

IPPR Working Paper No. 2 October 2003

## **Changing Values and Attitudes: Can Civic Education Make a Difference?**

Christiaan Keulder

**This paper reviews international literature on the impact of civil education on democratic values. It argues that all young democracies require democrats, and that democrats are made not born. Civic education is one method for producing democrats. However, assessments of the impact of civic education programmes suggest that such programmes are most successful among adults with middle-level education and an existing stock of political interest. Furthermore, participatory methods of civic education are more successful than most others.**

### **1. Introduction**

Democracy has little chance of surviving beyond its founding years if it has no value system to support its institutional framework. This type of value system, or 'civic culture' (Almond and Verba 1963), does not come about as a result of chance or accident nor is it inherent in all societies. Instead, it is the result of several social, economic and political processes and interventions that form and shape the way members of a society feel about themselves, about others, and about their political system and processes. These factors have both long and short-term effects and there is no single factor that can account for all or even most changes – normative and attitudinal – in any one society. Therefore, to analyse and understand the development of a civic culture, one needs to focus on the *multiple factors* that form and shape values and attitudes, as well as their *long- and/or short-term dynamics*.

This paper is a review of a body of international literature that deals with political-value and attitudinal changes. The purpose of the review is three-fold: 1) to highlight approaches and findings in the international context and to relate these to Namibia; 2) to provide some analytical context against which to develop an appropriate research framework for Namibia; and 3) to provide some background material for those who are active in building or supporting a civic culture in Namibia, against which to assess their current programmes and their likely impact.

In so doing, this paper starts with the assumptions that: 1) Namibia, after some 12 years of democratic rule, does not yet have a fully developed civic culture, and that 2) it needs a civic culture to consolidate its young democratic dispensation. The first part of this paper defines the civic culture and its various components. The next section tracks its development and consolidation. The third section focuses on value and attitudinal change, and the fourth deals with

---

the impact of civic education programmes. In addition to some tentative conclusions, the final section contains some guidelines for building a civic culture.

## 2. Political culture and its core components

Despite the fact that 'political culture' is a concept that is often used in discussions about democratic consolidation, there is no single accepted definition of what exactly it means. To avoid some confusion, this paper adopts a framework proposed by Rosenbaum (1975). He defines political culture as the "important ways in which people are subjectively oriented toward the basic elements of their political system" (1975: 5). The basic or core elements of a political culture include:

- **Orientations towards Government Structures**
  - *Regime orientation*: How people relate and respond to government institutions, national symbols, norms and officials.
  - *Orientations towards governmental inputs and outputs*: How members of a society feel and respond toward various demands for public policy (inputs) and how they react to policy decisions by government (output).
- **Orientations towards Others in the Political System**
  - *Political identifications*: How people define themselves in terms of political units such as the state, the nation, town and regions. Also important are social groups. How do people relate to these in terms of loyalty, obligation and duty?
  - *Political trust*: The extent to which individuals exhibit and support an open, cooperative and tolerant attitude toward others in both civic and political life.
  - *Rules of the game*: Individuals' understanding of the rules and norms that regulate the public sphere. How components of a society should interact with each other and the polity.
- **Orientations towards One's Own Political Activity**
  - *Political competence*: Mass and individual levels of participation in civic and political life. Political knowledge and civic skills.
  - *Political efficacy*: The feeling or belief that individual action can and does have an impact on the political process. This includes feelings such as 'voting makes a difference' and 'changes are possible'.

Any country's political culture is the sum total of individual citizens' beliefs and orientations on the core components. Thus the focus is on what is prevalent at the societal rather than individual level.

Political culture, so Rosenbaum (1975: 8) argues, "expresses itself in the daily thinking and activity of people going about the business of civic life just as their other beliefs and feelings are expressed in other aspects of the social world". Not all feelings and orientations are politically explicit and they are often implicit and subconscious.

Some elements of political culture, such as values, are deeply embedded within individuals and not very pliable. Others, such as attitudes and orientations, are far more conditional and subject to situational and environmental changes. Most of what constitutes political culture is learned behaviour and thus dependent on political socialisation, actual experiences and events, and socio-economic and political conditions. Thus changes in political culture are dependent on a number of factors and conditions, some of which take far longer to have an effect than others. Therefore,



---

changes in political culture are hardly ever consistent in time and effect across all components and actors.

### **3. Political Culture and Democracy**

Before proceeding with a discussion of the elements of a civic or democratic political culture, we first need to explore the causal links between political culture and political institutions. Is it possible to have democratic institutions without having a democratic culture or visa versa? If so, which should come first and is the relationship one of unidirectional causation?

Some scholars (Almond and Verba 1963; Inglehart 1988 and 1990) argue that values come first and that the viability of democratic institutions is affected by individual beliefs in their own political efficacy, self-expression, positive affect for the political system and inter-personal trust. Thus having developed these values, societies are more likely to adopt and maintain a democratic system of governance because democracy is the only institutional framework that is fully compatible with these values. Consequently, according to this line of argument, democrats precede democracy itself.

Others (for example Schmitter and Karl 1991) have argued that democracies are established for reasons other than existing civic values, and that civic values are in no way a requirement or prerequisite for the establishment of democratic institutions. Once established and maintained the democratic institutions cultivate and promote democratic values among citizens living under them. Thus civic culture values develop over time as citizens learn more about democracy and its institutions. In this view civic culture is the product of learned behaviour.

A third view, which presents the causal link between political culture and democracy as a reciprocal one rather than a unidirectional one, is presented by Muller and Seligson (1994). They present evidence that neither of the two arguments of unidirectional change is entirely right or wrong. They found that while popular support for gradual (as opposed to radical, revolutionary) change) precedes democracy, inter-personal trust is a product of the number of uninterrupted years a country has had under a democratic dispensation (1994: 646-647). Similarly, Seligson and Booth (1993) found that when comparing Costa Rica (a democracy) and Nicaragua (a non-democratic system) the democratic system did not necessarily produce democrats and the non-democratic system did not necessarily produce supporters of authoritarianism. Instead they argue that support for democracy and democratic values is the product of where one is placed in relation to the positions of power. Democrats who are close to positions of power display non-democratic attitudes when they fear a loss of power, whilst powerless non-democrats display pro-democratic attitudes and preferences when democracy would allow them more political space and opportunity to seize power (1993: 788).

### **4. The Civic Culture**

What are the value orientations and attitudinal components of a democratic or civic culture? On a superficial level the answer is quite straightforward: high positive scores on each of the three components and their respective sub-components. But in real life the ideal type is hardly ever present. The problem is one of both substance (core components) and degree (attitudinal and orientation levels). In the first instance: are all core components equally important at all times or do they vary across time and space? Secondly, how high does attitudinal support need to be?



---

Furthermore, what are the acceptable levels of attitudinal prevalence in any society for its political culture to be deemed democratic? Unfortunately there are no clear answers to these questions and as a result it is unclear at exactly what point a political culture becomes a civic or democratic culture.

What does a civic culture look like? The following elements are frequently discussed in the literature and some of these will be discussed below in the Namibian context:

- **Orientations towards Government Structures**
  - *Regime orientation*: Preference for and support for democracy. Also, satisfaction with democracy and an outright rejection of non-democratic alternatives. Consolidation becomes a much more likely outcome where and if a society has a large number of committed democrats (a high demand for democracy), as well as mass satisfaction with democracy (a high supply of democracy).
  - *Orientations towards governmental inputs and outputs*: This refers to a number of interrelated issues: perceptions on government performance, trust in government, and perceptions on government responsiveness. Also whether government's agenda concurs with the citizens' agenda.
- **Orientations towards Others in the Political System**
  - *Political identifications*: The crucial issue is whether or not citizens identify themselves in terms of national or parochial identities. Thus whether or not tribal, ethnic, religious or class identities are more important than national identity.
  - *Trust*: The issue is not only the extent of political trust that citizens direct at their government, but also inter-personal trust that they afford to other citizens that share public space with them. High levels of inter-personal trust are linked with the development of civil society and self-expressive values.
  - *Rules of the game*: Individuals' understanding of the rules and norms that regulate the public sphere. Relevant issues here are: citizens' willingness to comply with government's regulations, whether or not citizens believe they all have equal standing before the law, and whether or not even those most disliked would be afforded the same rights as all other citizens.
- **Orientations towards One's Own Political Activity**
  - *Political competence*: Participation in civic and political activities is of crucial importance, as are organised group and party membership.
  - *Political efficacy*: The feeling or belief that individual action can and does have an impact on the political process.

## 5. Elements of Namibia's Political Culture

This paper draws on data from the second round of the Afrobarometer Survey conducted in Namibia in 2002 to assess Namibia's political culture. Given the time and space constraints, not all relevant aspects are covered, nor are any of the themes addressed here covered in full. The aim is, therefore, rather to provide a synoptic overview of Namibia's emerging political culture(s). The following elements are discussed: 1) regime orientation; 2) government orientation; 3) political identities; and 4) political cognisance and partisanship.

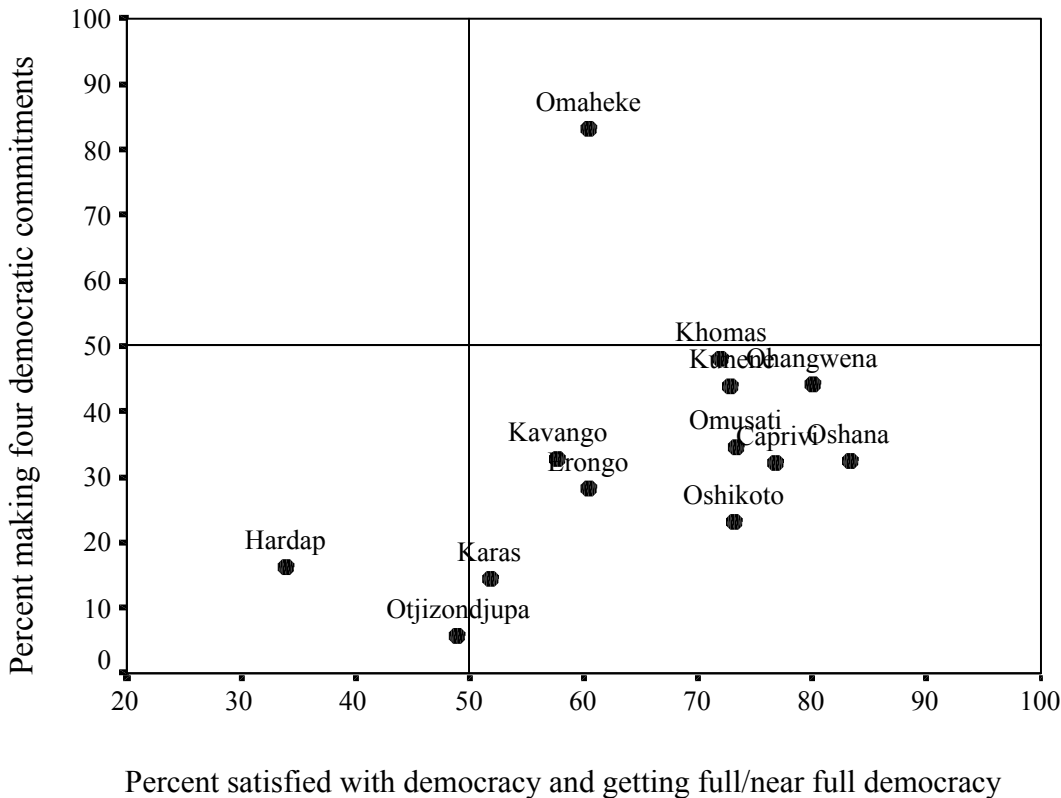


**Regime Orientation**

Democracy needs democrats, and perhaps even more so, it needs committed democrats. Committed democrats not only believe that democracy is always best, but they also reject all forms of non-democratic rule. In short, for committed democrats, democracy is the ‘only game in town’. The data shows that only about one in every three (34%) Namibians are committed democrats. These are Namibians who a) believe that democracy is always best – even when times are tough; and 2) reject three forms of non-democratic rule: exclusive presidential rule, military rule, and one-party government. Almost the same number (27%) can be considered ‘near-committed democrats’. These would typically reject only two of the three non-democratic alternatives. Only about 8% reject democracy out right. The remaining 30% are ‘uncommitted democrats’. In sharp contrast, some 67% of Namibians are satisfied with the current state of democracy and believe that the country is a full or near full democracy.

If we portray these findings in terms of a supply-and-demand model of democracy, Namibians seem to receive more democracy than they demand (i.e. the supply of democracy exceeds the demand). A regional breakdown of the supply and demand of democracy reveals some interesting sub-national patterns (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Supply and demand of democracy by region**



In two of the 13 regions, Hardap and Otjizondjupa, supply and demand of democracy are low and only in one, Omaheke, are both high. In all others, the supply exceeds the demand. This raises some concern with regards to the future of democratic consolidation, since it suggests an absence of committed democrats in these regions. Furthermore, it also suggests that popular demand for democracy to be developed further is low and in the hands of political elites, rather than ordinary citizens.



Five regions, Otjozondjupa, Karas, Khomas, Kunene and Ohangwena, are borderline cases that could go either way, meaning that any future developments in these regions should be followed with interest. For example, should the supply of democracy in Karas decline further it would join the low-demand-low-supply category in the bottom-left corner of Figure 1. Conversely, positive changes in supply would see it moving further into the low-demand-high-supply category in the bottom-right. In the case of Khomas, Kunene and Ohangwena, relatively small increases in the number of committed democrats would see these regions move into the high-demand-high-supply category in the upper-right-hand corner.

## Government Orientation

Orientation toward government is measured in at least four areas: 1) government legitimacy, 2) trust in government, 3) government’s responsiveness and 4) government’s performance.

### 1) Legitimacy

Legitimacy refers to people’s judgement of whether a government has the moral right to rule – i.e. the moral right because they were justly appointed, the right to make and enforce laws, use force where and when needed, and the right to impose and collect taxes. Table 1 contains Namibians’ views on the Namibian Government’s legitimacy.

**Table 1: Four elements of legitimacy**

	<b>Strongly agree</b> %	<b>Agree</b> %	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b> %	<b>Disagree</b> %	<b>Strongly disagree</b> %	<b>Don’t know</b> %
<b>Constitution expresses Namibians’ values</b>	26.4	43.9	11.3	12.3	3.4	2.6
<b>Courts have the right to make decisions by which people have to abide</b>	11.7	49.5	18.8	13.1	4.7	2.3
<b>Police have the right to make people obey the law</b>	20.0	49.8	15.9	11.8	1.6	0.9
<b>Tax department have the right to make people pay taxes</b>	16.8	34.5	21.5	16.7	3.1	7.5

*Question: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you agree or disagree?*

Some 70% of Namibians feel that the current constitution contains and expresses the values and aspirations of the Namibian people. Some 61% felt that courts have the right to make decisions that people must abide by; 70% felt that the police have the right to enforce the law; and some 51% felt that Government has the right to extract taxes from the society. It is on this last element that Namibians are most uncertain (7.5%) or disagree with most (20%). Overall then, the Government is regarded with substantive levels of legitimacy.

If we compile the four items into a ‘Legitimacy Index’ (and Factor and Reliability Analysis suggest we can), we can map government legitimacy across the country. Table 2 shows that overall legitimacy is relatively uniformly distributed across all regions of the country. The overall level of legitimacy is moderate although widespread. Given the fact that a five-point scale is used, it is significant that the overall level of legitimacy for most regions is either around the scale mean (2.5) or only slightly above it.





**Table 2: Means scores on Legitimacy Index and individual scale items by region**

Region	Overall Legitimacy Index	Constitution	Courts	Police	Tax
Caprivi	2.55	2.03	2.52	2.66	2.98
Erongo	2.58	2.42	2.65	2.39	2.85
Hardap	2.77	2.34	2.61	3.00	3.13
Karas	2.72	2.50	2.50	2.68	3.21
Kavango	2.31	2.27	2.20	2.23	2.56
Khomas	2.35	2.11	2.28	2.51	2.50
Kunene	2.20	1.77	2.38	1.79	2.88
Ohangwena	2.28	2.41	2.74	1.83	2.12
Omaheke	2.09	1.69	2.17	1.94	2.56
Omusati	1.96	1.74	2.41	1.63	2.05
Oshana	2.28	2.40	2.42	1.97	2.34
Oshikoto	2.50	2.53	3.01	2.23	2.23
Otjozondjupa	2.72	2.53	2.61	2.78	2.97
Overall average	2.38	2.22	2.50	2.25	2.55

The regional patterns on the individual scale items are quite different. For example, the constitution has least legitimacy in Kunene, Omaheke and Omusati (all with mean scores below 2). Yet, in all three of these regions, the courts and tax authorities have substantially more legitimacy. Views on legitimacy are inter-correlated suggesting that those who view one aspect of legitimacy as low or high are also likely to view the other elements in a corresponding way. Overall, the system is viewed as slightly more legitimate in urban areas than rural areas.

## 2) Political Trust

How must do Namibians trust their elected representatives to do what is best for them (the citizens)? Table 3 provides responses with regard to major political players.

**Table 3: Trust in selected political actors**

	Not at all %	A little bit %	Quite a lot %	A lot %	Don't know %
President	4.7	16.0	32.1	46.7	0.6
National Assembly	5.8	26.8	40.6	24.6	2.3
National Council	6.8	34.0	37.7	19.2	2.4
Electoral Commission	7.0	22.7	39.6	26.8	4.0
Regional Councils	9.8	32.3	37.9	17.5	2.4
Local Authority Councils <sup>1</sup>	11.9	38.4	34.6	15.1	-
Ruling Party	11.6	24.4	31.5	31.3	1.2
Opposition Parties	28.3	41.5	21.9	5.5	2.8

Question: How much do you trust the following?

By far the most trusted entity in the Namibian political system is the President (69%). He is followed by the Electoral Commission (66%), the National Assembly (65%), the National Council (57%), Regional Councils (55%), and Local Authority Councils (50%). Some 36% show some degree of distrust towards the ruling party, whilst even more (70%) distrust opposition parties. Political parties thus attract much lower levels of trust than any other elected agency.

<sup>1</sup> Only asked in urban areas



All the items listed above, except the Electoral Commission, constitute one theoretical dimension: elected representatives. It is important that parties are included in the list because they compile the electoral lists and nominate candidates from which representatives are elected. Factor Analysis confirms a single dimension and Reliability Analysis shows that these items can be aggregated in a single valid Trust Index.<sup>2</sup>

Table 4 shows the regions' mean scores on the Trust Index. Overall, trust in elected representatives is below the scale mid-point (1.5) in only four regions: Caprivi, Hardap, Omaheke, and Otjozondjupa. It is highest in Omusati and Ohangwena.

**Table 4: Trust Index by region**

Region	Trust Index
Caprivi	1.05
Erongo	1.56
Hardap	1.16
Karas	1.66
Kavango	1.57
Khomas	1.70
Kunene	1.73
Ohangwena	2.00
Omaheke	1.44
Omusati	2.04
Oshana	1.78
Oshikoto	1.94
Otjozondjupa	1.43
Total	1.60

Overall, trust in elected representatives is high, approaching the level of 'quite a lot'. Urban areas show slightly higher levels of trust, but the difference between urban and rural areas is marginal and not statistically significant.

### **3) Responsiveness**

How much contact do Namibians have with their representatives? For a government to be deemed responsive, it must not only have regular contact with the electorate, but it must also stay in touch with ordinary citizens and be able to listen to their demands. With regard to the first question, Table 5 shows that contact between Namibians and their elected representatives is extremely poor and that the frequency of whatever contact takes place is low and often one-off. The most contacted agencies were the Regional Councillors with National Assembly representatives being the least contacted. The second most contacted agencies were political parties, which is encouraging.

<sup>2</sup> Factor Analysis = Eigen value = 3.607; variance = 52%; Reliability Analysis = Cronbach's Alpha = .813. The Trust Index is a four-point scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 3 (a lot) and the scale midpoint is 1.5.





**Table 5: Contact with elected representatives**

	<b>Never</b> %	<b>Only once</b> %	<b>Sometimes</b> %	<b>Often</b> %
<b>Local Government Councillor</b>	80.2	12.1	7.3	0.5
<b>National Assembly representative</b>	87.3	7.1	4.9	0.7
<b>National Council representative</b>	84.9	8.8	5.7	0.6
<b>Regional Councillor</b>	64.8	21.5	12.9	0.8
<b>Government ministry official</b>	77.5	10.2	9.8	2.5
<b>Political party official</b>	74.1	13.6	10.2	2.1

Question: During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons for help to solve a problem or to give them your views?

Responses to the second question confirm the trends highlighted above, but also show that the distance between citizens and their representatives does translate into some cynicism towards the motives of these representatives. Table 6 below shows that the majority of Namibians (on average more than two in every three) feel that: a) leaders do not often try and look after their interests, and b) that leaders do not try and listen to their views on a frequent basis.

**Table 6: Government responsiveness**

	<b>Never</b> %	<b>Some of the time</b> %	<b>Most of the time</b> %	<b>Always</b> %	<b>Don't know</b> %
<b>Look after the interests of people</b>	22.1	49.2	19.5	6.8	2.4
<b>Leaders listen to what people have to say</b>	24.5	44.9	23.0	5.4	2.2

Question: How much of the time do you think elected leaders try their best to \_\_\_\_\_?

The distance between citizens and representatives is too significant to be ignored. Also, the data shows that whilst this can be partly ascribed to the use of a PR system at national and local authority level, it cannot and should not be reduced to that. It is a problem that perpetuates the entire polity and all its levels. It is not confined to the levels at which PR is used.

Table 7 provides an overview of those who believe that Government is looking after their interests by region, while Table 8 shows the perception that leaders listen to ordinary folk, also by region.

The most favourable perceptions (most of the time or always) are recorded in four regions: Ohangwena (45%), Omusati (41%), Oshana (46%) and Oshikoto (51%). This is perhaps unsurprising given the fact that these regions are also ruling-party strongholds. Among the remaining regions, more negative perceptions (never or some of the time) predominate. In Caprivi (98%), Kunene (100%), Omaheke (91%) and Otjozondjupa (90%) negative perceptions are especially high.



**Table 7: To what extent Government looks after interests of ordinary people by region**

	Never %	Some of the time %	Most of the time %	Always %
Caprivi	47.2	50.9	1.9	0.0
Erongo	28.3	54.3	10.9	6.5
Hardap	26.8	46.4	23.2	3.6
Karas	25.0	53.6	21.4	0.0
Kavango	21.0	65.0	12.0	2.0
Khomas	30.6	46.4	17.9	5.1
Kunene	32.6	67.4	0.0	0.0
Ohangwena	11.8	42.9	35.3	10.1
Omaheke	4.3	87.0	8.7	0.0
Omusati	14.8	43.8	23.4	18.0
Oshana	14.1	40.2	32.6	13.0
Oshikoto	7.9	41.6	35.6	14.9
Otjozondjupa	38.4	51.2	10.5	0.0

The picture in Table 8 does not look much better. The overall pattern of the distribution of responses is very similar to that in Table 7 above. In Ohangwena (45%), Omusati (56%), Oshana (52%) and Oshikoto (42%), a substantial proportion of respondents perceive that leaders listen to ordinary folk, either most of the time or always. This is in sharp contrast to the perceptions in Caprivi (0%), Kunene (2%), Omaheke (9%), Kavango (16%) and Otjozondjupa (12%), where only a very small percentage of respondents felt that way.

**Table 8: To what extent Government listens to ordinary people by region**

	Never %	Some of the time %	Most of the time %	Always %
Caprivi	52.8	47.2	0.0	0.0
Erongo	26.4	48.4	13.2	12.1
Hardap	35.7	39.3	21.4	3.6
Karas	23.2	46.4	30.4	0.0
Kavango	27.5	56.9	8.8	6.9
Khomas	35.5	43.7	16.2	4.6
Kunene	39.1	58.7	2.2	0.0
Ohangwena	14.3	40.3	37.8	7.6
Omaheke	6.5	84.8	6.5	2.2
Omusati	13.3	30.5	46.1	10.2
Oshana	7.5	40.9	44.1	7.5
Oshikoto	10.9	48.5	34.7	5.9
Otjozondjupa	44.2	44.2	11.6	0.0

Correlation Analysis shows that the two perceptions on government responsiveness correlate closely ( $r = .719$ ;  $p = 0.01$ ). This means that those who believe that Government is not looking after the interests of ordinary people are also more likely to believe that Government is not listening to ordinary people. Both the responsiveness perceptions also correlate with the amount of trust invested in government agencies, but it is significant that these correlations are relatively weak



( $r = .217$ ;  $p = 0.01$  and  $r = .221$ ;  $p = 0.01$ ). This suggests that perceptions of government responsiveness are only very weak predictors of levels of trust in government agencies.

#### 4) Performance

What does the ordinary Namibian regard as the most urgent policy priorities? The sum totals of all responses (each respondent could list up to three) on a selected number of issues are contained in Table 9.

**Table 9: The people's policy agenda**

	Percentage
Unemployment	76.6
Poverty/destitution	19.8
Food shortage/famine	12.2
Wages, income, salaries	12.2
Education	28.7
Health	21.0
HIV/AIDS	34.8
Crime/security	14.8
Water supply	14.4

*Question: In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this county that Government should address?*

By far the leading issue for ordinary Namibians is unemployment (77%). This is followed by HIV/AIDS (35%), education (29%), health (21%) and poverty (20%). Most significantly (in the current context) is the fact that only 1.1% of respondents listed land as an important issue.

Table 10 contains an overview of Namibians' views on Government's performance on a number of pre-selected policy issues.

**Table 10: Government's performance on selected policy issues**

	Very badly %	Fairly badly %	Fairly well %	Very well %	Don't know %
Managing the economy	2.5	12.2	55.3	24.3	5.8
Creating jobs	18.4	34.0	39.4	7.6	0.6
Keeping prices stable	15.8	47.0	29.7	5.5	2.0
Narrowing income gaps	20.8	45.2	25.8	4.0	4.3
Reducing crime	10.8	22.6	43.4	22.0	1.2
Improving basic health services	3.3	17.4	56.5	22.3	0.5
Addressing educational needs	2.7	16.8	60.6	18.3	1.7
Delivering household water	9.0	26.8	50.8	12.3	1.2
Ensuring food security	20.7	36.8	36.8	4.0	1.7
Fighting corruption in government	8.2	29.6	49.8	7.8	4.8
Resolving conflict between communities	2.9	21.0	53.3	16.3	6.4
Combating HIV/AIDS	8.1	11.8	54.5	23.0	2.6

*Question: How well or badly would you say the current Government is handling the following matters?*

Table 10 shows that Government's performance is considered either very bad or bad by a majority of Namibians in four policy areas. These are: creating jobs (52%), keeping prices stable (63%),



narrowing income gaps (66%), and ensuring food security (57%). For the remainder of the policy areas the majority of Namibians feel that Government is doing fairly well or very well.

For the most part, if one compares the people’s agenda with Government’s performance, the picture is a mixed one. With regard to people’s number-one priority – unemployment – Government’s performance leaves much to be desired. That is also the case with regard to poverty and reducing income gaps. On the other hand, Government is doing well with regard to water supply, health and HIV/AIDS.

Namibians were also asked about the performance of individual government agencies. Table 11 shows the responses in this regard. Some 87% of Namibians felt that the President is doing a good job. Although all other agencies are viewed in a very positive light (on average two in every three Namibians approve), none come even close to matching the perceived performance of the President. Thus, although Namibians are sceptical about Government’s performance in certain policy sectors, they are much more positive about the performance of their elected representatives.

**Table 11: Performance of government agencies**

	<b>Strongly disapprove</b> %	<b>Disapprove</b> %	<b>Approve</b> %	<b>Strongly approve</b> %	<b>Don’t know</b> %
<b>President</b>	2.4	8.5	44.3	42.3	2.5
<b>National Assembly</b>	3.1	19.3	58.2	15.3	4.2
<b>National Council</b>	3.3	25.7	55.8	11.8	3.6
<b>Regional Councillor</b>	6.0	23.6	53.6	14.1	2.8
<b>Local Government Councillor</b>	4.6	25.0	62.3	8.2	-

*Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the following people have performed their jobs over the past 12 months?*

### **Political Identities**

How do Namibians view themselves? Answers were solicited by means of an open-ended question: “*We have spoken to many Namibians and they have all described themselves in different ways. Some people describe themselves in terms of their language, ethnic group, race religion or gender and others describe themselves in economic terms, such as working class, middle class, or a farmer. Besides being Namibian, which specific group do you feel you belong to first and foremost?*” Thus what are listed are ‘secondary’ identities. By far the majority (two in every three) Namibians chose to define themselves in parochial (ethnic/tribal/racial) terms (see Table 12). This is perhaps unsurprising given the country’s past of racial and ethnic divisions. The second most frequently held identity is a class/occupation identity.



**Table 12: Political identities**

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Ethnic/racial/tribal</b>	794	66.2
<b>Class/occupation</b>	234	19.5
<b>Religious</b>	71	5.9
<b>Gender</b>	42	3.5
<b>Other</b>	13	1.1
<b>Total</b>	1154	96.2
<b>Missing</b>	46	3.8
<b>Total</b>	1200	100.0

The crucial issue about identity is not so much how one defines oneself (although this is not unimportant) but whether or not a specific identity has (perceived) political gains and/or losses attached to it.

Table 13 below shows perceptions on the economic position of respondents' self-defined identity groups. Some 32% felt that their group was better off than other groups, whilst almost an equal number (30%) felt that theirs was worse off. Slightly more (38%) felt that conditions were the same for all groups.

**Table 13: Own group's economic position**

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Much better</b>	69	5.8
<b>Better</b>	315	26.3
<b>Same</b>	450	37.5
<b>Worse</b>	269	22.4
<b>Much worse</b>	89	7.4
<b>Don't know</b>	8	.7
<b>Total</b>	1200	100.0

Question: Are \_\_\_\_\_s' [Respondent's identity group] economic conditions worse, the same as, or better than other groups in the country?

Rural dwellers are slightly more inclined to think that their own group's position is better than others', compared to urban dwellers. There are also different feelings among the different ethnic groups. Among those that speak the Kavango (48%), Herero (39%) Caprivi (52%) and Damara/Nama (50%) languages, the predominant feeling is that their own group position is worse or much worse than that of the other groups. In sharp contrast, 50% of Oshiwambo-speakers feel that their own-group status is better or much better than that of other groups. If one disaggregates these perceptions by region, on average one in every five Namibians across all regions feels that their group's economic position is worse than that of other groups. However, in some regions this perception is quite strong. In Caprivi (58%), Kavango (43%), Kunene (40%) and Otjozondjupa (55%) these perceptions of comparative deprivation are particularly high.

A second question enquired about unfair treatment of specific groups. Table 14 shows that only 29% of Namibians feels that their group is never treated unfairly by Government.



**Table 14: Own group treated unfairly by Government**

	Frequency	Percentage
Never	348	29.0
Sometimes	496	41.3
Often	222	18.5
Always	116	9.7
Don't know	18	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Question: How often are \_\_\_\_\_s [Respondents identity group] treated unfairly by Government?

Almost 29% of Namibians feel their group(s) is being treated unfairly either often or always. In Caprivi (68%), Hardap (39%), Omaheke (43%) and Otjozondjupa (54%), the feeling that government treats their own groups unfairly, either often or always, is the highest. At the other end of the spectrum, the feeling that the Government never treats their own groups unfairly is by far the highest in Ohangwena (53%) and Omusati (65%). Education seems to have an influence on these perceptions. Those with lower levels of education are more inclined to perceive unfair treatment of their own groups than those with higher levels of education. There is also an ethnic dimension to perceptions that some groups are being treated unfairly. Perceptions that own groups are treated unfairly either often or always are strongest among Herero-speakers (51%), Caprivian-languages speakers (57%) and Damara/Nama-speakers (40%). Conversely only about 17% of Oshiwambo-speakers felt the same way.

There seem to be clear patterns emerging around the previous two questions. Some social groups have strong feelings that their own groups' position is worse than that of other groups and that their own groups are being treated unfairly. The fact that these feelings coincide strongly with ethnic boundaries is disturbing but not entirely surprising (given the fact that the majority of Namibians chose to define themselves in ethnic terms and that the state is not perceived to be ethnically neutral). These perceptions raise some question on the resilience of a national (Namibian) identity in the light of the fact that perceptions on group well-being are shaped by ethnic dispositions. Thus when asked to choose between a national (Namibian) identity and their respective group identities, which way do Namibians go?

Table 15 shows that by far the majority of Namibians (83%) still regard themselves as Namibians first and foremost, above their group identity.

**Table 15: National versus group identity**

	Frequency	Percent
Namibian	995	82.9
Own-group identity	178	14.8
Don't know	27	2.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Question: Let us suppose that you had to choose between being a Namibian and being a \_\_\_\_\_ [Respondent's identity group]. Which of these two groups do you feel most strongly attached to?

Thus despite the relatively high levels of ethnically defined relative deprivation that exist among some Namibians/regions, there does not seem to be any major disengagement from the national identity. This means that although unhappy about their own groups' status, most Namibians still pledge their ultimate allegiance to the national rather than the parochial. At this point in time,





---

parochial identities do not seem to hold a threat to the national state and polity, but if these perceptions and feelings of deprivation are not addressed future problems cannot be ruled out.

### **Political Mobilisation**

Political theory explains citizens' mobilisation in politics in two ways. Firstly, some would argue that citizens are primarily mobilised through their attachment to political parties. Partisanship (measured as 'closeness to a political party') develops over time: as voters repeatedly vote for the same party, they become more attached to the party. Thus, one would expect older generations to have higher partisanship than the younger generations who have not voted repeatedly. Also, where partisanship is high, the party system will be stable due to the stable attachment to political parties.

Secondly, others would argue that voters increase overtime with the overall levels of education and, as mass media develops, rely less on political parties and more on they own cognitive skills to obtain the information needed to vote. Thus one would expect a decline in partisanship to coincide with an increase in cognitive skills. Cognitive mobilisation is predicted to be higher among the younger generations due to their higher levels of education and exposure to mass media. Where cognitive mobilisation is high, the party system will be unstable because attachment to parties is low. Voters who are mobilised through their own cognitive skills are 'floating voters' who show no permanent attachment to any party but could vote for any depending on their judgment on any single or a combination of issues.

Following Dalton (1984), we have compiled a 2x2 grid of Namibian voters based on the two dimensions of mobilisation (partisanship and cognitive mobilisation).<sup>3</sup> This renders four types of citizens:

- **Apoliticals:** Those who have both low partisanship and low cognitive mobilisation
- **Ritual partisans:** Those with low cognitive mobilisation but high partisanship
- **Apartisans:** Those with low partisanship but high cognitive mobilisation
- **Cognitive Partisans:** Those with high cognitive mobilisation and partisanship

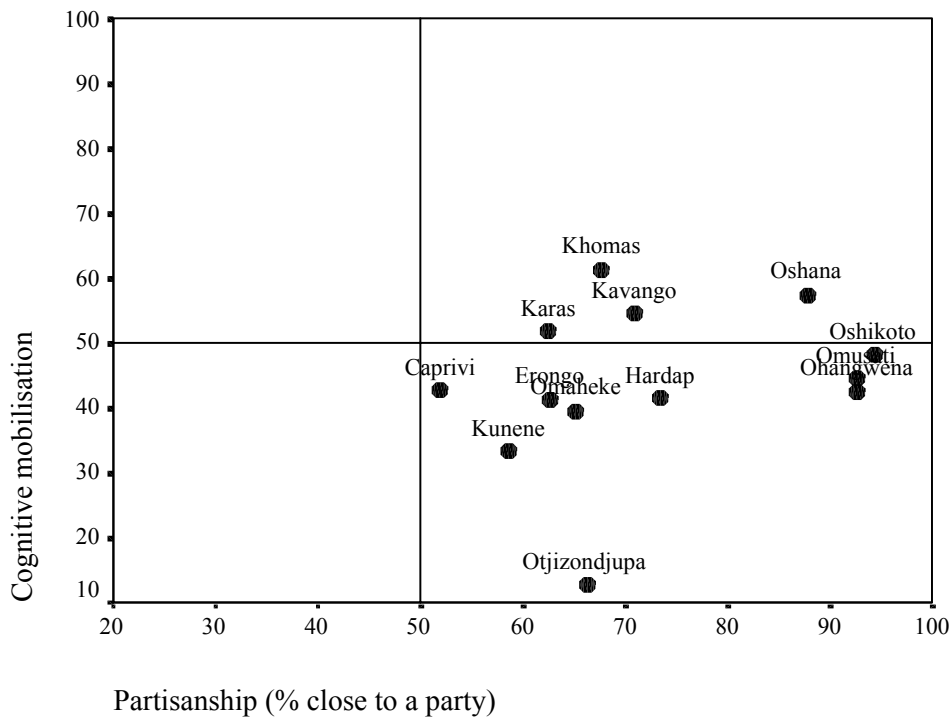
Figure 2 below maps the distribution of high partisanship and high cognitive mobilisation for Namibia by region.

---

<sup>3</sup> On the partisanship dimension, I distinguished between those Namibians who feel close to a party and those who don't. On the cognitive dimension, I compiled a six-point composite index of respondents' education levels and their interest in politics. Below 3 on this scale is treated as low, cognisance and above as high cognisance.



**Figure 2: High partisan and cognitive mobilisation**

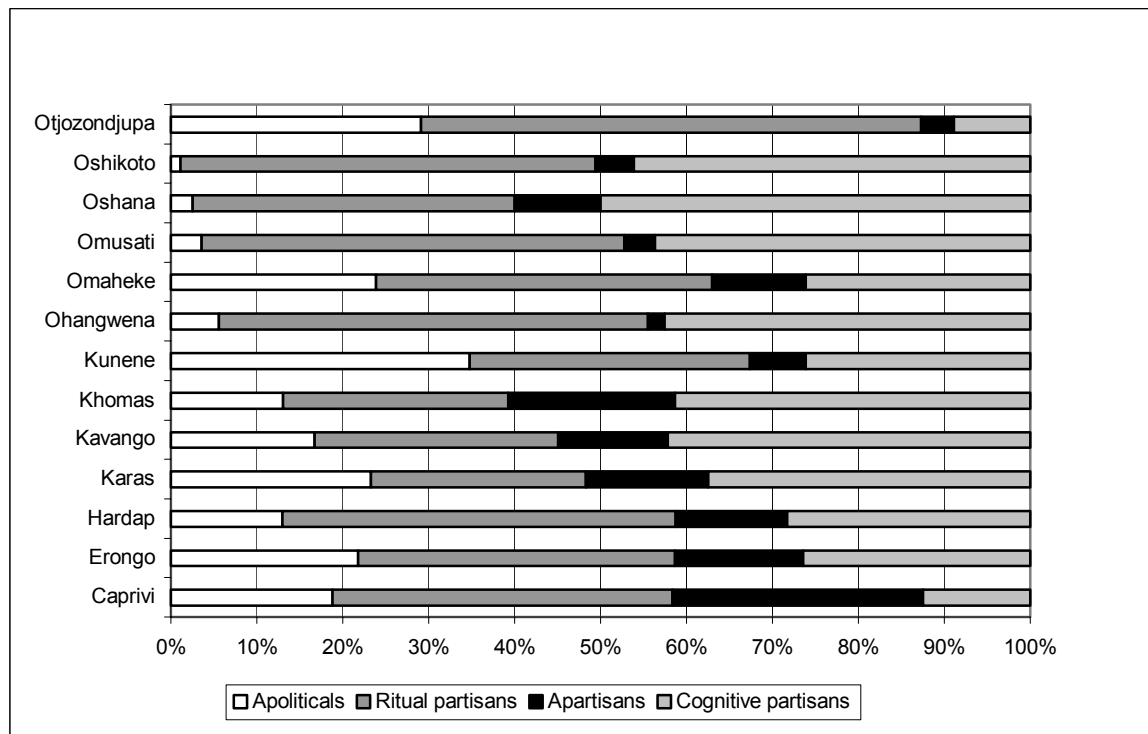


It shows the four north-central regions of Oshana, Oshikoto, Omusati and Ohangwena as having the highest levels of partisanship. In these regions, most citizens feel themselves close to a party. The significance of this is that these four regions are also the ruling party’s traditional stronghold, and as such this explains the ruling-party dominance of electoral politics. In Caprivi these feelings are lowest. The four regions of Khomas, Karas, Kavango and Oshana have the highest levels of cognitive mobilisation.

Figure 3 shows the four types of mobilisation by region. Apoliticals are highest in Otjozondjupa, Omaheke and Kunene. Caprivi is the only region that has a significant number of Apartisans (i.e. those who rely not on parties but their own cognitive skills for mobilisation). Finally, most regions (in fact all except the four in the upper right-hand quadrant of Figure 2) are dominated by ritual partisans. This means that most Namibians rely on their parties for mobilisation, and not on their own cognitive skills. This implies that the party system will remain stable at least in the near to medium future (and perhaps even longer) and the electoral dominance of the ruling party will continue.



**Figure 3: Types of mobilisation**



Does this mean that no change is possible? Dalton suggests that in some advance democracies inter-generational changes occur due to an increase in cognitive skills among the younger generation which causes a decline in partisanship. Is this likely in Namibia? To test this proposition we need to establish a relationship between age and partisanship as well as between age and cognitive mobilisation. After regressing age onto cognitive mobilisation, the predicted pattern is confirmed. Age does make a significant, albeit very small, difference to cognitive mobilisation ( $b = -.006$ )<sup>4</sup>. This is lower than the average ( $b = -.0159$ ) for the eight advanced democracies discussed by Dalton (1984:269), but follows the same trend. The small change in cognitive skills by age group suggests that any changes in this regard will be slow.

## 6. Changing Attitudes and Values

How does a civic culture develop? What drives its growth and development? Despite the already substantial body of literature on the subject, there is little agreement on the answers to these questions. Moreover, there seems to be little agreement on which variables, data and methods to use. As a result, the debate is as yet unresolved and the strategies by which to consolidate democracy and/or build a democratic value system are unclear.

There is also disagreement about the nature of values and attitudes themselves. For some, these are stable constructs which are not very pliable and any change is bound to be slow (see, for example, Inglehart and Baker 2000; Sears and Funk 1999; and Rice and Feldman 1997). Others regard them as more pliable, utilitarian and situation-dependent (see, for example, Seligson and Booth 1993; Rokeach 1966).

<sup>4</sup> 'b' is the unstandardised regression coefficient.



---

This is not the time or the place to address all facets of the debate. Instead this section will provide a synoptic overview of four potential drivers of value and attitudinal change. These are drawn from experiences outside Namibia, since value changes have not been studied in any great depth in this country. All the research presented here suggests that value and attitudes are open for change and, as such, that successful intervention on behalf of democracy is possible. Some aspects of change take longer to deliver or show an impact and some drivers of change fall outside the scope and reach of immediate programmatic intervention. What is covered here, therefore, is by no means an exhaustive account of the literature or the experience that is available today.

### **Modernisation**

Karl Marx and Max Weber are arguably the two theorists who laid the foundations for those that study the effects of modernisation on (political) culture. More specifically, scholars in this tradition link economic development with a number of profound cultural changes. As economic systems change, cultures change and modern values replace traditional ones. Pre-materialist values have been replaced by materialist values largely as the result of industrial capitalism, and right now these materialist values are being replaced by post-materialist values as parts of the world move further away from industrial economies to post-industrial economies (see, for example, Inglehart 1990; Inglehart and Baker 2000). The key driver for Inglehart and his various co-authors is economic development and the result of increased development is value changes across two dimensions: traditional versus secular-rational, and survival versus self-expression. It is the secular-rational and the self-expression values that, in turn, drive democracy. Thus for societies to maintain and consolidate democracy, economic growth and development are essential. Countries with a GNP per capita exceeding US\$ 15,000 are mostly high on both the secular-rational and self-expression dimensions. Those with a GNP per capita below US\$ 2,000 are mostly high on both the traditional and survival dimensions. Inter-generational values changes are most significant in societies with a GNP >US\$ 10,000.

Yet they also found that culture persists despite economic development – a country's cultural heritage<sup>5</sup> remains relevant for its development of secular-rational and self-expression values. For example, those countries which are Protestant historically score higher on the self-expression dimension than those in the historically communist zone (despite being equally high on the secular-rational dimension). Of all the cultural zones, it is the historically Protestant one that seems best at cultivating self-expression values. Thus, indirectly, chances for democratic consolidation are improved when a country has a Protestant past. It is also in this zone that inter-generational value changes are most significant.

### **Socialisation**

Loosely defined, political socialisation refers to the process by which political attitudes and dispositions are conveyed from one agency in a society to another. It is the way individuals learn about politics and it is the mechanism through which political values and orientations perpetuate themselves across generations (Merelman 1972). Much of the research done on political socialisation focuses on children and adolescents and, secondly, the agencies that have an influence on their political orientations. Those agencies commonly regarded as important agents of socialisation include the family, the school, parents, the media and events (Niemi and Sobieszek 1977). A third focus is on the outcomes of socialisation.

---

<sup>5</sup> They make use of Huntington's world cultural zones: Ex-communist, Protestant Europe, English-speaking, Latin-America, Africa, South Asian, Orthodox, and Confucian.



---

Children learn from their *parents* through a number of mechanisms: accumulation, generalisation, imitation and cognitive-development (Hess and Torney in Merelman 1972: 148). One specific area in which parents have a significant influence on children's political disposition is their orientation toward political authority (especially the country and its institutions). Jennings and Niemi (1968) found considerable correlations between school children and parents' party identification and attitudes toward specific social and political groups in America. They also found that parents' influence regarding political cynicism to be less strong. Axinn and Thornton (1993) found that parents' attitudes do influence children's behaviour, but also that children's behaviour influences parents' attitudes, thus suggesting that socialisation is not necessarily a one-way process.

*High school* seems to be more crucial an agent of political socialisation than primary school because children tend to develop the cognitive ability to deal with the abstract issues of politics only around the age of 11 to 13 (Niemi and Sobieszek 1977). During high school, learners are exposed to a number of influences: the school milieu, peers and civic education programmes. In a study of the effects of civic education programmes in British schools, John (2002) found that civic education programmes do increase political knowledge but with some gender and ethnic patterns. Boys know more than girls and white learners know more than non-white learners. He also found that learners' perceptions of their own efficacy is predicted by their parents' political activity, but that students' knowledge of politics does not increase their perceptions of their own efficacy. Knowledge does influence whether or not learners regard politics as complicated or not and having civic classes does increase political trust.

In the USA, Sears and Valentino (1997) highlight the effects of political events such as presidential election campaigns, can have on the learners' knowledge of parties and candidates, and that attitude gains during campaigns are higher than those in-between campaigns. The overall effect of campaign socialisation is that it raised learners' partisan attitudes closer to the levels of adults.

Norris and Sanders (2001) found that media exposure during the 2001 British election campaign had a significant effect on prospective voters' levels of political knowledge irrespective of their prior political knowledge. They also found that the increase in knowledge was consistent across all types of media used. Richard Miller (1976) found that mere repeated exposure to a single political issue through the media was sufficient to enhance (US) college students' attitudes toward that message, and that overexposure dampened only the positive attitudinal effects (1976: 232) but not actual behaviour. He also found that the negative effects of overexposure could easily be reversed by a total break in the campaign.

### **Social Capital**

Broadly defined, 'social capital' refers to the complex web of cooperative social relationships that facilitate the resolution of collective-action problems (Brehm and Rahn 1997). Social capital theorists emphasise a number of variables that are in one way or another linked to a civic culture. These include: inter-personal trust, participation, associational membership and tolerance. The central argument for many of these scholars is that greater civic participation shapes attitudes and orientations toward the polity, the self and others within the political system and that these in turn shape democratic attitudes and behaviour. Citizens ultimately learn about democracy not in the political system itself, but through civic engagement (participation in voluntary associations).

In a study of USA citizens, Brehm and Rahn (1997) proposed that ultimately social capital is based on the reciprocal relationship between civic participation and interpersonal trust. Thus the more citizens participate in their communities, the more they learn to trust others; and the more they trust others, the more likely they are to participate in their communities. Furthermore, they propose



---

that this relationship has important consequences for citizens' confidence in political institutions. Their findings suggest that although the relationship between civic participation and interpersonal trust is reciprocal, it is also asymmetrical: civic participation has a stronger effect on interpersonal trust than vice versa. Thus, it might be easier for communities to bolster participation than generate trust. They found the effects of these two dimensions on confidence in political institutions to be contradictory: civic engagement decreases confidence in political institutions whereas interpersonal trust increases confidence in political institutions (1997: 1018).

On the other hand, Gibson (2001) found that in Russia interpersonal trust has little to do with attitudes toward the political system and institutions, but that informal personal networks rather than formal associations display substantial political capacity. Given the fact that the former communist regime suppressed the development of formal associational life (much like the colonial authorities did in Namibia), Russians conducted their political activities through informal personal networks (such as 'kitchen circles' – informal meetings between groups of friends who met in their kitchens to discuss art, creation and politics (Greenfield 1992 quoted in Gibson 2001)). Therefore, although Russia had a weak civic society, a significant amount of civic activity did take place suggesting that it is possible to have a weak civic society and high levels of personal political capacity. But Gibson also shows that not all kinds of informal personal networks are conducive for building political capacity. He concludes that "networks with high capacity are broad (including many members), are politicised (in the sense of talking politics being common), and are 'weak' (network ties transcend family boundaries)" (2001: 59). These networks are an important source of learning about the meaning of democracy for Russians that engage in them, but most importantly, these networks do not necessarily generate the kind of trust (trust in strangers) that is required for democratic consolidation (the belief that democracy is always best). Thus, he argues that these networks must, at some point, develop into more formal associations (i.e. civil society agencies) if chances for consolidation are to be improved. These informal personal networks might thus be a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for democratic ideas. At the same time prospects for developing formal associations are improved where these personal networks exist.

Mishler and Rose (1997) argue that any political society requires political trust for at least two reasons: 1) it allows governments and representatives to pursue long-term national interests without being restricted by short-term constituency objectives; and 2) it is crucial for the formation of a vibrant civic society (i.e. formal associations of interests that extend beyond the family to include strangers). They also argue that while some degree of trust is needed to allow government to do what it needs to do, too much trust in government might also be counterproductive. With too much trust, citizens will be unwilling to suspend ineffective governments and thereby change the government of the day. Another feature of too much trust is apathy. Both these could hamper the consolidation of democracy. They also make the important point that trust might be inherited – i.e. the product of socialisation during earlier times with different institutions and a different political environment (1997: 420). They found that scepticism rather than positive trust or active distrust is the dominant orientation toward post-communist institutions. To explain the sources of trust, distrust and scepticism, they make use of a lifetime learning model (where past individual orientations toward political institutions learned early in life [socialisation] are augmented by more recent individual experiences with institutions' performance). Thus, both the past and the present are used to understand current orientations. Ultimately, they found that in post-communist Europe levels of trust are influenced not so much by associational membership or civic participation, but by early-life socialisation (indirectly) and by the economic and political performance of institutions (directly). One of the consequences of these findings is that trust could be regarded as unstable since it is so closely linked to performance.





---

Tolerance is another attribute of social capital that is often discussed in the literature. Although there are significant differences in the approaches by which tolerance is studied, most studies focus on tolerance toward least-liked, or strongly-disliked groups, and the extent to which citizens are willing to extend civil and political liberties to these groups. A further focus is on the 'tolerance environment', i.e. the conditions that shape and influence tolerance.<sup>6</sup>

Milton Rokeach (1966) offers a useful distinction in this regard. He distinguishes between an attitude-object (which may be abstract or concrete, involving a person, a group, an institution or an issue) and an attitude-situation (a specific event or activity). To understand attitudes fully, he suggests a focus on both components. Thus how a person will behave toward an object within a situation will depend on the beliefs and dispositions triggered by the attitude-object as well as the beliefs and dispositions triggered by the situation (1966: 531). These two components can, but do not have to, be in congruence and their relative importance in bringing about attitudinal change can and may vary. For example, it is quite possible for a particular individual to have strong racist attitudes (attitude-toward-object), yet at the same time he or she will allow members of these intensely disliked groups to wine and dine in his/her restaurant simply because of his/her perception of 'what is good for business' (attitude-toward-situation). In this case the latter component of the overall attitude is relatively more important than the first in determining the individual's behaviour. But, despite the behaviour, this individual cannot be classified non-racial.

In line with Rokeach's argument, Sullivan, Marcus, Feldman and Piereson (1981), after exploring the overall effects of some social, psychological and political determinants of tolerance, found that: 1) social determinants (occupation, size of city, sex, race, income etc.) had very little impact on tolerance attitudes and democratic norms; 2) personality variables (dogmatic, self-actualisation, self-esteem etc.) have a strong indirect influence through general norms of democracy on tolerance; and 3) that political variables (general democratic norms and perceptions of threat) have a strong direct influence on tolerance. The importance of this latter finding is that tolerance levels seem to be situation-dependent: intolerance increases if and when most-disliked-groups are perceived to pose a political threat.

Gibson and Gouws (2003) in a study of South Africa also found that tolerance is strongly influenced by perceptions of threat. In addition, however, they found that as a result, tolerance levels are not stable; changes in threat perceptions will result in changes in tolerance levels. Another important finding of their study was that tolerance levels vary significantly across racial groups and that the respective racial groups' tolerance levels are influenced by different factors. Among black South Africans tolerance is shaped predominantly by perceptions of political threat; among white South Africans it is predominantly perceptions of changes in crime levels; among coloured South Africans it is perceptions of increased political security; and among South Africans of Asian origin it is the strength of their commitment to democratic institutions. In South Africa, thus, threat perceptions are tied to group identities.

The malleability of tolerance orientations is also illustrated by Gibson and Gouws by means of a 'persuadability experiment' (2003: 119-153). They challenged respondents' survey responses by means of counterarguments in an attempt to measure changes brought about by persuasion. Overall they found that a significant number of South Africans are willing to change intolerant

---

<sup>6</sup> At this point in time a caveat is in order. Most of the studies cited here are limited to a specific set of predetermined groups: communists, atheists, right-wingers, pro-abortionists etc. that could be placed on a left/right ideological spectrum. What is regularly omitted from this type of analysis are groups that would be directly relevant to societies such as Namibia; e.g. ethnic, tribal or racial groups. What these studies thus analyse is 'ideological tolerance' and not necessarily ethnic or racial tolerance.



---

attitudes after being exposed to a persuasive counterargument, but that the direction of the change in attitude is not always positive (i.e. from intolerant to tolerant). A number of factors are highlighted as important for persuasion: 1) those individuals for whom threat perceptions are salient in bringing about intolerance are less likely to be persuaded by pro-tolerance arguments; 2) those that already hold pro-democracy attitudes are more likely to be persuaded by pro-tolerance arguments than those that do not have pro-democracy attitudes; 3) some South Africans (more specifically black South Africans) are open to pro-tolerance persuasion only when they trust the source of the tolerance message. Furthermore, those with highly integrated and crystallised attitudes (a significant number of political attitudes are interrelated and systematic in intensity and direction) are less likely to be persuaded than those whose attitudes are compartmentalised.

Finkel (2000) concurs with Gibson and Gouws when he finds that “tolerance judgements can be affected via persuasive argumentation only when the messages are understood and the individual is able to link them with ‘collateral democratic values’. The list of collateral values, however, must be expanded to include the individual’s evaluation of the current performance of the political system” (2000: 34).

### **Civic Education**

In recent times a number of studies focused specifically on the effects of civic and voter education campaigns on adult political orientations. Civic education is a very specific agent of adult socialisation and it forms part of the lifetime-learning model of political socialisation proposed by Mishler and Rose (1997). Civic education is also different from other forms of socialisation in that it has a deliberate, clearly defined goal, focus and message, and a specific set of pedagogic tools by which to convey the message and achieve the goal. Unlike the usual forms of socialisation, civic education is a deliberate intervention of behalf of democracy.

Recently a number of studies were conducted with the specific objective of measuring the impact of adult civic education programmes (Finkel 2000; Finkel and Stumbras 2000; Finkel, Sabatini and Bevis 1998; Bratton and Alderfer with Bowser and Temba 1999). Using a variety of quasi-experimental research designs, all these studies measure the impact of civic education by means of a comparison of political attitudes and orientations of control and experimental groups, whilst at the same time controlling for impact of self-selection. In general, these studies found civic education to be effective in changing attitudes and orientations but that it is dependent on a number of conditions. Importantly however, these studies are not clear on the durability or lasting impact of these attitudinal changes.

Bratton and Alderfer (1998) found that in Zambia, civic education has a positive effect on civic values and preferences for political reform but that the effects are quite small. It was found that civic education promotes distrust rather than trust in the political system and that civic education does not contribute to the development of social capital. Also, civic education has no effect on those citizens who are both less educated and less informed.

Finkel (2000) in a study of the Dominican Republic and South Africa found that civic education does have a significant effect on tolerance judgements but that these effects are conditional. Among the variables that shape the effects of civic education are: 1) the frequency of exposure to training; 2) the type of training methods used; 3) the level of cognitive skills among the participants; 4) and the level of participants political awareness and general orientation toward democracy prior to exposure to the training programmes. In short, civic education has a significant effect on tolerance levels when:



- 
- individuals are exposed to these programmes on a frequent basis (at least three times);
  - training takes place by means of an active, participatory teaching methodology;
  - individuals have sufficient (i.e. neither very low nor very high) cognitive skills and high levels of political awareness; and
  - individuals have a strong orientation toward democracy and democratic values prior to receiving the training, and are of the opinion that the current political and economic system performs well.

Bratton and Alderfer with Bowser and Tamba (1999) also found that the effectiveness of civic education programmes in Zambia is dependent on certain conditions. They found that:

- formal methods of training are more effective in bringing about cognitive changes.
- informal methods are more conducive in bringing about value and behavioural changes.
- civic education programmes have an effect first on knowledge levels and value orientations before they have an effect on political behaviour. Civic education seems to enhance civic knowledge and civic values irrespective of prior levels of interest and knowledge, and it had a clear impact on the propensity to register for elections. Behavioural changes of this nature are limited to those who possess more education and information, among the rest, civic education had no effect on behavioural change.
- the effects of civic education on orientations to democracy are marginal rather than radical.
- civic education can have unintended effects. In Zambia it promoted distrust toward fellow citizens and political institutions.
- civic education neglects underprivileged groups; those that are both less educated and less informed. Civic education works best when participants have acquired higher levels of education which enable them to understand the messages, and when they have had prior exposure to radio news.

Although no research on the impact of civic education has been done before in Namibia, one recent exercise presents a model of those who are more likely to attend civic education meetings (Keulder 2003). Appendix 2 below shows that the propensity to participate in political meetings (including civic education meetings) is strongly influenced by a number of factors. Most important are: 1) whether or not individuals already engage in church and school meetings (civic participation); 2) whether or not they have prior interest in politics and have frequent political discussions; and 3) whether or not they are currently member of a political party. Lastly, it also shows that education has a negative effect on willingness to participate, suggesting that those with higher levels of education are less likely to attend these meetings.

These findings do have some relevance for the potential effects of civic education in Namibia. Aside from showing that civic education programmes are likely to attract a special audience it also suggests that the prospects for a significant impact are quite positive. Given the effects highlighted by the two studies above, the potential audience displays many of the right preconditions for civic education to be successful. They have high levels of political interest and frequently enter into political discussions. They are already active in civic matters and display high levels of social capital (interpersonal trust and care). Two aspects that might mitigate the success of civic education in Namibia are that those that are more likely to attend might not have the cognitive skills to understand the messages (due to lower levels of education) and their orientations might be closely linked to that of a specific party. They might thus not be open for information that counters their basic political understandings as encapsulated by their partisanship.



---

## 7. Conclusions

The findings presented here suggests that political values, attitudes and orientations can be shaped and changed by both long and short-term stimuli to support a democratic dispensation. Thus it is possible to build a democratic culture.

The theoretical perspectives presented in the first sections of this paper suggest that both long and short-term stimuli will bring about changes in values, attitudes and orientations. Given the purpose of this paper, in this conclusion the long-term stimuli (modernisation, economic development etc.) will be put aside and focus placed on the effects of short-term stimuli (especially civic education). Although no further discussion of long-term stimuli is offered, one should not forget that the incremental changes brought about by these long-term factors would add to the effects of the short-term stimuli. Thus both are important.

The first important conclusion about value and attitudinal change in Namibia is that we are still insufficiently informed. More research is needed for us to understand how Namibians' values, attitudes and orientations are formed and shaped. We need to know how and from whom Namibians, young and old, learn about politics and specifically democracy and what they learn about politics and democracy. In short, we need to learn more about socialisation. Secondly, we need to learn more about the sources that bring about change to existing values, attitudes and orientations. These should include both long and short-term stimuli. Finally, we need to learn about the effects of this change over time.

Based on the synoptic overview of some key elements of Namibian political culture and the findings of the studies presented here, it is safe to conclude that Namibia's current political culture contains both positive and negative elements concerning the prospects for building a democratic culture by means of short-term stimuli.

On the positive side:

- Namibians do believe that the current political system is working to their favour. According to Finkel (2000), this should enhance prospects for successful pro-democracy changes by means of civic education programmes. This is reflected in their positive opinions on legitimacy, political trust, and government agencies' performance. Another positive element of the current political culture is that Namibians attach high value to their national identity, despite their strong secondary dispositions toward parochial (ethnic) group identities. Furthermore, those that are likely to attend civic education meetings display the predispositions necessary for successful pro-democracy changes (all other things constant). With the right methodologies and frequent exposure civic education could make a significant difference.

On the negative side:

- Namibia does not have enough committed democrats to make consolidation a foregone conclusion. This also suggests that despite the fact that there is an element of the Namibian population that will make pro-democracy changes when exposed to civic education programmes, a substantial proportion will not be or will be less open to such changes.
- Namibians are high in partisanship and low in cognitive skills. This could also hamper some of the effects of civic education especially if the messages challenge party messages.



---

The conclusion of Bratton and Alderfer with Bowser and Temba (1999: 26) that “[in Zambia] civic education effects are marginal, partly contradictory and socially selective” presents a sober expectation of what can be achieved by means of civic education. They recommend the following for civic education programmes:

- “One size does not fit all”: civic education programmes should be carefully designed to meet the needs of selected participants – sophisticated messages for those that have the cognitive abilities to understand them and simplified messages for those that do not have substantial cognitive skills.
- The methodological effects of civic education should be taken into consideration. Based on the Zambian experience, informal methods should be given preference over formal ones. Given the fact that formal methods increase cognisance they should not be eliminated altogether. In a different context, Finkel (2000) found that participatory methods are more successful than non-participatory methods.
- A cost-benefit analysis should be made to prioritise the type of civic education programme and methods used. High-cost programmes with limited outreach potential could be reduced or forfeited in favour of those with lower costs and greater outreach potential.

## 8. Bibliography

Almond, G. and Verba, S. (1963). *The Civic Culture*. Little Brown: Boston.

Axinn, W. and Thornton, A. (1993). Mothers, Children and Cohabitation: The Intergenerational Effects of Attitudes and Behaviour. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 58 (2).

Bratton, M. and Alderfer, P., with Bowser, G. and Temba, J. (1999). The Effects of Civic Education on Political Culture: Evidence from Zambia. *World Development* Vol. 27.

Brehm, J. and Rahn, W. (1997). Individual-level Evidence for the Causes and Consequences of Social Capital. *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 41 (3).

Dalton, R. (1984). Cognitive Mobilization and Partisan De-alignment in Advanced Industrial Democracies. *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 46 (1).

Finkel, S. (2000). Can Tolerance be Taught? Adult Civic Education and the Development of Democratic Values. *Unpublished paper for conference on ‘Rethinking Democracy in the New Millennium, University of Houston, February 16-19.*

Finkel, S. and Stumbras, S. (2000). Civic Education in South Africa: The Impact of Adult and School Programmes on Democratic Attitudes and Participation. *Report for USAID, Contract No. AEP-I-00-96-90012-00, Task Order No. 10, Washington DC: MSI, February 8.*

Finkel, S., Sabatini, C. and Bevis, G. (1998). Civic Education and the Development of Democratic Political Culture: Evidence from the Dominican Republic and Poland. *Unpublished paper delivered at the Annual Meetings of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago: Illinois.*

Gibson, J. (2001). Social Networks, Civil Society, and the Prospects for Consolidating Russia’s Democratic Transition. *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 45 (1).





---

Gibson, J. and Gouws, A. (2003). *Overcoming Intolerance in South Africa: Experiments in Democratic Persuasion*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

Inglehart, R. (1988). The Renaissance of Political Culture. *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 82.

Inglehart, R. (1990). *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton University Press: Princeton.

Inglehart, R. and Baker, W. (2000). Modernization, Cultural Change and the Persistence of Traditional Values. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 65.

Jennings, M. and Niemi, N. (1968). The Transmission of Political Values from Parent to Child. *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 62 (1).

John, P. (2002). Acquiring Political Knowledge Through School Curricula and Practices: Evidence from England. *Unpublished paper for 2002 Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston*.

Keulder, C. (2003). Gender and Political Participation. *Unpublished paper to The Civic and Voter Education Network*. IPPR: Windhoek.

Merelman, R. (1972). The Adolescence of Political Socialization. *Sociology of Education*, Vol. 45 (2).

Miller, R. (1976). Mere Exposure, Psychological Reactance and Attitude Change. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 40 (2).

Mishler, W. and Rose, R. (1997). Trust, Distrust and Scepticism: Popular Evaluations of Civil and Political Institutions in Post-communist Societies. *The Journal Of Politics*, Vol. 2 (2).

Muller, E. and Seligson, M. (1994). Political Culture and Democracy: The Question of Causal Relationships. *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88.

Niemi, R. and Sobieszek, B. (1977). Political Socialization. *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 3.

Norris, P. and Sanders, D. (2001). Knows Little, Learns Less: An Experimental Study of the Impact of Media on Learning During the 2001 British General Election. *Unpublished paper for 2001 Meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco*.

Rice, T. and Feldman, J. (1997). Civic Culture and Democracy from Europe to America. *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 59 (4).

Rokeach, M. (1966). Attitude Change and Behavioral Change. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 30 (4).

Rosenbaum, W. (1975). *Political Culture*. Nelson: London.

Schmitter, P. and T Karl, T. (1991). What Democracy Is ... And Is Not. *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 2.





---

Sears, D. and Funk, C. (1999). Evidence of the Long-term Persistence of Adults' Political Predispositions. *The Journal Of Politics*, Vol. 61 (1).

Sears, D. and Valentino, N. (1997). Politics Matters: Political Events as Catalysts for Pre-adult Socialization. *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 91 (1).

Seligson, M. and Booth, J. (1993). Political Culture and Regime Type: Evidence from Nicaragua and Costa Rica. *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 55.

Sullivan, J., Marcus, G., Feldman, S. and Piereson, J. (1981). The Sources of Political Tolerance: a Multivariate Analysis. *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 75 (1).



## Appendix 1: Table of Types of Mobilisation

	Apoliticals	Ritual partisans	Apartisans	Cognitive partisans	Total
Caprivi	18.8	39.6	29.2	12.5	100
Erongo	21.8	36.8	14.9	26.4	100
Hardap	13.0	45.7	13.0	28.3	100
Karas	23.3	25.0	14.3	37.5	100
Kavango	16.7	28.4	12.7	42.2	100
Khomas	13.1	26.2	19.4	41.4	100
Kunene	34.8	32.6	6.5	26.1	100
Ohangwena	5.6	50.0	1.9	42.6	100
Omaheke	23.9	39.1	10.9	26.1	100
Omusati	3.6	49.1	3.6	43.6	100
Oshana	2.5	37.5	10.0	50.0	100
Oshikoto	1.1	48.3	4.5	46.1	100
Otjozondjupa	29.1	58.2	3.8	8.9	100
Namibia	14.0	39.1	11.0	35.9	100

## Appendix 2: Regression Coefficients for Political Participation

		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)		-.414	.322		-1.287	.198
Social capital index		.154	.045	.094	3.438	.001
Associational membership		.055	.040	.038	1.368	.172
<b>Civic participation</b>		.422	.028	.422	14.869	.000
Residential location (rural = 2)		.141	.078	.055	1.797	.073
Gender (female = 1)		-.130	.072	-.052	-1.806	.071
Age		.000	.002	-.003	-.107	.915
<b>Education</b>		-.110	.025	-.129	-4.370	.000
<b>Political interest</b>		.336	.073	.150	4.603	.000
<b>Frequency of political discussions</b>		.253	.062	.137	4.074	.000
Willingness to start political discussions		-.040	.070	-.015	-.562	.574
Party supporter		.379	.152	.068	2.502	.013
<b>Party member</b>		.271	.072	.108	3.789	.000
Caring for children		-.043	.021	-.062	-2.090	.037
Caring for the sick		-.018	.020	-.026	-.893	.372
Housekeeping/cooking		.053	.031	.048	1.702	.089
Working to earn money		.013	.016	.024	.812	.417
<b>R</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Adjusted R Square</b>	<b>Std. Error of the Estimate</b>	<b>df1</b>	<b>df2</b>	<b>Sig. F Change</b>
.656	.431	.421	.94787	16	909	.000

Note:  $p < 0.05$   $p < 0.01$

