States at this time (see Verba et al. 1978: 57 &ff.). More recently in the 1990s, a large-scale, 17-nation survey in Latin America showed that although around two-thirds of respondents said they had voted in national elections, only about one-ninth

⁴⁴ The actual proportion of those voting in elections is in fact considerably lower than that self-reported in surveys.

⁴⁵ For instance, Schlozman et al. (1999: 23 and Figure 21; see also Putnam 2000: passim but esp. 342) report that participation (defined as 8 acts similar to those included in our own study) declined by about 22% from the early 1970s to the early 1990s. There is some reason to suspect that even the low participation rates reported reflect an upward bias, based on experience with self-reported voting in opinion surveys. This overreporting has been a consistent problem over time, identified by comparing self-reported voting from surveys with actual turnout at the ballot box. Similar problems may affect self-reporting of other political activities as well, though of course unlike voting itself there is no objective way to verify this by reference to actual behavior (see Verba et al. 1995: 50 n2 on this issue). Thus there may well be a systematic upward bias in what is collected in surveys of the type we have used in our assessments. The clear implication in the United States is that survey data on political participation of all types – not just voting – represent an outside *maximum* estimate of reality, which is in all likelihood rather less than reported levels. Accordingly, the argument presented in this report about the importance of even modest increases in participation is strengthened. If fewer actually participate than seems initially apparent, small gains in participation become correspondingly more significant. Presumably the same reasoning applied in developing countries.

said they had worked in political campaigns, and one-seventh had shown an interest in trying to influence other people about politics.⁴⁶

Evidence from the former Communist bloc is especially illuminating in this regard. After an initial explosion of interest and involvement in politics attendant upon the introduction of democracy at the beginning of the 1990s, both aspects dropped markedly in subsequent years. In the Czech and Slovak republics, for example, survey respondents asserting that they had a "keen" or "very keen" interest in politics slid from over 30% of those polled in 1990 to 10% or less five years later, while those with "hardly any interest" or "none" rose from 20-25% to almost half over the same period. Those reporting they had attended a political meeting dropped from 35 to 15% in the Czech Republic, 29 to 17% in Slovakia during this time. People taking part in political rallies or cooperating with other citizens to solve local problems declined by essentially the same proportions. In Poland participation rates had not climbed as high in the first days of democracy, but declined nonetheless. Those attending a political meeting slid from 13 to 7% between 1990 and 1995, those taking part in a political rally from 9 to 3%, and those cooperating with other citizens on common problems from 13 to 6%.⁴⁷

Overall, though the evidence is not entirely uniform, it would be safe to say that political participation in the United States and the Western democracies has been low and probably declining in recent decades. The consequences are potentially profound. The fact is that in the Western democratic polities, strikingly low rates of participation have sustained the basic political systems at all levels in recent decades. While these systems have worked more or less well most of the time in assuring that all who want to do so can participate in politics either directly or as members of civil society groups, that the rule of law prevails, and that officials can be held accountable, such structures have a certain precariousness to them. It is hard to imagine our political systems surviving very well if participation were to go much lower, and Western political socialization processes certainly have not worked to increase that citizen engagement during the past half century and more. The declines in Eastern European participation so shortly after the initiation of democratic politics provide strong evidence of similar realities there. In such settings, a civic education program that can raise political participation even by relatively small degrees would have to be considered a very substantial success.

In the Niemi and Junn (1998) analysis of civic education in American high schools, it is our embarrassingly low levels of political knowledge and other measures of civic engagement that provide the backdrop against which they can argue that civic education programs increasing student scores by 15% are worth investing in.⁴⁸ And it makes eminent good sense to assert along similar lines that high instructional quality adult civic education programs in our three countries correlating with increases of 11-27% in local participation (as in Table 6) are worth supporting as well. When one reflects back that the central objective of civic education efforts is to improve

⁴⁶ Data are from a *Latinobarómetro* study, as reported in IDB (2000: 171-173). Unfortunately, the items reported for this survey differed from those considered in this report for other countries, but the patterns appear similar.

⁴⁷ Data from Plasser et al. (1998: 130-134). There is similar evidence from Russia as well, though less pronounced, possibly because the time period studied was shorter (1990-1993). See Hahn (1998: 150-155).

⁴⁸ Brody (1994) and Soule (2000) found statistically significant improvements in the United States and Bosnia respectively, brought about by formal school-based programs implemented through the Center for Civic Education's pedagogical approach. But the statistical analyses they employed are not comparable to those used in the Niemi-Junn assessment and in this report.

political participation (cf. Figure 1), such investment seems a good one indeed. While the supporting dimensions of civic competence and democratic values/support do not show similar levels of enhancement, these critical aspects of the democratic enterprise manifest significant growth as well. In particular, political tolerance, which is generally considered a difficult orientation to enhance, shows a real if not spectacular increase in Table 7 (see also Table A3 in the methodological annex, as well as Finkel 2000).

Finally we must ask who would gain from civic education? Bratton et al. (1999) found in Zambia that civic education delivered more impact on those already more educated and better informed, from which one could infer some danger that it would tend to reinforce upper class dominance of the political system. But our own data show some evidence that those less advantaged can begin to catch up through civic education when well taught, for Poland and South Africa (though not so much in the Dominican Republic; see Table 4b). Thus we find at least some promise that civic education can deliver on what Arend Lijphart (1997) in his 1996 presidential address to the American Political Science Association called the central democratic project of our time: improving the capacity of marginal elements to participate in a democratic polity.

IV. LESSONS LEARNED AND IMPLICATIONS.

1. **Given the low rates of participation in most political systems, even moderate increases connected with good civic education programming can make a significant contribution to democratization.** Voter turnout has long been a source of concern in the Western democracies, especially in local elections, and levels of participation in other political activities are even lower. Political participation in developing countries is low as well. Accordingly, civic education initiatives that can help increase those levels – even if by only modest amounts – can provide a valuable component to a democracy assistance strategy.
2. **Teaching methods matter.** At one level, this lesson is common-sensical, even obviously so. But it is nonetheless profound in its program implications. Civic education initiatives that provide little exposure, that lack a strong participation component in their instructional components, and that do not inspire confidence in their instructors yield little impact. In all three of our countries and with most of our variables, programs that scored low on these instructional measures generally had little if any more impact than no program at all. At the low instructional end, in other words, the treatment groups were not much better than the control groups – sometimes they came off even worse.⁴⁹ At the high end, especially when these good qualities were combined, program participants did significantly better on our democratic orientation measures. The programming implication is that if a civic education program is not done well, it's probably not worth doing at all.
3. **Training of trainers is worth the investment.** As with the old saying about military leaders, a few of the good ones are born that way but most of them have to be made, or in the case of civic education instructors, trained. It follows from the lesson above on teaching methods that money spent on training program trainers will return good value. It also fol-

⁴⁹ See e.g., Figure 9 on political tolerance; for the Dominican Republic and South Africa, programs with no good instructional qualities produced fewer respondents in the high scoring category than the control group.

lows that in the absence of “training of trainers” (TOT) it would probably be best not to become involved in civic education efforts at all. These assertions imply more front-loaded program cost involving expatriate TOT experts, but all the expatriates certainly need not be Americans. Indeed, there should be good scope for intra-regional expertise here, with the best trainers from South Africa going to, say, Nigeria to provide TOT there if a civic education program should begin in the latter country. Sending TOT experts from Poland to Ukraine or the Central Asian Republics would offer similar opportunities.

4. **One size does not fit all in civic education programming.** The measures used in this report to gauge civic education program impact showed considerable variance in impact. The gains from programs with good instructional qualities found in general participation for both the Dominican Republic and Poland, for example, were essentially absent in South Africa (Table 7). And while support for elections increased appreciably in Poland, the gains were only half as much or less for the Dominican Republic and South Africa. These impact disparities could be due to differences in programs, participants, objective conditions (e.g., democracy was faring better in Poland and South Africa by the Freedom House reckoning, as per Figure 3, and so it was easier to enhance support for elections) – or most likely to some combination of these factors. Some pretesting of participants could help identify which orientations were stronger or weaker at the outset and allow tailoring the civic education program effort to where the needs were perceived to be greatest.
5. **Gender does make a difference** and should be taken into account in programming. For the most part, men not only start out at higher levels on the democratic orientations we have measured, but they also gain more from high-quality civic education programs. Much of the differences here surely derive from long-engrained cultural practices that cannot be overcome through short-term civic education initiatives, no matter how gender-sensitive they might be. But including gender aspects systematically in the training of trainers for future civic education efforts might help at least reduce the tendency for programming in this area to widen gender disparities, and might even reduce them somewhat, as happened with political tolerance in South Africa (cf. Table 4a).

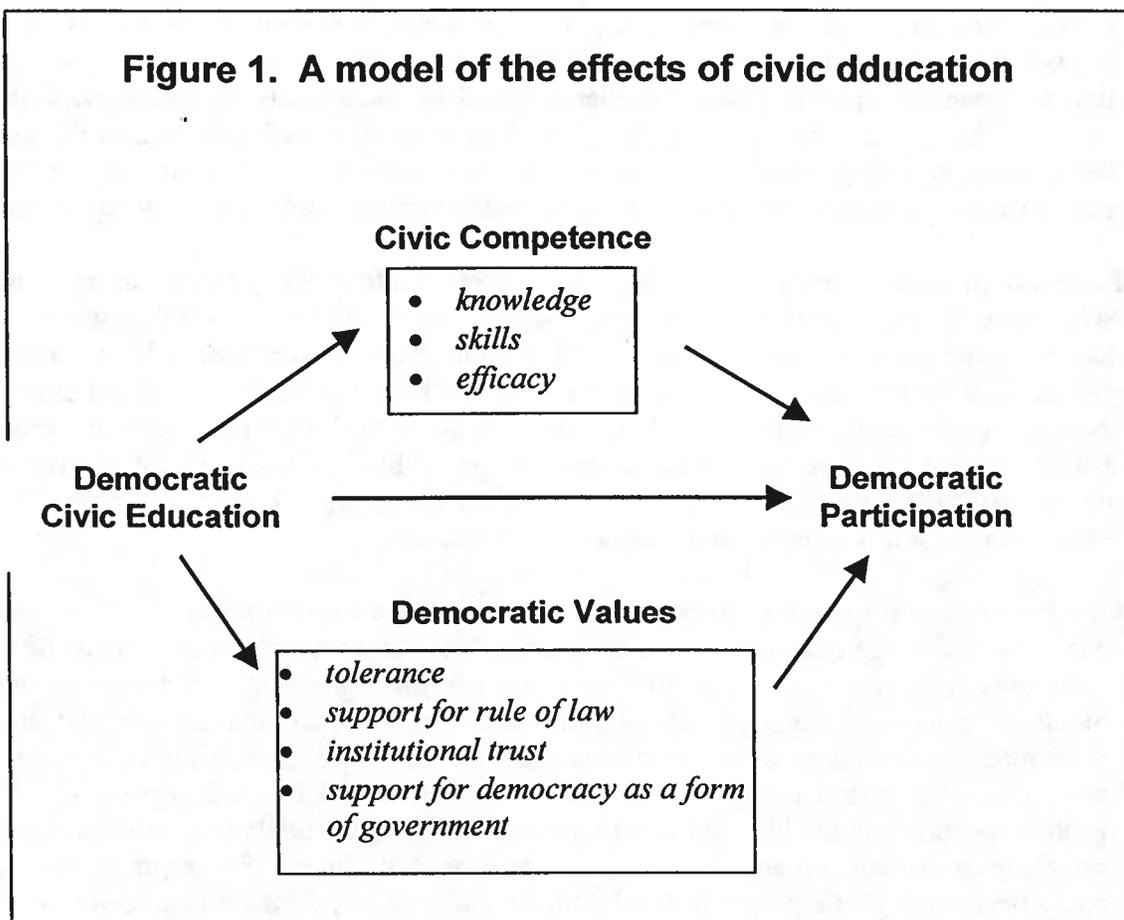
Since women do benefit from civic education (even if not as much as men with the particular programs we have assessed), another strategic implication for lessening gender gaps in political participation might be to sponsor programs specifically for women as the constituency most in need. There is ample precedent for gender-based programming in the development community, e.g., the well-known Grameen Bank micro-credit program in Bangladesh, which has focused on poor women.

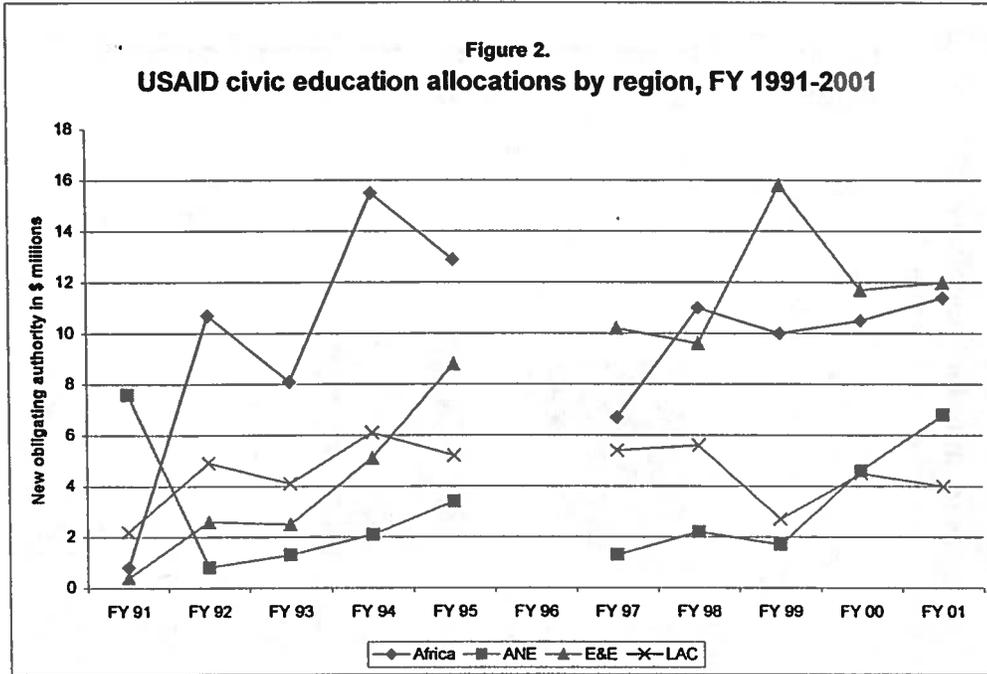
6. **The political advantages conferred by education can be compensated for to a modest extent by good civic education.** Reflecting as it does superior socio-economic status, higher educational levels not surprisingly correlate with better scores on the democratic orientations employed in this study. But good quality civic education can help make up for these differences, at least to some extent for some orientations. Of equal importance, civic education need not be viewed as an instrument likely to reinforce the headstart that local elites already have in the political arena.

7. **Since participants already belonging to groups tend to gain greater benefit from civic education programs, group membership may be a useful screening device for recruiting participants.** Such an approach would have the added attraction of providing civic education to those who (being group members) would be most likely to spread what they had learned. At the same time, our finding that less well connected participants do somewhat better at improving political tolerance in all three countries (cf. Table 4c) implies that there may be some advantages to programming directed at citizens belonging to fewer groups.⁵⁰
8. **Fade-out problems do exist, but high quality civic education programming appears to withstand them.** As must be expected with any relatively brief adult training program in skills that are not used every day, there will be some drop-off over time in how much trainees retain. But for the most part, these fade-out effects have been relatively slight among those enjoying good quality instruction. Particularly in the critical local participation dimension, it has been possible to keep most of the gain (as per Table 5). Civic education programmers can accordingly be confident that most of the civic education impact imparted will persist beyond the first few months after instruction has ceased.
9. **One fundamental question on civic education remains to be answered.** This assessment has answered many questions about civic education programming impact, showing how respondents in the treatment group differ from the control component. But despite the matching of sample populations and the use of statistical controlling techniques, our analysis cannot determine whether those in the treatment segment may have been different in some critical ways from the control group at the outset. We did control for such aspects as education, gender, location and the like, but other qualities were not amenable to controls either through sampling or statistical methods. In particular, those who joined the programs may have already been more participatory in local politics, had greater political tolerance or the like – in which case what seems to be program impact would in fact be an antecedent difference between the those who entered the program and those who did not. The only way to deal with this would be to conduct a before-and-after survey, thereby assuring that we know the differences between the two groups *ex ante* and *ex post*. Hopefully it will be possible to conduct such a study in the near-term future.

⁵⁰ More applied research could usefully be directed to this last point, looking at *inter alia* the Putnam-inspired question of whether the groups people join tend more to be “bridging” or “bonding” organizations (see Putnam 2000).

Figure 1. A model of the effects of civic education





NOTE: Data for FY 1996 are not available from the USAID archives. Figures for FY 1991-1998 are actual obligations, while those for FY 1999-2000 are appropriations and those for FY 2001 are USAID requests.

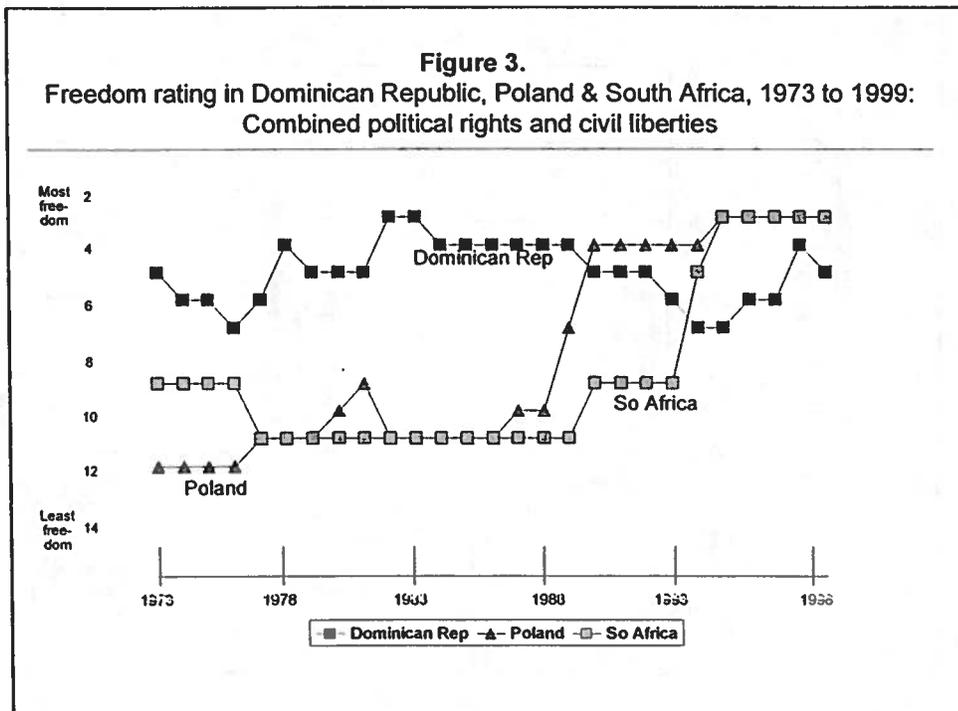


Figure 4. South African adults: effects of civic education sessions attended on political efficacy

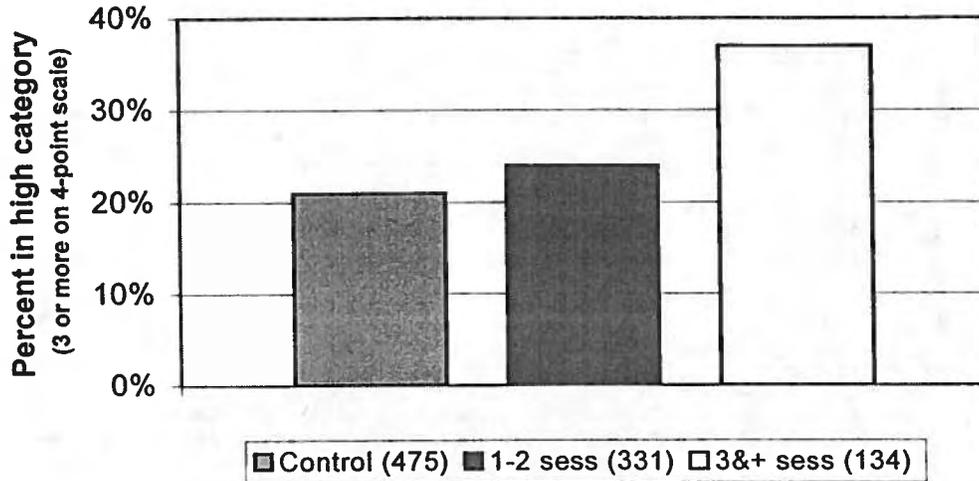


Figure 5. South African adults: effects of adult civic education frequency, participatory methods, and instructor quality on political efficacy

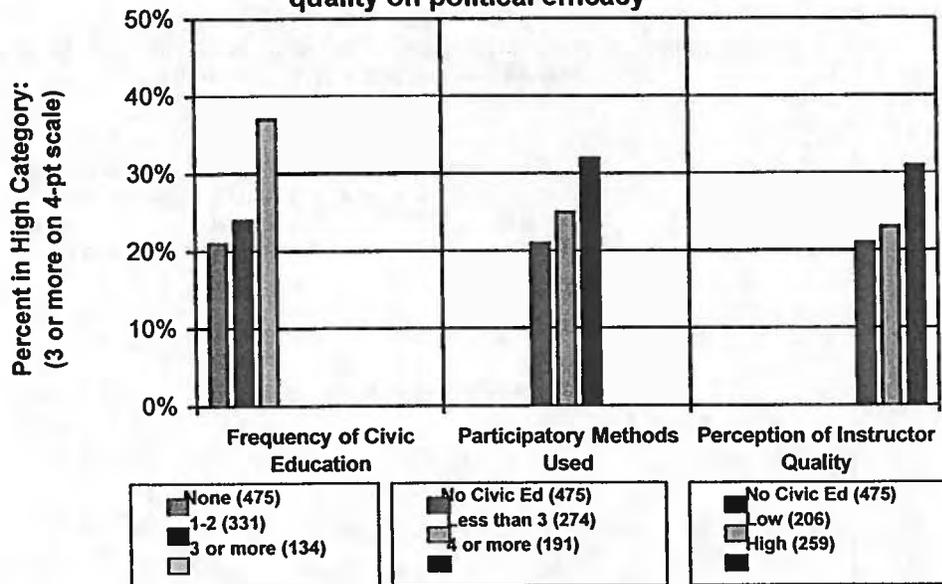


Figure 6. Effects of good civic education qualities in South African adults on political efficacy

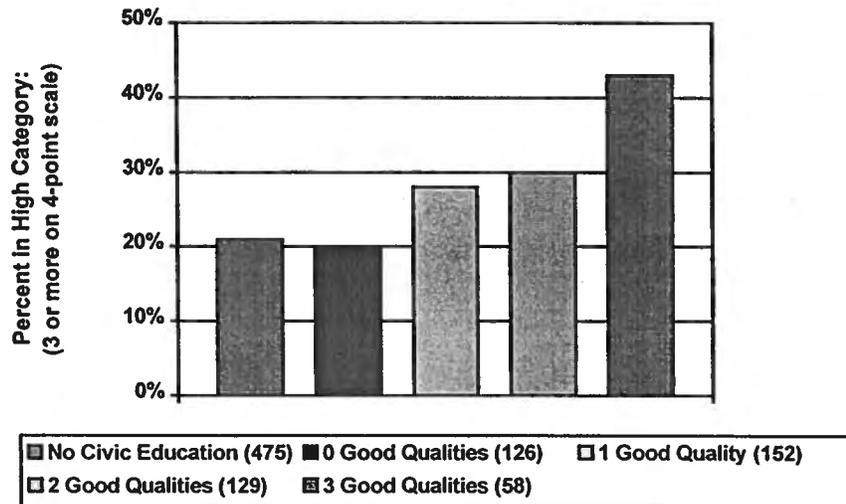


Figure 7. Effects of good civic education qualities on local participation (by number of good instructional qualities)

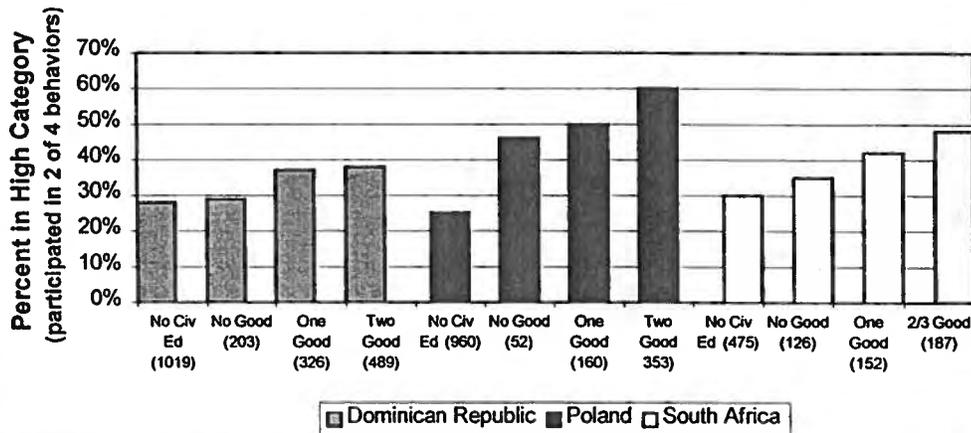


Figure 8. Effects of good civic education qualities on political efficacy (by number of good instructional qualities)

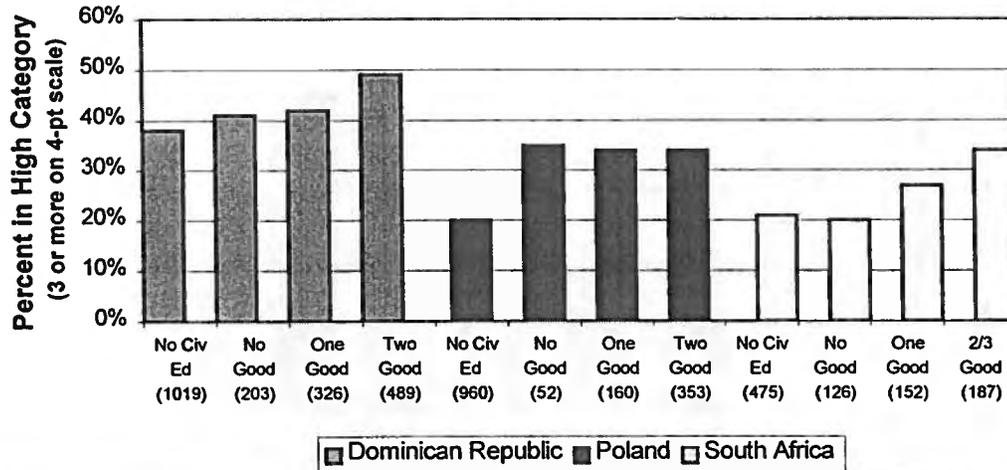
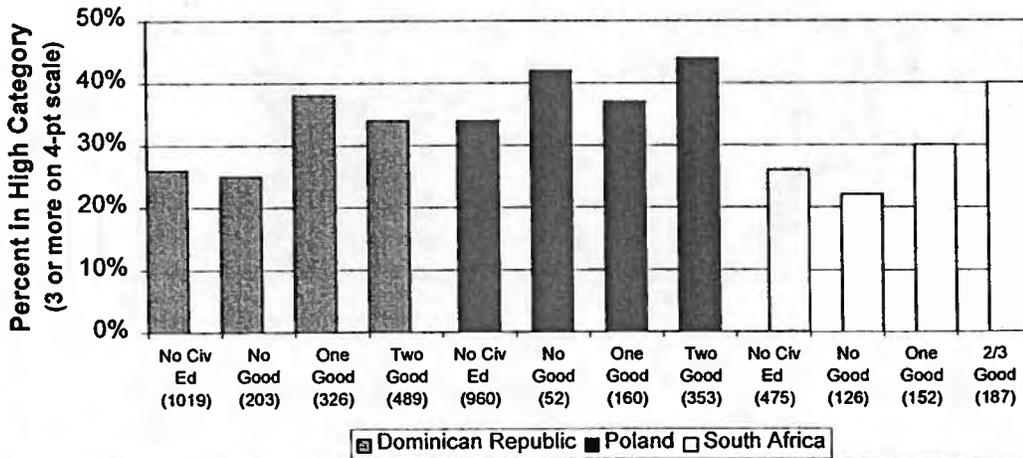


Figure 9. Effects of good civic education qualities on political tolerance (by number of good instructional qualities)



**Figure 11. Effects of good civic education qualities on trust in political institutions
(by number of good instructional qualities)**

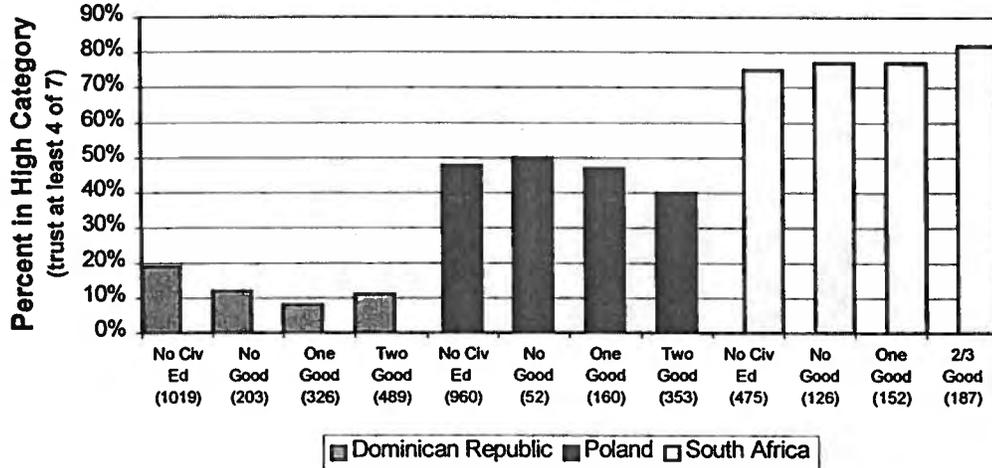


Figure 11. Gender and civic education: effects of good instructional qualities on local participation

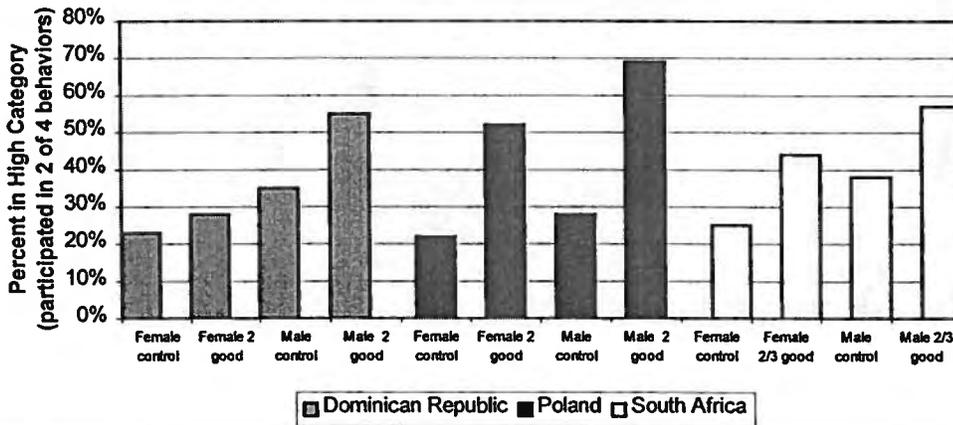


Figure 12. Educational background and civic education: effects of good instructional qualities on local participation

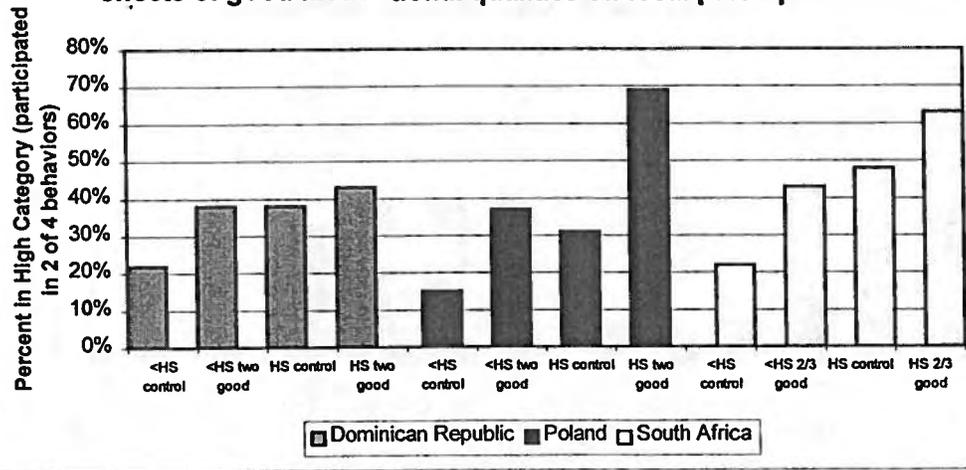


Figure 13. Effects of good quality adult civic education on political participation in three countries

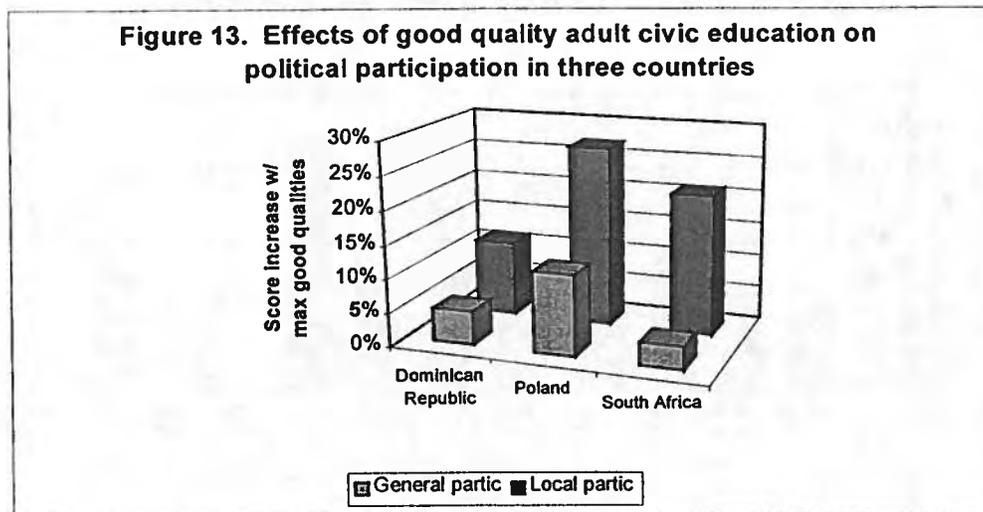


Table 1. Comparative data on the Dominican Republic, Poland and South Africa, mid-1990s

	Dominican Republic	Poland	South Africa
Adult literacy – female	82%	99%	82%
Adult literacy – male	82%	99%	82%
Life expectancy – female	72 yrs	76 yrs	68 yrs
Life expectancy – male	67 yrs	67 yrs	61 yrs
Real GDP in “purchasing power parity” dollars	PPP\$ 3923	PPP\$ 5442	PPP\$ 4334
Annual change in per capita GDP, 1960-95	2.2%	0.1%	0.5%
Human Development Index (HDI)	.720	.851	.717
Gini index	.505	.272	.593

Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report* (except World Bank, *World Development Indicators*, for Gini index).

Table 2. Civic education adult programs in three countries by topic

Main program topics	Dominican Republic		Poland		South Africa	
	Program	Size	Program	Size	Program	Size
General democracy & legal rights	Radio Santa Maria (RSM)	305			Community Law Center-Durban (CLC)	100
					National Institute for Public Interest Law (NIPILAR)	150
					Lawyers for Human Rts (LHR)	225
Community problem solving & local government	Grupo Acción por la Democracia (GAD)	247	Foundation for Support of Local Democracy (FSLD)	250		
			Dialog Project Lublin Neighborhood Revitalization Program	354 156		
Women's focus	Asociación Dominicana para el Desarrollo de la Mujer (ADOPEM – a women's NGO)	201			NIPILAR (focus on women's rights) [225] <i>N.B. this program also listed above</i>	
Election observation	Participación Ciudadana (PC)	250				
Elite-oriented			Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights	205		
Feasible comparison for adult programs	All 4 programs	1003	3 programs (Helsinki omitted)	760	All 3 programs	475
Control sample		1019		960		475

Table 3. Effects of good civic education instructional qualities on democratic orientations in three countries
(percent in high category on each orientation; span difference in percentage points)

		Dominican Republic					Poland					South Africa				
		Control	No GQ	1 GQ	2 GQ	Span diff	Control	No GQ	1 GQ	2 GQ	Span diff	Control	No GQ	1 GQ	2/3 GQ	Span diff
Political participation	Local Participation (2 out of 4 behaviors)	28%	29%	37%	38%	10	25%	46%	51%	60%	35	30%	35%	42%	48%	18
	General Participation (2 of 6 behaviors DR, 5 P, 7 SA)	30%	30%	36%	41%	11	11%	14%	22%	28%	17	20%	19%	19%	22%	2
Political competence	Polit Knowledge (3 of 4 correct DR, P, any in SA)	43%	46%	52%	56%	13	39%	46%	50%	48%	9	25%	23%	30%	30%	5
	Political Efficacy (3 or more on 4 pt scale)	38%	41%	42%	49%	11	20%	35%	34%	34%	14	21%	20%	27%	34%	13
Democratic values	Political Tolerance (3 or more on 4 pt scale)	26%	25%	38%	34%	8	34%	42%	37%	44%	10	26%	22%	30%	40%	14
	Support for Elections (4 on a 4 pt scale)	36%	40%	37%	43%	7	63%	72%	80%	77%	14	33%	30%	42%	39%	6
Democratic	Trust in Institutions (Tends to trust at least 4 of 7)	19%	12%	08%	11%	-8	48%	50%	47%	40%	-8	75%	77%	77%	82%	7
	Satisfaction w/ Democracy (3 & + on 4 pt scale)	70%	74%	75%	66%	-4	52%	57%	51%	55%	3	80%	80%	86%	82%	2
Number of Cases		1019	203	326	489		960	52	160	353		475	126	152	187	

NOTE: "Span diff" indicates the difference between the percent in the high category who were participants in programs with two (or possibly three in South Africa) good instructional qualities and the percent in the high category among control group participants. For local political participation in the Dominican Republic, the figure was 38% (among those having two good instructional qualities) less 28% (among those in the control group) = a "span difference" of 10 percentage points.

Table 4a. Gender and civic education: effects of good instructional qualities

Cells show percentage of respondents in high category for control group (CG) and multiple good instructional qualities (2GQ and 2/3GQ). **Shaded cells** show patterns where females show greater improvement than males.

	Dominican Republic				Poland				South Africa			
	Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male	
	CG	2 GQ	CG	2 GQ	CG	2 GQ	CG	2 GQ	CG	2/3 GQ	CG	2/3 GQ
Local participation	23%	28%	35%	55%	22%	52%	28%	69%	25%	44%	38%	57%
Political efficacy	32%	42%	47%	60%	18%	30%	22%	37%	19%	32%	23%	41%
Political Tolerance	25%	31%	28%	38%	32%	42%	35%	48%	24%	39%	29%	41%
n	541	317	478	172	494	173	463	180	312	119	163	68

Table 4b. Educational background and civic education: effects of good instructional qualities

Cells show percentage of respondents in high category for control group (CG) and multiple good instructional qualities (2GQ and 2/3GQ). **Shaded cells** show patterns where less educated group shows more improvement than the more educated group.

	Dominican Republic				Poland				South Africa			
	< High Sch		High School		< High School		High School		< High School		High School	
	CG	2 GQ	CG	2 GQ	CG	2 GQ	CG	2 GQ	CG	2/3 GQ	CG	2/3 GQ
Local participation	22%	38%	38%	43%	15%	37%	31%	69%	22%	43%	48%	63%
Political efficacy	28%	36%	54%	70%	05%	20%	27%	41%	18%	33%	28%	40%
Political tolerance	18%	25%	37%	49%	22%	44%	41%	48%	22%	38%	32%	45%
n	739	212	280	277	457	64	503	289	325	108	150	79

Table 4c. Group membership and civic education: effects of good instructional qualities

Cells show percentage of respondents in high category for control group (CG) and multiple good instructional qualities (2GQ and 2/3GQ). **Shaded cells** show patterns where those with fewer group memberships show greater improvement than those with more.

	Dominican Republic				Poland				South Africa			
	0 or 1 group		2 or more groups		0 or 1 group		2 or more groups		0 or 1 group		2 or more groups	
	CG	2 GQ	CG	2 GQ	CG	2 GQ	CG	2 GQ	CG	2/3 GQ	CG	2/3 GQ
Local participation	16%	24%	39%	54%	14%	55%	55%	86%	14%	24%	36%	58%
Political efficacy	29%	43%	50%	58%	15%	25%	30%	49%	14%	18%	25%	40%
Political tolerance	24%	35%	26%	35%	31%	43%	44%	51%	28%	46%	25%	38%
n	765	127	254	362	854	145	106	208	185	26	290	161

Table 5. Fade-out effects and civic education: effects of good instructional qualities

Cells show percentage of respondents in high category for control group (CG) and multiple good instructional qualities. **Shaded cells** show patterns where civic education participants with longer time lapse score higher than those with less.

	Dominican Republic			Poland			South Africa		
	CG	2 Good Qualities		CG	2 Good Qualities		CG	2/3 Good Qualities	
		<6 months	>6 months		<6 months	>6 months		<6 months	>6 months
Local participation	28%	39%	36%	25%	64%	50%	30%	44%	43%
Political efficacy	39%	50%	48%	19%	36%	32%	21%	33%	26%
Political Tolerance	27%	31%	39%	35%	39%	44%	26%	29%	33%
n	1019	327	509	960	336	223	475	180	264

Table 6. Impact of good quality instruction in civic education on democratic orientations

Numbers show the average percentage increase (or decrease) in scores for civic education participants in programs manifesting the maximum number of good instructional qualities (2 in the Dominican Republic and Poland, 3 in South Africa). For a more detailed explanation, see Annex B.

Democratic orientation	Domin- ican Rep	Poland	South Africa
Local participation	11.3%*	27.0%*	21.0%*
General participation	5.0%*	12.0%*	3.4%
Political knowledge	8.3%*	2.5%	2.0%
Trust in institutions	-9.9%*	-2.1%	5.7%*

* $p < .05$ for the regression (b) coefficient in the equation from which the figures in this table are derived (see Annex B).

Table 7. Span difference* in percentage points between treatment group receiving maximum good instructional qualities and control group on democratic orientations in three countries

		Dominican Republic	Poland	South Africa
Political participation	Local Participation (2 out of 4 behaviors)	10	35	18
	General Participation (2 of 6 behaviors DR, 5 P, 7 SA)	11	17	2
Citizen competence	Political Knowledge (3 of 4 correct DR, P, any in SA)	13	9	5
	Political Efficacy (3 or more on 4-point scale)	11	14	13
Democratic values	Political Tolerance (3 or more on 4 pt scale)	8	10	14
	Support for Elections (4 on a 4-point scale)	7	14	6
Democratic support	Trust in Institutions (Tends to trust at least 4 of 7)	-8	-8	7
	Satisfaction with Democracy (3 or more on 4-point scale)	-4	3	2

* "Span difference" indicates the difference between the percent in the high category who were participants in programs with two (or possibly three in South Africa) good instructional qualities and the percent in the high category among control group participants. For a complete presentation of these data, see Table 3.

ANNEX A METHODOLOGY

The treatment-and-control method and its problems

The treatment-and-control approach used enables us to take into account such dimensions as gender, location, education and the like when choosing the sample to be interviewed, and then it is feasible to introduce further controls in the statistical analysis, for instance for income and political interest. The object here is to ensure that such factors would not be the underlying explanation for what might superficially seem to be program impact. For instance, if this were not done, there might appear to be a large program impact on, say, political knowledge, which would emerge in the statistical findings. But it could be that people in the treatment group tended to have much higher educational levels than those in the control group, and that it was this difference that actually accounted for what seemed to be program impact. One way to deal with this problem is by matching the samples on educational level so that the same proportion of both treatment and control groups had only finished primary school (or less), had some high school, had finished high school, and so on.

A second method to deal with the problem of confounding intervening factors is through statistical controls, which in effect do the same thing as sample selection but do so through such techniques as “partial correlation” and “analysis of covariance.” This latter method is especially useful with more subtle differentiations that become increasingly difficult to build into sample selection, such as background interest in politics or level of church involvement. By using these various methods – using treatment and control groups, selecting matched groups, and statistical controlling techniques – we can be reasonably confident that differences on the qualities we want to measure were connected with program participation and thus indicative of program impact.⁵¹

As alluded to earlier, however, there remains one further potential problem that controls of the sort described above cannot handle through *ex post* sampling. That is the possibility that program participants were different in the first place from the non-participants. In particular, those who decided to take part may have been more democratically inclined or psychologically ready to participate than those who did not. In other words, there could have been some “selection bias” (and using the snowball method may have increased such a bias in our sample). This kind of problem would tend to exaggerate program impact. On the other hand, there is also the possibility that random measurement error has led to underestimation of program impact. And finally, some of the factors that would appear to be causal (e.g., group membership) could in fact be the result of program participation, so that what appears to be something affecting program impact is actually being affected by program participation. The only way to control for these potentially confounding factors would be to conduct a before-and-after survey that would measure the treatment-and-control group differences prior to a civic education program’s initiation and then again after its conclusion. Obviously, given the *ex post* nature of the programs covered here, such an approach lay beyond our reach, but it may well be possible to undertake such a research design with future civic education efforts.⁵²

⁵¹ For more detail on sampling issues in the three countries, see Sabatini et al. (1999: 19-24); and Finkel and Strumbras (2000: 11-15).

⁵² More analysis of these problems will be found in Sabatini et al. (1999: A16-A17).

This kind of before-and-after testing that has proven so difficult to do in the past may become possible in an upcoming adult civic education initiative in Kenya during 2000-2002. Planned to be sponsored by a consortium of donors, this program is tentatively to be evaluated by USAID as its contribution to the overall enterprise. Part of this evaluation may well be just the sort of pre-and-post survey mentioned here. In addition, the Center for Civic Education plans to do a before-and-after analysis of its school-based civic education effort in Bosnia; this should constitute a much-needed addition to what is known about impact in the school programs.

Survey reliability – Cronbach’s alpha

This statistic takes the average correlation among themselves of the coded answers to a cluster of questions (such as the four questions making up our “local political participation” variable for the Dominican Republic). The formula is:

$$\text{alpha} = \frac{k \text{ times average correlation between all items in the cluster}}{1 + [(k-1) \text{ times average correlation}]}$$

where k is the number of items.

Like most other correlation coefficients, alpha varies between zero (indicating no relationship, or “random noise” among the components) and one (indicating a perfect relationship, in which all the questions are measuring the same dimension). Alpha coefficients over .80 are desired in survey research of the sort we are doing here, but often alphas in the .60-.80 range are deemed suitable in published research. As can be seen in Table A1, the alpha coefficients for impact variables among adults in our three countries, with one serious exception in the case of political knowledge in Poland, met the .60 standard in all cases and met the .80 standard in some instances. For students in the South African school-based programs, there was one similarly low alpha for political efficacy and a marginally low reading for school political participation, but the others were over .60. The average alpha for the student variables, however, is appreciably lower than for the adult samples.

For students in the Dominican Republic and P, the alpha coefficients are even lower, averaging only .35 in the former case. This may be one reason why the statistical analysis yielded few significant results for these two countries – the surveys were simply not tapping reliable measures that hung together. In any case, the low reliability coefficients offered an additional reason for excluding the student samples in these three countries from our detailed analysis.

[Table A1 about here]

Regression analysis

The main statistical tool employed in this report, and the one underlying virtually all of the numerical analysis, is “ordinary least squares” (OLS) regression. It comprises a technique for measuring the cumulative impact of any number of “predictor variables” (also called “independent variables”) such as program participation, education level, and gender on a “dependent vari-

able,” such as political knowledge. At the same time, the procedure allows the isolation of each of the predictors to show how much it individually is contributing to the total statistical impact apart from all the others (“controlling for” the others in statistical terms). Thus we can ascertain, for instance, how much participants’ education or income level is contributing to political efficacy among South African respondents, and how much program participation is doing so. This approach allows us to say that program participation (what we really want to measure) contributes x amount to political efficacy by itself, independently of everything else we can measure, but that educational level and income (which of course are not part of the program but which we know have some effect also) contribute y and z amounts respectively.

More important for our own analysis are the “regression coefficients,” which tell us how much an increase in one of the predictors, e.g., religious attendance, which was coded on a 3-point scale, is associated with an increase in the political knowledge scale. These “ b coefficients” (so called because they replace the letter “ b ” in the regression equation⁵³) can then be set along a common measure – “standardized” in statistical parlance – so that each can be compared with all the others to see which ones made more or less contribution to the changes in the dependent variables.

Table A2 offers two examples to illustrate the regression approach – political efficacy and political knowledge. Both are shown first as regression equation coefficients and then in terms of Cohen’s d and as the proportion of respondents in the high category on our scoring system. The regression coefficients show how much is contributed to political efficacy and knowledge by the factor we’re interested in (in this case frequency of civic education sessions) and also by all the control variables. Thus attending one or two sessions would on average raise a respondent’s score on political efficacy by 0.05 points on a four-point scale – not much improvement. But attending three or more sessions would raise the score by 0.27 points – a considerably higher gain. The long list of “control variables” indicates how much each of these factors contributed to the score. Being a male would on average raise one’s score by 0.09 points on the four-point scale, for example, while living in a city would depress it by 0.05 points

[Table A2 about here]

“Political interest” (itself a three-point self-rated scale – much/some/little) proved a strong contributor; moving up one point on this scale contributed to a 0.32 point increase in political efficacy. This particular measure is somewhat difficult conceptually, in that it may well be an effect of program participation as well as an independent variable that should be expected to contribute to program impact. But it is reasonable to think of political interest as existing largely apart from civic education program participation, indeed it may have contributed to people’s taking part in the program in the first place. Consequently, we want to isolate it with the use of statistical controls as in Table A2, which allows us to assess how much impact an instructional variable (in this case session frequency) had on political efficacy, independently of political interest.

⁵³ This is the widely known formula:

$$y = a + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + \dots + b_nx_n$$

where y is the dependent variable such as political knowledge, a is a constant term, x_1 and x_2 , etc. (up to x_n) are the predictor variables such as civic education frequency, group membership, etc., and b_1 , b_2 , etc., are their respective coefficients.

In addition to the regression b coefficients, Table A2 also includes a column labeled “Standardized Beta.” This measure recalculates each of the coefficients so that it can be directly compared with all the others, thereby allowing us to determine how much each contributes to the overall equation. For example, employment has a b coefficient of 0.12, while education’s value is 0.08, apparently less. But employment is a yes-no index, coded as 0 or 1, while education has a wide range of possible answers, from no schooling through university and professional degrees. So moving from unemployed to employed would on average link to a 0.12 point increase in political efficacy score, but moving from the lowest to the highest category in education would on average contribute to a 0.64 point increase (8 points on the education scale times 0.08 points political efficacy each). The difference shows up in the “Standardized Beta” column, where we observe that education’s relative contribution to the entire regression is 0.17, while employment’s is only 0.07. Similarly, when we use the b coefficients for political knowledge, we see that living in a city (another yes-no variable) contributes 0.36 points on average to the 0-8 political knowledge scale used, while one step on the education index accounts for just a bit more at 0.40. But when these predictors are standardized, we observe that in toto education counts for 0.34 – a great deal more than city living, which contributes only 0.08.

A final element in the regression is the “R-square” value, which captures the total effect (“explained variance” in statistical language) of the regression in predicting the dependent variable. The version of R^2 used here is “adjusted R-square” (adjusted for the number of predictor variables being employed), which varies between zero and unity. When $R^2 = 0$, it indicates no relationship between predictors and dependent variable, while when $R^2 = 1$, there is a complete relationship. This R^2 value is often expressed in percentage terms, such that the regression in the left-hand column “explains” 30% of the “variance” (another statistical term) in political efficacy, and the one on the right accounts for 48% of the variance in political knowledge.

Both these R^2 values are fairly high by general social science standards for large-scale surveys like those used here. It will be observed, however, that the predictor we are most interested in – session frequency – provides a widely varying component of this total statistical explanation. A look at the Standardized Betas indicates that for political efficacy, political interest contributed the most (Beta = 0.30), followed by education (0.17), and then being in three or more sessions was in third place at 0.13. For political knowledge, on the other hand, attendance at three or more sessions ranked in 11th place, far down the list. So for political knowledge, the regression contributed more to explaining the dependent variable ($R^2 = .48$, as against only .30 for efficacy), but session frequency played a far smaller role in accounting for that overall impact.

Cohen’s d

A statistic more appropriate than the multiple regression in many ways for the present report is the lesser-known “Cohen’s d ” (also called an “effect coefficient”), which is derived from the regression equation. This measure is equal to the unstandardized regression coefficient divided by the “standard error of estimate” (another common statistic), and it indicates the effect that a treatment (such as participating in programs that met three or more times, as opposed to being in the control group) has on the dependent variable in terms of standard deviations. In more general terms, *Cohen’s d* parallels the regression coefficient in showing contribution to the overall

regression's explanatory power, but does so by the number of standard deviations increase (or decrease) brought about in the orientation score by the treatment.⁵⁴ Table A3 presents *Cohen's d* for our democratic orientations for adults in all three countries, using session frequency and participatory methods.

[Table A3 about here]

A couple of examples will illustrate the use of *Cohen's d*. To begin with the example used for Figures 6 and 7 for political efficacy in South Africa, civic education program participants who attended one or two sessions scored on average .08 standard deviations higher than members of the control group. Those who attended three or more civic education sessions scored on average .46 standard deviations higher.

The *d* statistic here shows how much a typical individual in the group (which in this case consists of those that met three or more times) differs from the control group average. In the bell-curve or "normal" distribution, about two-thirds of the cases are within one standard deviation (plus or minus) of the overall average. For political efficacy in South Africa, the typical individual who's been in three or more civic education sessions is .46 standard deviations higher on the political efficacy score than the average member of the control group, or in other words in about the 68th percentile, as against the 50th percentile for the typical control group member.

The *Cohen's d* figures here parallel the "threshold effect" observed in Figures 6 and 7, whereby there was little improvement with one or two sessions, but then a sudden jump with three or more meetings. A similar though slightly less dramatic effect can be observed for participatory methods, which increase from .08 standard deviations to .37. The data shown for political efficacy in Table A3 can be compared with those presented in Table 3 and Figure 10, except that in Table A3 *Cohen's d* is shown for session frequency and participatory methods separately.

⁵⁴ For more on *Cohen's d*, see Keiss (1989: 505-507); also Judd and Kenny (1981: 217-218).

Table A1

Reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha)

Democratic orientation	Adults			Students		
	Dominican Rep	Poland	South Africa	Dominican Rep	Poland	South Africa
Local participation	.64	.83	.76			
School political participation				.49	.44	.53
General participation	.64	.60	.82			
School club participation						.64
Political knowledge	.66	.28	.76	.07	.36	.60
Political efficacy	.68	.76	.63	.31	.54	.28
Political tolerance	.78	.83	.87	.51	.64	.74
Support for elections						
Civic duty				.35	.55	.64
Institutional trust	.85	.81	.83			.74
Satisfaction with democracy						
Average alpha	.71	.69	.78	.35	.51	.60

NOTE: The items on "support for elections" and "satisfaction with democracy" were single questions rather than composites, so Cronbach's alpha could not be calculated.

Table A2

**Effect of civic education upon political efficacy and political knowledge
in South Africa**

	Political efficacy (1-4)		Political knowledge (0-8)	
	Unstandard- ized B	Standard- ized Beta	Unstandard- ized B	Standard- ized Beta
Civic education session frequency				
1 or 2	0.05	0.03	-0.14	-0.04
3 or more	0.27**	0.13	0.32**	0.06
Control variables				
Group membership	0.03**	0.08	0.10**	0.10
Age	0.05**	0.07	0.05	0.03
Race (1=black)	0.13*	0.05	0.84**	0.13
Gender (1=male)	0.09*	0.06	0.69**	0.17
Education	0.08**	0.17	0.40**	0.34
Income	0.00	-0.01	0.08**	0.11
Employed?	0.12**	0.07	0.01	0.00
Student?	0.06	0.02	-0.28	-0.04
Number of children	-0.01	-0.04	0.03	0.03
Household size	0.00	0.01	-0.06**	-0.09
Years in community	0.00	-0.02	0.01	0.04
Church attendance	0.02	0.04	0.07	0.04
Church involvement	0.00	0.00	-0.04	-0.02
Live in city?	-0.05	-0.03	0.36**	0.08
Live in town?	-0.03	-0.02	0.28**	0.07
Political interest	0.32**	0.30	0.42**	0.15
Media use	0.10**	0.11	0.33**	0.14
(constant)	0.36**		-2.29**	
Adjusted R-square	0.30		0.48	
Std error of estimate	0.63		1.40	
Cohen's <i>d</i>				
1 or 2 sessions	0.08		-0.10	
3 or more sessions	0.44		0.23	
Proportion in high category				
Non-participants	21%		20%	
1 or 2 sessions	24%		19%	
3 or more sessions	37%		26%	

** $p < .05$ * $p < .10$

Table A3

The Effect of Sessions Attended and Participatory Methodologies in Civic Education, on Democratic Orientations for Adults in Three Countries

(Cohen's *d* statistic)

Democratic Orientation	Instructional Quality	Dominican Republic		Poland		South Africa	
		Lo	Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo	Hi
Local Participation (0-4)	Sessions	.30	.33	.52	1.12	.24	.56
	Methods	.12	.43	.86	1.06	.17	.57
Political Knowledge (0-4)	Sessions	.19	.28	.18	.13	.06	.27
	Methods	.15	.30	.23	.07	.08	.17
Political Efficacy (1-4)	Sessions	.18	.16	.35	.32	.08	.46
	Methods	.08	.19	.32	.34	.08	.37
Political Tolerance (1-4)	Sessions	.06	.19	.03	.20	.02	.25
	Methods	.09	.16	.03	.25	.00	.23
Support for Elections (1-4)	Sessions	.14	.18	.21	.28	.07	.21
	Methods	.19	.15	.28	.25	.08	.13
Trust in Institutions (0-7)	Sessions	-.31	-.36	.00	.06	.11	.24
	Methods	-.32	-.35	-.04	-.05	.08	.24
Satisfaction w Democ (1-4)	Sessions	.04	-.11	.07	.04	.04	.14
	Methods	.05	-.09	.01	.07	.03	.14
Number of Cases		2037		1527		940	

Sessions: Lo = Attended 1 or 2 sessions
 Hi = Attended 3 or more sessions
 Participatory methods Lo = Used 3 or less
 Hi = Used 4 or more

ANNEX B

Table B1. Impact of good quality instruction in civic education on democratic orientations

Regression coefficients (unstandardized) for “Good civic education instructional qualities” come from the OLS regressions for predicting democratic orientations (columns b/e/h; cf. the methodological annex for examples). Coefficients show predicted change in each of the democratic orientations for every additional “good civic education quality.” This coefficient times the number of good instructional qualities scale (3 for the Dominican Republic and Poland, 4 for South Africa[@]) gives the maximum possible gain in points for each democratic orientation (columns c/f/i). The maximum possible point gain divided by the number of points on that particular scale (column a) times 100 gives the average percentage gain for a participant enjoying all good qualities over a respondent in the control group (columns d/g/j).

Only those orientations are included here for which a reasonable interval scale could be constructed. For example, “local participation” consists of four discrete activities in which respondents might have taken part, so their scores consisted of a scale from 0 (no activities) to 4 (participating in all 4 activities). On average, then, a Dominican respondent who took part in an adult civic education program that met more frequently and used more participatory methods (i.e., included two good instructional qualities) would score 11.3% higher on local participation than a Dominican in the control group.

Democratic orientation	Dominican Rep (GQ scale = 3)				Poland (GQ scale = 3)			South Africa (GQ scale = 4)		
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j
	Points on scale	B coefficient	Max (3) points	Max %	B coefficient	Max (3) points	Max %	B coefficient	Max (4) points	Max %
Local participation	4	.15**	.45	11.3	.36**	1.08	27.0	.21**	.84	21.0
General participation	6/5/7 [#]	.10**	.30	5.0	.20**	.60	12.0	.06	.24	3.4
Political knowledge	4	.11**	.33	8.3	.03	.09	2.5	.02	.08	2.0
Trust in institutions	7	-.23**	-.69	-9.9	-.05	-.15	-2.1	.10**	.40	5.7

* $p < .10$ ** $p < .05$

[@] The good quality instructional scale had 4 points for the Dominican Republic and Poland (control group, program with no good qualities, with 1 good quality, and with 2 good qualities), and 5 for South Africa. Thus the maximum possible gain on the scale would be 3 for the first 2 countries (i.e., the difference between the control group and having 2 good qualities), and 4 for South Africa.

[#] Scale was 0-6 in Dominican Republic, 0-5 in Poland, 0-7 in South Africa

ANNEX C

Adult civic education case studies included in Brilliant (1999: 5)

Program Name and Description	Location	Problem Addressed	Goals/Objectives	Program Content	Methodology	Target Audience
Human Rights School--Teaching elites about human rights and the rule of law	Poland	Weakness of democratic culture	Change in knowledge/values (mobilization is not aimed at political participation)	Human Rights Education	Lectures and seminars	Participants are university graduates in variety of professions
Civic Forum--Fostering democracy in the West Bank and Gaza through a network of discussion groups	West Bank/Gaza, Bosnia	Weakness of democratic culture and underdeveloped civil society	Initially more emphasis on change in knowledge/values; subsequently increasing emphasis on motivation/mobilization	General Civic Knowledge	Discussion groups, forums, role-play, exercises/games, training of intermediaries, community organizing, and materials distribution	Individual Palestinians and Palestinian NGOs and community organizations
Vocea Civica/CENTRAS--Civic education to solidify democracy in Romania	Romania	Weakness of democratic culture and underdeveloped civil society	Initially more emphasis on change in knowledge/values; subsequently increasing emphasis on motivation/mobilization	General Civic Knowledge and Civil Society Creation and Mobilization	discussion groups, forums, training of intermediaries, community organizing, materials distribution and mass media	Initially potential civic leaders and NGOs; subsequently more focus on NGOs
IPEDEHP--Human rights education to combat violence and abuses	Peru	Unequal access to justice and widespread human rights violations	Both change in knowledge/values and motivation/mobilization	Issue-based or Rights Knowledge and Civil Society Creation and Mobilization	discussion groups, role-plays, games/exercises, training of intermediaries, community organizing, materials distribution	Primary target is community leaders participating in training. Secondary target is local counterpart organizations
Vkloochis--Engaging young people in the political process	Russia	Weakness of democratic culture and voter apathy	Motivation and mobilization	Voter education	discussion groups, forums, simulations, training of intermediaries, community organizing, special events/festivals, materials distribution, and mass media	Primary audience is young voters
Inter-American Democracy Network--A North-South network of NGOs building capacity for civic education within the LAC region	Latin America and the Caribbean	Underdeveloped civil society	Motivation and mobilization	Civil society Creation and Mobilization	discussion groups/forum, training of intermediaries, community organizing, materials distribution, and mass media	Primary audience is the NGOs that are members of the Network. Secondary target is the individuals being trained by the NGOs.

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