

the most important. Earlier economic models assessing lifetime earnings hadn't accounted for the human capital part of the equation—that is, acquired skills and knowledge that have value in the job market. Earlier models also put more emphasis on the economic “shocks” experienced by a worker throughout life—the bumps in the road that affect income.

Although the economists did not look specifically at the factors that build human capital early in life, their results do shine a light on the importance of education. “It appears that educational success or attainment is a huge factor in the inequality,” Matthews says. “This [paper] looks at it from the point of view of the individual, but it is also true writ large that it has great social impact as well.”

Matthews cautions that the results don't diminish the importance of continued education throughout adulthood, since the rapid pace of technological change requires workers to acquire new skills constantly. But because relatively few adults complete postsecondary education after age 40, the level of education attained by the mid-20s does seem to carry forward throughout life, he says.

Rory O'Sullivan, policy and research director for the advocacy group Young Invincibles, sees a hopeful message in the study. “It means that getting an education is more important than luck. ... If we can figure out the right ways to make sure that the rising generation can get through school and get their degrees, you can be pretty sure they will be successful. It's not up to the winds.”

—Corinna Wu

Mark Huggett, Gustavo Ventura, & Amir Yaron, “Sources of Lifetime Inequality,” *The American Economic Review*, 101, 2011.



CIVIL SOCIETY

Civic Education Through Social Networks

3 From 2001 to 2002, more than 70 local NGOs fanned out across Kenya to conduct one of the biggest adult civic education efforts ever launched in a developing country. The NGOs held about 50,000 events to teach citizens about constitutional reform and the upcoming national democratic election, using formats ranging from lectures to puppet shows. By the 2002 election, the program had trained roughly 4.5 million people.

Steven Finkel, a professor of political science at the University of Pittsburgh, wanted to find out how effective the program was. Finkel had studied civic education programs in the Dominican Republic and South Africa, but wasn't able to compare people's attitudes before and after workshops. In Kenya, he says, “the idea was to try to get a program that was at its inception and build in the impact evaluation from the beginning.”

Finkel visited Kenya several times from 2000 to 2003 and worked with a survey company, which sent teams to the NGOs' workshops and interviewed

people who were about to attend. The teams also talked to nearby residents who were not attending, then followed up with workshop attendees and non-attendees over the next year and a half. Surveys were designed to determine if people's political knowledge, participation, tolerance, and identification with Kenya (rather than with individual tribes) changed over time.

Workshop participants improved in all four areas. But the program's indirect effects were sometimes even stronger than effects on attendees themselves. For instance, a person who didn't go to a workshop but talked to four or five workshop attendees might show a bigger shift in knowledge and attitudes than someone who just went to one workshop. In the first case, the person is getting information from people they trust, says Finkel, who collaborated with Amy Erica Smith, a political scientist at Vanderbilt University. While 14 to 16 percent of Kenyan adults attended program events, roughly another 25 to 35 percent received informal education through social networks.

The study suggests that people may have underestimated the effects of civic education programs, says Juliana Pilon, director of the Institute of World Politics' Center for Culture and

Kenya's civic education campaign included billboards connecting political corruption to ethnic violence.

Security. “All too often, people think of the target audience in a very narrow sense,” she says. “By focusing on the broader context, it underscores the tremendous echo effect.”

The data also showed that participatory methods, such as games or role-playing exercises, were more effective than lectures. And the program seemed to have a bigger impact on people who needed it most—those who are less educated and live in rural areas.

It's unclear whether large adult civic education efforts would have similar effects in more established democratic countries. Such programs probably wouldn't generate much interest in the United States, says Finkel. But programs in emerging democratic countries can try to amplify those indirect effects. For example, workshops could encourage discussion with others and provide materials to distribute to family members, friends, and neighbors.

—Roberta Kwok

Steven E. Finkel and Amy Erica Smith, “Civic Education, Political Discussion, and the Social Transmission of Democratic Knowledge and Values in a New Democracy: Kenya 2002,” *American Journal of Political Science*, 55, 2011.