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Youth Participatory Democracy and Political Choices: Views from eThekweni

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Abstract

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North Beach graffiti, eThekwini – photo by Anthony L. Wagner V, Nov. 2015

YOUTH PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CHOICES: VIEWS FROM ETHEKWINI

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Fall 2015

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Acknowledgments

Abstract

In this research project I am seeking to gauge youth participation in and attitudes towards the South African democratic process. As in many democratic societies, there is a perception by some that the youth of South Africa are apathetic to issues related to politics and government. In this study I seek to evaluate youth perspectives of democracy based on what they have been taught in school and at home, levels of youth political participation, attitudes towards the African National Congress's (ANC) dominance of South African politics, perceptions of political alternatives to the ANC, young people's engagement with nongovernmental organizations in relation to making progress on civil society-related issues, and youth opinions on the Fees Must Fall campaign of 2015. I conducted four separate focus groups, three with youth from different civil society nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and one with a group of youth who live within a township of the eThekwini municipality. Participants ranged in age from sixteen to twenty-five and included young people of different races, genders, and socio-economic backgrounds. My hypothesis is that South African youth – specifically those associated with civil society NGOs in eThekwini – are, contrary to popular belief, very engaged with their democracy, especially using unconventional methods such as protesting, and have strong opinions related to the state of the political process in South Africa and the recent Fees Must Fall campaign.

Introduction

The topic of this paper is youth participatory democracy in the Republic of South Africa. When I say 'youth' throughout my research, I am referring to the generation of South Africans referred to as 'Born-frees.' More will come later about what being a 'Born-free' means. There are many in South Africa, mainly belonging to older generations, who claim that these young people are lazy when it comes to knowing and caring about democracy. Accusations against them include that they do not vote, they are woefully not informed nor want to know about the issues facing South Africa, and that they are neither civically minded nor do they participate in democratic processes. Democracy is built upon citizen participation. If claims against Born-frees are true, and they are truly disengaged with civil society, then the country's democracy may be in danger of collapse.

The year 2015 has been interesting in regards to youth participatory democracy. Students across the nation have been protesting in droves ranging from issues of lingering white colonialism on university campuses to increased university tuition. The Rhodes Must Fall campaign at Rhodes University and the Fees Must Fall campaign, which spread across the entire nation are interesting in that they paint a quite different picture of the nation's youth, at least at the collegiate level. Both campaigns, which were each successful in their own way, exhibited a generation of South Africans that is able to organize political movements quite well. They mobilized their peers and staged massive protests from the halls of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal's Westville campus to the doors of parliament. At times, the protests became destructive – but their mission remained intact. Rhodes Must Fall was successful in that an emblem of white colonialism – a statue of the university's white, English founder – was removed from campus. Likewise, Fees Must Fall provoked

great debate and culminated in President Jacob Zuma announcing that tuition fees would not be raised for the next academic year. South African youth have again and again, across generations, been the catalyst of drastic change in South Africa. From Soweto, 1976 to Rhodes, 2015 – the words apathetic and disengaged hardly seem descriptive or just in describing these young people.

Today, as South Africa's democracy enters its twenty-second year, it is important to gauge whether claims of laziness and disinterest are accurate in their portrayal of the nation's youth. As older generations of South Africans pass on, younger generations will take their roles in government and civil society. As this transition unfolds, South African democracy may find itself in a critical position. Those who knew apartheid and fought the long, slow but successful fight for liberation founded democratic South Africa. Born-frees, those born after the fall of apartheid, never experienced that regime of segregation and racist discrimination. For most young South Africans, democracy is all they have known. Now is an incredibly important time to conduct research on their political tendencies and level of participation in an attempt to determine how democratically active and prone to causing change Born-frees will be.

The objectives of this paper are fairly simple. I wish to examine existing literature surrounding issues of youth participatory democracy and citizenship education, specifically in South Africa. These will serve as the two overarching themes of this research paper. Citizenship education is an important aspect in relation to this topic in that, as will be discussed later, the most important period in learning about democratic participation and issues of governance is adolescence. An examination of the subjects that are most important to be taught in schooling versus the reality of what is being taught is necessary

in order to conclude whether learners are being sufficiently educated on topics of democracy, participation, and government.

Secondly, an objective of this study is to examine perspectives of young people in the eThekwini municipality regarding issues of participation, democracy's functionality in South Africa, African National Congress (ANC) party dominance, political alternatives, nongovernmental organizations' (NGO) relation to civil society change, and the Fees Must Fall campaign. This is a lengthy list of topics to include, but they all fit within the central themes of participatory democracy and citizenship education. In conducting focus groups with actual Born-frees, I hope that, by discussing theses themes, I am able to determine how knowledgeable they are on topics of democracy and participation, whether they think they have been sufficiently educated, and their thoughts on current issues related to the topic in South Africa.

I also hope to determine whether traditional mantras of youth apathy and disengagement ring true for the youth of eThekwini. Focus groups will aid me in making a conclusion on youth levels of participation within South African democracy. Do they know much about their democracy? What does democracy mean to them? What do they think about South Africa's political structures? How do they participate? – These are all questions that must be asked to drawl conclusions as to how engaged Born-frees truly are.

In my attempt to answer these very important questions, I will first begin this paper with an in-depth literature review that examines youth citizenship education methods and South African youth participatory democracy. While there is quite a lot of research on the former, very little has been written regarding the latter. The literature review will cover traditional means of citizenship education, methods of experiential education, the nature of

South Africa's democracy *writ large* as well as a look at the small amount of literature that exists on Born-free participation. I will then explain my methodology in conducting research and the limitations and shortcomings that are inherent in my study. The main body of the paper will focus on analyzing four focus groups I conducted with Born-frees affiliated with different civil society NGOs and/or townships of the eThekwini municipality. From there I will drawl conclusions based on my data and will finish with recommendations for further research on this topic in eThekwini.

Literature Review

Introduction

Apathetic. Disinterested. Uninformed. Disengaged. These are all words that are used to describe the 'Born-free' generation of South Africa. The term 'Born-free' refers to those (today, aged between sixteen and mid-twenties) who were born slightly before, during, or after the 1994 transition from apartheid to democracy. It literally refers to being *born free* from the repression and racism of the apartheid regime that was in control of South Africa's government from 1948 until the first free democratic national elections of 1994. Although it is questionable whether these young people were truly born free, something that will be discussed later, it is true that at first glance their generation was the first to experience open democracy and the first to spend their school years in an education system that supposedly promotes active citizenship.

While this generation has enjoyed free and fair elections and access to political campaigns and elected representatives, there are many who criticize young South Africans for a lack of participation in their democracy. The director of a civil service non-governmental organization (NGO) in South Africa was quoted on an online news publication, *The Citizen,* saying that young people are not motivated to participate and that they are 'worried about their more immediate concerns' like finding a job and acquiring an education. This, many argue, is detrimental to South Africa's democratic health. On the other hand, a recent student-led campaign decrying university tuition hikes, known as 'Fees Must Fall,' was successful in rapidly mobilizing students across the country to protest on their campuses against the increases. Some young people even stormed government buildings and clashed with riot police. After weeks of protests and a near shutdown of the

university system, President Jacob Zuma yielded to the students, saying that tuition fees would not be raised for the next academic year.

This creates an inconsistent narrative of youth participatory democracy in South Africa. One the one hand, many complain that Born-frees are apathetic to duty-bound forms of participation and the political institutions and processes of the country. On the other hand, these 'apathetic youths' were successful in changing a major government policy through unconventional forms of participation. So which is it?

With the literature about participatory democracy, education, and South African Born-frees, it is possible to conclude that this young generation is in fact a very active part of the citizenry. Data and research can dispel claims that say otherwise. Before plunging into the issues surrounding born-free participation and engagement with democracy, it is key to understand how participation is an integral pillar of democracy. Education in the classroom *and* outside of the classroom, at home and in the community, are also important areas of focus when attempting to determine at what stage citizenship education is most relevant. A brief discussion focusing on the changing nature of South Africa's democracy will show where the country is currently in terms of citizenship engagement with and commitment to democratic institutions. Finally, a careful examination of studies conducted on Born-free participation will reveal whether they are truly a careless generation or one capable of creating change through engagement and citizenship.

The Importance of Participation

Participation is an integral part of a democracy's foundation. Without an active citizenry, democracy would crumble. Participation is a loaded term as it can mean many different things. There is a plethora of methods by which people can act and influence

politics and governance. Print (2007) lays out three categories of 'engagement indicators' within democracy: civic indicators, electoral indicators and political engagement indicators. Civic forms of participation include group membership, volunteering with civil service organizations, and working towards solving community problems. Electoral indicators include voting in elections, donating to political candidates/parties, and campaigning alongside political candidates/issues during an electoral cycle. Meanwhile, political engagement indicators include somewhat unconventional means by which to participate that include protests, boycotts, reaching out to the media or candidates regarding issues, and utilizing the internet to create political change.

Of all the forms listed above electoral methods of participation are most commonly used by citizens of a democracy. Print (328) writes that, "...[Voting] is argued [to be] the least problematic, requiring the least resources and what is potentially the most powerful for most people." Perhaps many people are more inclined to vote than to join a civic organization or protest because voting arguably requires less commitment and energy. Nevertheless, all of these forms of participation are used, at least from time to time, in a thriving democratic state. A healthy democracy requires, or at least invokes, every citizen to play a crucial role in maintaining and preserving democratic principles through these methods of participation. Roefs and Liebenberg (1999, 279) agree when they write that, "Although there is disagreement as to what the optimum level of participation should be to guarantee a functional democracy, they key dictum remains: Participation by citizens at various levels is essential to make democratic society work."

In a perfect world, every citizen in a democracy should willingly and freely contribute by participating in some way. Such a world does not exist, and not all citizens

participate equally. Research has found that some citizens are more likely to engage with democracy than others and this usually depends on the context. Education, for example, is very important when talking about participation and democracy. Knowledge about methods of participation and institutional democracy are not things that people are born with – they must be learned. Therefore, education plays a crucial role in the development of democratic citizenship among youth. Roefs and Liebenberg (287) write that it is commonly believed that level of education correlates positively with political knowledge and participation. An individual with a university degree is expected to know more about politics and government than someone who did not graduate from high school.

However, Roefs and Liebenberg's research, conducted in South Africa, found positive correlations between education level and political knowledge and participation to be only partially true. Although there is some correlation between higher amounts of education and heightened knowledge of political policies, they found that all people are generally uneducated on how governmental institutions function. Thus, people are unaware on how to navigate their own democratic institutions. Given that participation is so very important to a functioning democracy, their findings are startling. This highlights the importance of what they call 'citizen education:'

> Citizen education, if formalized within the educational system, is likely to advance understanding as well as knowledge, and will foster the will to participate in state functions, which may ultimately manifest in active participation in and the sustainment and deepening of democracy in South Africa (304-305).

Therefore, participation is not the only vital organ of democracy. Education regarding politics and methods of participation is equally as important, perhaps even more so.

Democracy in (and out of) the Classroom

Education's crucial role in developing and sustaining a healthy democracy is evident. Pillars of democracy like participation and political knowledge are practiced and learned. The timing of citizenship education is important as well. Fleishman (2007, 816) writes that, "From a human development perspective, adolescence is a significant time for the development of the ability to think critically and to take the perspectives of others, both important skills for citizens in a democracy." Likewise, Pacheco (2008, 415) believes, "During adolescence citizens learn about their democratic responsibilities and also acquire political attitudes that translate into adult political behavior and opinions." The teaching of democracy in the classroom is incredibly important to creating spaces for democracy beyond the schoolyard. Students must be exposed to principles of democracy and methods of participation within society starting at a young age. The hope is that by promoting such topics as part of formalized education and curriculums, schools will foster lifelong, active and engaged citizens.

Unfortunately, not everyone agrees that youth should play such an active role starting at a young age. Munn (2012, 1060) laments that young people are often alienated completely from democracy and participation:

> There is a lack of recognition of the child as valuable in the political processes of the modern western democratic state, and this lack of recognition serves in the case of the child…to exclude and marginalize children away from full participation in the community. The reasoning behind the exclusion of children also mirrors the type of fallacious argument which had been used to attempt justifications of the exclusion of women; 'their lack of competence, in particular to be rational, and their dependency' [Lister 2007].

This culturally ingrained stigma about children may bleed through into how they are educated in the classroom as well. If Munn is correct that children are marginalized from

civic education based on their 'dependency' and 'lack of competence' then it is plausible

that a vast majority of young people in democracies around the world have not been

adequately educated about democracy. If adolescence is indeed the prime time for

formalized civic education that will transfer from childhood into adulthood participatory

habits, then a *lack* of education at this critical point in development will also translate into a

lack of adulthood knowledge on politics and participation. Roefs and Liebenberg's research

confirms this:

> … the study also found that the [South African] public was poorly informed: Less
> than one in ten respondents indicated that they felt adequately equipped with
> knowledge about the various stages in the legislative process… [and] two-thirds felt
> ill informed about parliament and indicated that they had little understanding of
> their own local councils (308).

Systematic failures in civic education during adolescence lead to an ill-informed electorate

that may not know how to navigate government institutions and/or participate effectively

in democracy.

Formalized citizen education is not simply a goal of educators and governments;

rather, communities and youths yearn it for. Yohalem and Martin (2007, 807), in a

discussion on American democratic education, write that, "Across the country, youth

advocates, civic activists, community builders, and young people themselves have been

calling for more meaningful roles for young people in society." Although it is wise to

caution against the notion that all learners in every democratic state are excited about

voting and political parties, it is important to understand that some youths are attempting

to create spaces in the real world that in turn further enhance their citizenship/democratic

education. Yohalem and Martin emphasize the importance of motivating young people to

learn about and become active in democracy:

To put it simply, opportunities to participate are critical. In order for young people to make community involvement a priority, space needs to be created and social recognition provided. Adolescents may be highly motivated but without clear pathways for involvement, they will not necessarily become engaged. Sustained engagement requires supportive environments that provide structure, opportunities to participate in decision-making, and clear roles for young people (809).

This highlights a point that will be more closely examined later, but one that is key to interpreting effective means by which young people can learn about democracy. School curriculums only provide so much knowledge to learners; therefore, finding spaces outside of the classroom for democratic experiential learning is equally as important in developing and encouraging engaged citizenship.

Another important aspect of democratic education is the educator. Taylor and Fransman (2004, 1) say, "In order to promote and increase participation effectively, and also ethically, there is a growing need for experienced and well-trained people who are active and open to [participation's] meaning, methods and practice." It is incredibly important that those who teach civics and citizenship courses in primary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions be educated on such topics themselves. Teachers who are ill equipped to train students on these important pillars of democracy tragically pass on their ineptitude and/or lack of knowledge to their students. Democratic states must take care to put in place means by which to properly train teachers to teach curriculums that will propel students into becoming engaged citizens from primary school forward into adulthood.

Although this section has focused heavily on classroom based education that is not to say that other forms of citizen education do not exist. Print (2007, 330), for example, writes that there are three forms of citizen education:

... the family, through role modeling, discussion, and media use; the media, mostly television and newspapers; and third, school experience providing knowledge, skills and values from non-partisan educators. Other sources such as peers, the extended family, community and church, count for little.

Pacheco's (2008, 417) research has also confirmed that families play a large role in shaping citizen education in youth:

... parent-child political discussions directly increase levels of political knowledge and political interest among youth, which in turn increase voter turnout in young adulthood.

These alternative educational experiences should not be discounted, as they can and do play important and fundamental parts in developing youths' views on democratic processes and participatory habits. That being said, Print writes that, "...the school offers the best chance of building an informed, balanced sense of democratic worth, political knowledge and democratic values and skills," and that, "... research shows that the best predictor of adult voting and democratic engagement available is the course taken in civics or citizenship education."

Learning through Participating

As was discussed above, creating spaces for youths to participate in society at a young age can be and is a key steppingstone in creating engaged citizens. Learning through participating is an effective educational method that informs learners about ways they can contribute to society – be it joining a civil society organizations or taking part in a political campaign – that produce meaningful change. Sloam (2010, 327) outlines three layers of political understanding that are important to this learning process: democracy as a way of life, democracy as a social system, and democracy as a form of governing. "Only by connecting these layers together," he writes, "can political science *and* participation in electoral politics become in any real sense meaningful." What he calls for here is an in-

depth education system that exposes learners to the deeper meanings of democracy.

Democracy is not simply an act, but a way of life. Sloam quite clearly states the importance

of participatory learning:

> The learning process should also be related to students' participatory acts and experiences (*participation*) within our democratic societies… as many political scientists and educationalists have argued, participation is central to the political learning process. It also have great potential to connect with Student A's experiences in an active sense (327-328).

Students who experience politics through participation are more likely to engage with their

democracy in the future and develop keen citizenship skills better than students who learn

only in the classroom setting or do not learn about participation and democratic principles

at all. While participatory experiences may happen outside of school or university at

community action centers and political party headquarters, they can also happen on

campus. Sloam believes that schools and universities serve as sites on which students are

encouraged to and indeed do develop their own "political biographies" that carry with

them after their formal education ends (329). The experiential learning approach is an

interesting but largely unused method of educating young people in democratic states

around the world. This is detrimental to the developing of active citizens and an engaged

electorate. Since the most important stage of citizen growth is during adolescence, it is

clear that exposing learners to participatory experiences, or at least fostering sites of

political development on school and university campuses is an underused but vital step. In

order for classroom civic education to resonate at maximum effect with learners,

experiential civic engagement must be supplemented. Sloam concludes:

> … political literacy is crucial but abstract without participation, the impact of participation is limited without deliberation, and connecting with students experience creates citizens more likely to participate in the classroom, society, and politics (331).

Likewise, Taylor and Fransman (2004, 16) write:

> Rather than participation and learning being "done to" people, the need is more widely recognized for individual commitment to change, for the development of a new relationship between the self and the 'real world' as well as enhanced self-awareness.

Therefore, when citizen education curriculums are coupled with real world, citizenship experiences of participation, learners gain a more in-depth understanding of participation and effective methods they can employ to cause meaningful change as they move from the classroom into adulthood.

The Nature of a Changing Democracy in South Africa

In order to relate the above discussions of democracy, education and participation to South African youth, it is important to take stock of South Africa's democracy at the moment. The word democracy has many definitions and fits into many different contexts. American democracy differs greatly from Japanese democracy just as South African democracy does. Even within the South African context, democracy means and is defined as something different by every citizen. Mattes and Bratton (2007, 193) write about this in their research based in South Africa saying, "Respondents may have differing ideas about what democracy actually is, limiting the comparability of any two responses." Although this is an important point, it is not impossible to make observations about South Africa's democracy *writ large.* Their study focuses on the perceived supply and demand of democracy in eleven democratic states in sub-Saharan Africa, including South Africa. Political supply is measured in terms of democratic progress that has been made since the inception of democracy in the nation – for South Africa the supply of democracy began in 1994. Political demand is measured by how committed citizens of a nation are to

maintaining and preserving democracy in their country. If citizens were open to allowing a

different and nondemocratic regime to take power, the demand for democracy would be

quite low.

Mattes and Bratton discovered that in at least some African countries democracy is

neither in big supply nor in large demand. Of the eleven nations, South Africa was ranked

fourth from the bottom, the bottom being eleven, in terms of political supply with a score of

just over forty percent. The percentages in this study take into account respondents'

answers to questions related to their attitudes towards South African democracy as

compared to other regime choices and their perceptions of how democracy is supplied by

the country's political institutions. According to Mattes and Bratton, this means that while

South Africans believe their nation to be democratic, they admit that many problems exist

within their democracy and that there is room to become more democratic. Alarmingly, in

terms of demand for democracy, South Africa ranks third from the bottom with a score of

just under thirty percent. The lowest scoring nation was Lesotho with about fifteen percent

while the highest scoring nation was Nigeria with over sixty percent. Does this mean that

South Africans are ready to turn on democracy and run to a totalitarian regime? Probably

not, but it does show that major problems exist within the country in terms of how people

view their government and the democratic services that the government provides to its

people. Mattes and Bratton write that:

> To explain Africa's lack of democratic progress, scholars routinely point to factors
> such as widespread poverty, small middle classes, and a population that is
> disproportionately young and rural (where people – especially women – remain
> repressed by customary law, traditional authority, and patriarchy), all of which limit
> the size of the public with a stake in stable democratic rule (196).

A few of these points that limit democracy may be at play in South Africa, especially poverty, rural populations, and an increasingly young demographic. Mattes and Bratton (204) conclude from their findings that in order to combat these problems and increase both democratic supply and demand, it is incredibly important that quality civic education be instilled in the classroom and mass media *and* that leaders in government strive towards good governance in their nation. A civically uneducated nation with weak and/or corrupt leaders is not a place where democracy can thrive.

Some may conclude from Mattes and Bratton's findings that South African democracy is in the midst of a crisis. If the supply of democracy does not reach equally to all members of society, then problems must and do exist. This in turn may alter a populous' demand for democracy in that without adequate access to democratic participatory means, people may become disillusioned with democracy. Buccus (2) writes that, "Participation mechanisms that are established to channel citizen input are not accessible to the majority population in societies characterized by inequality, particularly marginalized communities and sectors, and typically do not 'automatically benefit poor people and groups that have long faced social exclusion' (Major 2004: 5)." South Africa is a nation characterized by inequality, often cited as the most unequal society in the world. In order to curb democratic disenfranchisement and disillusionment in South Africa, drastic changes must be made at many different levels. As has been discussed, education is important as is creating spaces for citizens to experience and enact participatory democracy. Buccus (5) believes that governments at both the national and local levels must engage with citizens in meaningful ways, making it possible for people to be part of the policy making process. Officials at all governmental levels should seek citizen input on policy decisions and allow them to voice

their opinions. This would create a legitimization of policy making by creating open

channels through which citizens can engage in open and effective dialogue with elected

officials – something Buccus coins as "genuine empowerment." Such legitimization is hard

to find in South Africa's democracy which accounts for at least some of the populous' lack of

commitment to the democratic states. Inequality and poverty, however, will remain a major

obstacle to achieving substantial democratic participation. While channels of engagement

and empowerment may exist or be created, many disadvantaged may not have the time or

resources to participate. Buccus, on this point, concludes:

> ...a fundamental issue emerging is the need to critically asses how participation and
> deliberative democracy design and process interventions can fundamentally
> transform inherently unequal social power relations, so that marginalized and
> vulnerable groups are brought into governance processes in a meaningful,
> empowering way...Above all, the focus needs to be placed on enabling the voices
> and interests of marginalized communities to influence policy making, from the
> framing of policy issues to the deliberation of policy options (20-21).

There is a path forward that expands participatory democracy to all South Africans, but it

requires fundamental changes to occur in the policy making process. These sorts of

changes do not happen overnight, but if South African democracy is to become more

democratic, then changes like these to the system must begin to unfold. Government is

unlikely to make such changes without a shove, so it is vital that marginalized populations

begin to do this on their own.

     In talking about South African democracy, one must talk about change. An

increasing number of scholars and political scientists have written about the needs for

drastic change to the democratic state. Essop Pahad in particular believes that democracy

in South Africa needs a facelift. He writes (2005, 21) that in order for progressive social and

political change to overtake the country citizens must use two mechanisms:

One is through formal political participation and the other, as they seek to bridge the growing gap between them and their political processes and institutions, is through substantive political participation that goes beyond voting and engaging with political parties.

As discussed in an earlier section, there are multiple strains of participatory democracy. Although Pahad nods in approval that traditional, duty based forms of participation like voting are important, he emphasizes the importance of what Print (2007, 328) calls 'political engagement methods' that encompass namely reactionary political measures like protests, boycotts, and reaching out to the media and elected representatives. Why are political engagement indicators so important in the South African context? As is happening in the rest of the world, South African youths are disengaging with electoral and civic forms of participation and turning towards 'political engagement style' participation. Pahad (2005, 22)

The means by which youth become empowered to engage with democracy in South Africa is also important. Instead of being coerced into traditional participation by government programs or educational initiatives, youth are becoming involved with civic service organizations that seek to make change in communities:

Very often it is the strength of civic organizations and their connectedness to community that provides citizens with the opportunity for civic engagement. The incentives and disincentives to participation are not monetary, rather they include considerations of solidarity, personal satisfaction and making a difference to the community as a whole. Political participation in society therefore needs to be understood as part of the process of social and political inclusion. Pahad (2005, 25)

These types of community action networks are appealing to youth because of the hands-on approach they take to making change. Civic organizations are also better at producing change in the short term – in part because of their local, community based support. For example, a group of township residents who are concerned about water quality and march

on town hall are more likely to get something done in South Africa than those who vote. This is partly due to a lack of political diversity in the voting booth as well as the slow nature of policymaking and bureaucratic red tape. A group of angry citizens engaging with government in the form of protest is much more likely to be an impetus for action and change. For this reason, Pahad (26) calls upon progressives to "start promoting notions of 'democratic citizenship,' the 'democratization of democracy,' and inclusive political practices," and the, "need to promote strong organizations in civil society."

Born-Free Participation in South African Democracy

Levels and methods of political participation vary across many areas of demographic measurement. As will be shown, such variation can be found from generation to generation. Variation is also visible amongst genders, level of education, socioeconomic status and class, as well as occupational status. A review of the literature on each demographic section of born-free participation is an undertaking for another time. Here, the discussion will be based mainly on differences in Born-free participation and engagement with older generations of South Africans.

The first point that should be made about Born-frees is that the myth written about them that says they are apathetic and do not care about politics, government and democracy is not supported by research and should be considered false. Examining a South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASA) report compiled in 2008 by Benjamin Roberts and Thabo Letsoalo can prove this. When respondents in all age groups were asked if they thought voting in the 2009 national election was important, the average amongst all ages saying 'yes' was fifty-eight percent. Born-frees – classified as being between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four in this study – responded 'yes' at a rate of sixty-one percent, just as

high as other, older generations. There was also a lack of evidence that young people are less likely to talk about politics, be interested in politics, or had any less intention to vote in the 2009 national elections than other age groups. Roberts and Letsoalo (2008) conclude:

> [Young people] claim to have a strong commitment to the democratic process. A sizable majority of young people considers it a duty to vote and smaller but equally notable shares hold the view that voting ultimately makes a difference. Therefore, without even considering non-electoral forms of participation, young South Africans emerge as interested, aware and engaged in political matters to the same extent as their elders. *These results pose a convincing challenge to the stereotypical representations depicting youth as 'disengaged' or 'lost'* (12).

The researchers note that there is variation within these views on participatory democracy when broken down into categories of race. For example, black youth were more likely to show enthusiasm to engage with the voting process. Simply said, empirical data exhibits a far different story about Born-free participation than the conventional wisdom offered by older generations.

The timing of the Born-free generation should also be considered. Born-frees were born on, a few years before, or after the 1994 transition from apartheid to democracy. Therefore, a plausible hypothesis pertaining to Born-free participatory habits can be created. Since they have spent their more formidable civic education years under a democratic regime unlike the repressive, racist apartheid system, Born-frees should be more likely to engage with and be committed to democracy than previous generations. However, as Mattes (2012, 139) writes:

> …a closer reading of post-apartheid history suggests that the expected level of the Born Frees commitment to the new democratic regime is by no means self-evident…Hypotheses will differ sharply depending upon whether one focuses…on the potential impacts of the newfound opportunities of the post-1994 democratic dispensation, the new school system and curriculum, and the vast expansion of infrastructural development, or – on the other hand – on the continuation of one party dominance…the enduring levels of poverty and unemployment, or the increasingly dysfunction education system.

It is clear that it is not as simple as to say that since Born-frees were born 'free' they should

be more committed to democratic institutions than their parents and grandparents. Indeed,

the term Born-free is ironic in that, as Mattes points out, many of the systems that existed

before apartheid are alive and well in democracy. Many Born-frees are experiencing even

greater income inequality, larger levels of unemployment, and significantly increased

measures of poverty than pre-democratic generations ever witnessed. (Mattes, 140)

Students suffering under these conditions also face a dysfunctional education system in

which curriculums are poorly formulated and teachers are inadequately trained or simply

do not come to work.

Mattes' (2012, 150) research finds that Born-frees are slightly less committed to

democracy than previous generations. This, he writes, could be on account of the failure of

the education system that, "was supposed to promote a series of values conducive to

democratic citizenship," but "has as of yet failed to effect attitudinal change." Coupled with

inadequately trained teachers, the citizen education Born-frees are exposed to is a recipe

for disaster. Although he does note that born-frees in primarily white schools are more

democratically minded, overall South African youth are not being properly taught on topics

of participation and governance. This is a far cry from the methods of quality citizen

education and experiential learning through participation discussed by Pacheco, Munn,

Yohalem and Martin, Sloam, and Taylor and Fransman. Their somewhat negative views on

democracy could also stem from the nature of politics and government in South Africa and

the problems facing the country:

> ...whatever advantages might accrue from the new political experiences of political
> freedom and a regular, peaceful, electoral process, they are diminished by

frustrating encounters with the political process, victimization by corrupt officials, and enduring levels of unemployment and poverty. Mattes (2012, 151)

Despite the fact that Born-frees have grown up and have been educated in a supposed new era of governance and democracy, many apartheid-era problems have seeped through the 1994 transition. This, coupled with inadequate civic education, a national inequality crisis, and a corrupt politic have understandably deterred many Born-frees from being totally committed to democracy.

All of the literature discussed thus far looks at Born-frees using empirical data collected through highly organized social and scientific surveys. Very little research has been conducted on Born-free participation and attitudes towards democratic principles using qualitative methodologies. One such study, conducted in 2015 by Susan Booysen for Freedom House, examined South African youth' (aged eighteen to thirty-five) attitudes towards politics, government, and the ways that they participate by sitting down with them in a focus group setting(s). The summary of her results correlate with Roberts & Letsoalo and Mattes' quantitative data. Her main findings were that while youth are very cynical of the political system, they are also politically interested; they are generally politically informed; and they engage in unconventional non-electoral methods of participatory democracy.

Cynicism of youth stems partially from the many corruption scandals that have rocked the ruling party in recent years. Young people also believe that their elected representatives are not invested in their constituents and are only involved in politics to make personal social, political and economic gains. Booysen (2015, 1) writes that, "These young people…are skeptical of any political leader who expects voters to endorse them so that the leaders can go on to enrich themselves while forgetting about the citizens who had

sent them into high positions." She also found that they were highly aware of what the main political issues were at the time of the focus group and that they had strong opinions on them.

As a follow up on Roberts and Letsoalo's analysis on youth and the 2009 nation elections, Booysen found that the young people she interviewed felt as if they had more than enough information and felt prepared to vote and participate in the 2014 national elections. Not only did they feel as though they had adequate knowledge, but they felt as though they knew where they could get more information if it was needed. Many of the focus group participants, however, felt 'demotivated' by the 2014 elections because, "[they] loathed the superficial appeals for votes, without matching evidence of commitment by those who wanted to be elected" Booysen (2015, 2).

Booysen (2015, 2) also found that young people are engaging in non-electoral forms of participation:

> These young South Africans participate widely in political and socio-political affairs, providing more evidence of political interest and engagement. Their activities range from volunteer community work…to protest action to get jobs allocated to members of the local community. They are avid followers of political events. They obtain information from both traditional sources…and the new(s) or social media.

All of the data – which, if discussed in this paper, would take up many more pages - examined for this review indicates that South African youth are both aware and utilize alternative, non-electoral forms of participatory democracy. Protesting and civic engagement are effective methods young people use because, as discussed earlier, they are more effective means by which change can occur. If the South African political system does not change, youth will assuredly continue to use non-electoral methods of participation to enact civil society change in communities.

The role of social media in the recent Fees Must Fall campaign showcases how unconventional methods of participation can organize grassroots movements and produce widespread change. Hyde-Clarke (2013, 132) writes that (as of two years ago) 13.06 percent of the South African populous had access to Facebook. As this number increases, which it assuredly will in this ever-expanding digital age, the participatory and organization possibilities that media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, etc. provide to young people will only grow. Although Hyde-Clarke had her doubts (145) as to whether or not these types of platforms could be used to effectively engage in public discourse and organize political movements, it is clear that youths are quickly learning.

Conclusions

From the literature, it is clear to see that the narrative of Born-free participation is quite complex. Claims that South African youth are apathetic to politics and governance and are not inclined to participate have dominated this narrative for a long time, but appear to be false. Participation and democracy, however, are multi-layered concepts that do not end at duty-bound, traditional actions like voting and campaigning. There are many alternative methods that can be and are employed by citizens in democracies that are effective ways to bring about community and/or political change.

The state of citizen education within a democracy is key. A democratic state that refuses to create spaces for students to participate or does not enact experiential educational platforms is failing its learners. A state that is not able to even provide quality civic education in the classroom is in even worse shape. It is proven that the best time to expose learners to studies on citizenship is during adolescence, and that curriculums and experiences that promote active participation are likely to carry with learners into

adulthood. South Africa's system generally lacks in both aspects of the citizen education process. Teachers are inadequately prepared to teach civics classes and most schools cannot afford to choose not to provide students with meaningful participatory experiences. Issues such as income inequality and poverty often stand in the way of learners having the chance to develop good citizenship habits starting at a young age. When youth reach voting age they are often turned off by the electoral process on account of an increasingly corrupt and self-serving political system dominated by one-party control.

That being said, and keeping in mind the sorry state of learners' experiences with democracy, it is incredible to find that young people are keenly aware of and have strong opinions about top political issues, that they feel comfortable seeking out additional information on issues and governance, and that they are extremely active in non-electoral forms of participation. Movements like the "Fees Must Fall" campaign are encouraging and show a vibrant and active citizenry capable of change. It remains unclear where young people are learning about participation. Do families or institutions of higher learning teach it, or – perhaps - is it self-taught? The role that civil society non-governmental organizations may play in developing youth into active citizens is also in need of research. Needless to say, more research must be carried out on this important topic. Despite what should be considered the fragility of democracy in South Africa, literature on democratic participation and more specifically on youth civic engagement shows that there is the possibility of drastic democratic change in the nation in the decades to come. This will only be helped if the government enacts a quality, non-partisan citizen education system that fosters what Sloam calls "democracy as a way of life."

Methodology

I conducted four focus groups in my study. Each focus group took place with a different youth civil society NGO or was based in a specific township of the eThekwini municipality. My original goal was to focus on four different civil society NGOs that engage youth with political, social, and community issues. Due to problems that will be detailed in the section discussing limitations of this research, I was forced to conduct focus groups with youth from three civil society NGOs and one focus group with youth who all live in the same township. The focus groups were conducted with the Umkhumbane Schools Project (an organization based in Cato Manor that uses university student mentors to tutor and instruct high school learners in mathematics and sciences); the Durban Youth Council (an organization that promotes active citizenship through student government and community development projects); and the Democracy Development Programme (an organization that promotes democracy amongst South African youth by exposing them to issue-based community dialogues and citizenship participation). I also conducted a focus group with a group of youth who all live in Wentworth, a township of eThekwini. Although they were not affiliated with one NGO, some participants have been active in community development organizations within Wentworth. Focus groups were conducted over a three-week period between November fourth and November seventeenth, 2015.

Youth who participated in my focus groups ranged in age from sixteen to twenty-five. A detailed breakdown of focus group racial demographics is provided in **Table 1.1** and **Table 1.2** shows the highest level of education completed for each focus group. The Umkhumbane Schools Project focus group included four of the organization's university mentors who attend a local institution of higher learning. All participants were black South

Africans. Participant one was a male, aged twenty-five; participant two was a male, aged twenty-three; participant three was a male, aged twenty; and participant four was a male, aged twenty-two. Each participant has graduated from high school and, as mentioned before, is enrolled in a four-year university program. The focus group conducted with the Durban Youth Council included two individuals. Both participants were white. Participant one was a female, aged seventeen and participant two was a male, aged sixteen. Both participants are currently finishing grade eleven at local, private high schools. The Wentworth focus group was conducted with three individuals. Two participants were coloured and one was black South African. Participant one was a female, aged twenty-four; participant two was a male, aged twenty-three; and participant three was a male, aged eighteen. Participants one and three have graduated from high school and participant two has completed grade ten. The final focus group, conducted with youth affiliated with the Democracy Development Programme included two individuals. Both participants were black South Africans. Participant one was a female, aged twenty and participant two was a female, aged eighteen. Participant one has completed some college but is not currently enrolled and participant two has completed high school.

The Umkhumbane Schools Project focus group lasted approximately two hours and ten minutes; the Durban Youth Council focus group, one hour and forty minutes; the Wentworth focus group, one hour and twenty minutes; and the Democratic Development Programme focus group lasted one hour and two minutes. Focus groups were all conducted in the same manner. I used the same series of questions in each focus group, which can be found in the appendix of this paper. Although my focus groups were quite structured, some questions simply did not apply or were repetitive by nature in the focus group setting.

Therefore, some questions differed between focus groups as the conversations unfolded.

Along with the original set of questions, I have also included pictures of each question sheet

from each focus group to show the exact questions that were omitted or added in the

appendices. Each participant signed a consent form that guaranteed his/her anonymity and

protection in my research. It also stated that I had the right to electronically record the

focus group conversation and use it in this research and further research if I so choose.

Participants under the age of eighteen were required to have their legal parent/guardian

sign the form of consent as well. I have attached a copy of both the under-eighteen consent

form and the regular consent form in the appendix.

Table 1.1: Focus Group Racial Demographic Breakdown

Focus group	Description	Total number of participants	Black African	Coloured	Indian	White
1	Umkumbane	4	4	0	0	0
2	DYC	2	0	0	0	2
3	Wentworth	3	1	2	0	0
4	DDP	2	2	0	0	0

Table 1.2: Focus Group Data on Highest Level of Education Completed

Focus group	Description	Total number of participants	Some high school	High school	Some university	University
1	Umkumbane	4	0	0	4	0
2	DYC	2	2	0	0	0
3	Wentworth	3	1	2	0	0
4	DDP	2	0	1	1	0

Limitations of Research

My research and report are limited by the amount of time that was provided for this study by the School for International Training (SIT). Although the roots of this research project initiated long before the independent study project period began, I was given five weeks to meet with my advisors, conduct an in-depth literature review, schedule focus groups, conduct focus groups, gather the data, analyze my findings and write this report. The nature of SIT's programming does not allow for an infinite amount of time to be spent on the independent study project. Given that this is a semester long program, that it quite understandable; however, I feel as though this particular study requires far more time and planning than was given. If given more time, I may have been able to set up focus groups with more youth participants in them. Two of the focus groups contained just two students and although both were incredibly rich in detail and information, I believe it is better to have between four and five voices in each focus group to ensure that a wide breadth of opinions are being shared versus just two or three. Given more time, I would have also been able to further explore the quantitative data available on Born-free participation in South African democracy that would have strengthened my literature review. More time would also have allowed me to finish focus group transcripts, and thus double check the accuracy of the transcripts as well as to further edit this report.

I found that mid-November is an unfortunate time to schedule focus groups with youth in eThekwini. For those who are attending university or high school, this is a busy time of year with end-of-term testing. It was difficult to schedule focus groups that worked for everyone in the group given the differences in examination schedules.

The focus group held in Wentworth was not conducted with youth belonging to a specific NGO like the rest of the focus groups were. As previously mentioned, a few of the participants have been or were currently involved with youth development projects and NGOs in Wentworth. That being said, given the scientific nature of this study, Wentworth's focus group is different than the rest because of this. It is unclear if this fact made any difference in the answers given by participants.

Ideally, the NGOs/communities chosen to participate in these focus groups would have been selected randomly from a database of youth civil society nongovernmental organizations in the eThekwini municipality. After a careful and exhaustive search for such a database, it became clear that none exists. Imraan Buccus, director of the SIT program, and I decided that it would be best to choose from the youth civil society NGOs that he and I could think of in eThekwini – including the Umkhumbane Schools Project, Durban Youth Council, Democracy Development Programme and either the Chatsworth or Wentworth Youth Centres. The first three came through; however, the contact with the Chatsworth Youth Centre was unresponsive to my correspondence and it was discovered that no youth centre exists in Wentworth. My co-advisor, Quinton Kippen, was able to set up a focus group with youth he has interacted with in Wentworth. In the interest of time, this was chosen as the best option for a fourth focus group. Therefore, to say that this study is truly scientific would be dishonest. That being said, using the best information I had on youth civil society NGOs in eThekwini and the time available to conduct my study - my study reflects the best options possible under the conditions.

I did not have time to complete transcripts for all four focus groups. I have entirely transcribed the audio from the Durban Youth Council focus group, but was – due to time

restraints – unable to complete transcripts for the rest. I will continue to work on these transcripts after this project has been completed to make it more scientifically sound and to make the focus group material more accessible for a continuation of this research project/future research projects I may endeavor.

Ideally, the data analysis section of this paper would also be planned differently. Given the relatively short period of time I had to complete the final paper after my focus groups, I was unable to integrate all four focus group findings into thematic sections of the data analysis section. Instead, I completed the section focus group by focus group showing the findings for each theme for each focus group individually.

Data Analysis

Introduction

The following is a brief analysis of the four focus groups I conducted for this study. I have broken each focus group down into five thematic sections: first dealing with what is known about democracy and participants' thoughts on the state of civic education; second, about participants' thoughts on whether South African democracy is working – along with issues of ANC dominance and political alternatives; third, examining ways that participants participate in democracy; fourth, how participants engage with NGOs and democracy; and lastly, participants' thoughts on the recent Fees Must Fall protests. I have included quotes from the focus groups to show what participants actually said which I will explain and link together.

Umkhumbane Schools Project Focus Group[1]

Democracy – what has been learned?

The first topic that was discussed with this focus group was what participants have learned about South African democracy in schooling and at home. As the literature states, the state of citizen education in South Africa (and abroad) is quite poor. Asking youth what they know and where they learned it is quite important in gauging how their adolescent experiences and learning molded them into young citizens. Being that all participants in this focus group are university students, thus having completed high school, their responses show what any given youth in South Africa might know on the subject after

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[1] Umkhumbane Schools Project Focus Group. Focus Group Audio Recording. 4 November 2014. All quotes and participant ideas in the section labeled 'Umkhumbane Schools Project Focus Group' are derived from this source.

finishing high school. Participant three, for example, said that he learned about what he

calls the stages of democracy:

> **Participant 3:** For me I think I have learned that, eh, okay, there are many different stages of democracy. And maybe sometimes there is a political and there is also the economical. And right now I understand, okay, even here in South Africa we do have a political democracy where we have achieved the right to vote and we want all that stuff and we get the access to some institutions where we were not allowed before. But, the social and economical conditions, they haven't changed that much.

It is unclear if this was something that the participant learned in his schooling or in a

different setting; nonetheless, his analysis of democracy is quite interesting. Despite the

fact that South African democracy is entering its twenty-second year, participant three

believes that, even though all people are able to vote, economic and social conditions

remain largely unchanged from what they were before democracy's start and he links these

conditions directly to democracy. In other word, for him, democracy incorporates many

different spheres including economic and social issues.

Participant one's input shows that democracy, in his opinion has, perhaps by

accident, led to some negative outcomes in government:

> **Participant 1:** Somehow we have to…like, okay if you have friends who are in power, then you…your voice will be heard. But if you are just nobody coming from nowhere, you'll just talk and nobody will listen to you.

Again, it is unclear where participant one came to this conclusion. His point is that politics

has become corrupt in the sense that in order to have one's voice heard – at least as an

individual - it is necessary to be friends with someone in power. The average citizen in

South Africa's democracy, according to participant one, has very little chance to be heard

because of a lack of connections and networking. Therefore, democracy - in the sense that

elected leaders listen to the people and use the people's opinions to make change – is not

always functional.

There is a difference between what participants said they know about South African democracy and what they know or think about democracy in general. When participants were asked what the word 'democracy' means to them, they gave very different answers from what they said they know or think about South African democracy:

> **Participant 1:** If someone say[s] 'democracy,' I'll think, okay: freedom, that's the first thing that will come. Freedom, access to most things....now, I can, I can say whatever I, maybe I feel like saying. And you can be, being able to like now, to understand most of the things and being able to hear most of the things. Access to most, like everything. That's the first thing, those are the things that come to my mind.

Participants four and three shared similar sentiments:

> **Participant 4:** I think, uh, democracy…democracy means, means you being free irrespective of…of your, of your race, or culture, or status, or whatever but, not – you not being judged because of a certain aspect about you. It means, uh, about you having, like access to everything. Access to opportunities as (participant 1) said, access to…I don't know how to put it…
> **Participant 3:** Okay…I think we can wrap it up by saying: it means quality life.

Words such as freedom and access were understood by this focus group to be synonymous with democracy *writ large*. They believe democracy is blind to race and status – both of which are incredibly important topics in South Africa and are frequently discussed and debated. Note how these comments differ from the descriptions that participants gave earlier regarding South African democracy, calling it unequal and corrupt. Youth in this focus group paint a clear difference between what they have learned about democracy and the democracy that currently exists in South Africa.

The state of citizen education in South Africa was discussed in this focus group as well. Despite the fact that these four youth actually knew quite a lot regarding democracy, they lamented that their civic education experiences were not adequate. Participant four said that as a learner, he and his peers were only taught about 'the story: the Nelson

Mandela story." Participant three believed that, at least for people of his race, there is a general disinterest in politics and government:

> **Participant 3:** The thing is: I think us, as South African, most of us as blacks...the majority of us are not interested in government. They don't know the function of government because, even, even at home I'm the only one who watches...I'm the only one who watch[es] the news.

Perhaps this is true of some black South Africans, but participant three's interest in watching the news must have developed from somewhere. If not from his family, as he suggests, perhaps it came from something he learned in school. Still, as participant one states, it appears that civic education in schools is very basic:

> **Participant 1:** Even when we grew up, they would only tell you that the president is this guy...eh, the prime minister is this guy. What is their job? You don't know.
> **Interviewer:** What they're there for.
> **Participant 1:** You don't know what they're there for.

If participant one's learning experiences are true, it suggests that civic education in South Africa barely skims the surface of topics like government, participation and politics. There is a difference between learning who the president is versus learning who the president is *and* what he does, where his power comes from, and how he comes to power.

According to this focus group, the civic education curriculum is not an in-depth experience for learners. The 'Nelson Mandela story' and being taught the name of the president of South Africa is hardly what one would consider a high-impact educational experience that will influence high participation rates among youth. That being said, there are other places and spaces that youth can learn about democracy and participation. Participant three, for example, said that he watches the news every night. The internet is another place where youth potentially learn about such things. Participant one, however, says that in his experience, information on democracy and participation is not accessible:

Participant 1: ...I think, eh, information is not out there. The information is not, like, out there in a way, accessible, in a way that we can access it.

Is South African Democracy Working?

After our conversation regarding democracy and education, the area of focus changed to whether participants believe that South Africa's democracy is working twenty-one years after its inception. There was general agreement within the group that democracy is working, but not as it should. Participant four believes that elected officials are not doing what they should be:

> **Participant 4:** I feel as if it is working, but it's not working to its full potential. I feel that, that there are a lot of things that could be done but they're not, uh, not...they're not being done. Because, this goes back to the, to, to this thing that we've been promised certain things. And us being promised certain things, it means that whoever promised us was sure that he or she can do that. But when time comes where he does not deliver – that's where the problem starts. That you promised us this and now you can't deliver, it means that you can do it but you're not doing it.

Other youth in the group shared similar sentiments. Distrust exists between them and their elected officials. A properly functioning democracy for them is one in which, when politicians and government officials make promises to the public, they carry out their promises in the form of laws, action and legislation. This, for them, is something that is lacking in South Africa.

Equality is another principle that this group used to measure the success of South African democracy. Equality and democracy go hand-in-hand for these youth; however, many of them feel as though South African democracy, and access to democratic institutions, is not equal for all citizens:

> **Interviewer:** So the inequality extends beyond just what you can afford to buy. I mean, it extends to, it extends to your access of democracy.
> **Participant 3:** Yeah, it...it's always extending. And, and this thing, you must say okay, we're experiencing, eh, this democracy but for us apartheid, it's, like a chain

reaction. Because our parent[s] did experience it. So, here we're saying: okay, we're living in democracy but actually, we are experiencing…
Participant 4: It's still growing, it's still growing…
Participant 3: Yeah, we are still experiencing the effect of apartheid…

It is interesting that inequality in regards to access to democracy is being compared to apartheid here. Participants in this focus group grew up in a democratic society just a few years after the end of apartheid. They believe, however, that inequality is still present – even in the hallmark institution of the transition: a democratic government. Participant four's comment 'it's still growing' refers to the fact that democracy and post-apartheid measures for greater equality are still spreading through South Africa. In other words, inequality within the system exists, but that inequality may start to shrink as democracy continues to infiltrate the country.

The dominance of the African National Congress in South African politics was also discussed in accordance with the functionality of the country's democracy. Interestingly enough, as all participants in this group were black South Africa, there was over all agreement that continued ANC dominance is harmful and/or inadequate to the health of South African democracy. Participant three, using the example of the ANC's attempt to give all citizens electricity, believes that the ANC has bit off more than it can chew:

> **Participant 3:** During [the] apartheid government, the apartheid government neglected us, as blacks. So, and there was this illusion that South Africa is a very rich country and there is this cheap electricity that people are always talking about. They said: ah, what happened to Eskom, Eskom used to be great. Eskom used to have cheap electricity. But, as the ANC came to government, ANC promises that, okay, you as black[s], we are going, we are going to give you electricity because…I, I think some of them thought that there was enough electricity for us and when they start giving electricity to everyone, because [before the end of apartheid] remember that government was only catering maybe for like twenty percent of the population…and neglected the whole eighty percent, so when the ANC came to government it, it, it tries to include everyone. So it, it, it, it's become difficult because there are many things to be done. There are hospitals, there [is] water, there [is] electricity [to provide to everyone].

What the youth suggests here is that the ANC's promise to provide so much for those who were oppressed under apartheid has led to dysfunction within democratic government institutions. Grandiose promises of electricity for all, water for all, and health care for all have remained largely unfilled because the government does not have the resources required to act effectively. Therefore, ANC dominance has largely been a time of big promises without widespread action. That, for members of this group, is frustrating. They want a government that provides. ANC dominance, however, is something that may be difficult for the country to overcome. Participant four, despite voicing his displeasure for the party, likened switching from the ANC to changing religions:

> **Participant 4:** I just thought of the weirdest thing ever. Like, it's the most craziest idea ever. Okay…let me start here: firstly, I'm a Christian and, how am I going to put this (laughs) you see, I'm not – I hope you follow my channel – what I'm trying to say is that we as people believe, like, so much in the ANC that it changing is something is like, like changing our party to be another party despite being the ANC is something like…
> **Participant 1:** Changing religion…
> **Participant 4:** …closely impossible. It's like we believe in the ANC. It's like, for instance, telling me that I must stop being Christian and believing in something else.

Thus, members of the group would like to see a change in government but were not optimistic that any change will come soon. The ANC's stronghold on the national government, they predicted, will last for the foreseeable future.

When asked about existing political alternatives to the ANC, participants were even more disenchanted. One member had never even heard of many of the opposition parties that are currently fighting the ANC within government. Again, however, this may be because ANC dominance has lasted for so long. There has not been a national election since 1994 in which the ANC did not receive less than sixty percent of the popular vote. Lack of

knowledge and lack of legitimization of alterative parties were apparent amongst members

of the group:

> **Participant 4:** I feel as if many of them, we don't know many of them. And, we've, we've put our trust so much on the ANC that we can't change. We told ourselves that the ANC fought, like, for us during the apartheid and promised us a lot of things and in time they will produce what they promised us. So that's why the other parties are, like, not noticed or we're not voting for them and whatever. And I feel as if, even the parties that are there are not putting much effort for them to be, like, acknowledged by us.

It is clear that these youth are not very interested in alternative parties; not because they

do not support them or their causes, but because they feel that these parties are not trying

to reach out to a broad base of support of South Africans, including young people like

themselves.

Being that participants exhibited disappointment with the ruling party and political

alternatives, I asked them if they thought it was important for a legitimate alternative party

to exist, and if so, what that party should look like. The youth were generally receptive to

the idea of a legitimate opposition to the ANC, but cautioned that any party that rises

should deliver on its agenda and promises:

> **Participant 1:** Yes, that party will come. The thing is…that party will come and promise us the same thing the AN…the ANC promised us. But now try to promise us maybe more. Cause the only thing I see right now is the expectation that you can live for. They promise, like, okay if you say something like: convince us. You're going to have to follow it. There's also, the only thing now, the other thing…if the other party can come and promise, like information can be out there, make sure that information is out there and we receive each and every information they are providing. Maybe we can go for it.

Participant one did not elaborate on when he believed such a party would exist, but the key

takeaway from his response – and the entire discussion on this topic - is that political

parties should follow through with policy promises.

Participation

The next subject in our discussion was participation. I was very interested to see how these young people participate in democracy and to hear whether they believe these forms of participation are effective means by which to change civil society. The first form of participation broached was voting behavior. Three of the participants voiced that they vote and that voting is important, including participant two:

> **Participant 2:** Yeah, um, I have voted. Um, I believe that if you don't vote, uh, you won't have, uh, any right to say, uh, anything.

Not only did participant two say he votes, but he said that voting is the key to being able to speak out on issues. In other words, if you don't vote, you should not complain. Participant three, however, expressed that he doesn't always vote:

> **Participant 3:** Sometimes I do vote and sometimes I don't vote.
> **Interviewer:** Yeah, but do you think it's important to vote?
> **Participant 3:** Here in South Africa, we can say it is important, but it is not *that* important because, actually here in South Africa there is nothing much you can change by voting.

Citing ANC dominance, participant three believes that voting is not very important. Simply put, given that the ANC has won every national election since 1994, voting is an ineffective means by which to make change for him. Disagreement – represented by one participant out of the group – over the importance of voting should be noted. It is unclear if other youth with similar backgrounds to these participants share participant three's views on the topic.

Protesting, as showcased by the Fees Must Fall campaign, is often used by young South Africans in an attempt to bring about change. When asked if they had ever participated in protests, all of the participants in this focus group shared that they have frequently engaged in protesting:

> **Participant 3:** I always participate in any kind of protest: peaceful, not peaceful, whatever…

Interviewer: And why? Why do you? Why do you always participate?
Participant 4: Because from that at least we get results…
Participant 3: Because…yeah, I'm trying…to change something. I'm, I'm trying to speak to those in power because I want to be heard.

In our discussion on voting, it was clear that there was disagreement over whether voting is an effective means by which to bring about change in a democracy. Protesting, however, was unequivocally considered a tool to make change happen. When the youth in this focus group protest, they feel as though their voices are being heard because they see tangible results and change from their efforts. This is further supported by the following excerpt:

Interviewer: So you feel, just to put it into what I think you're saying, is that, you know, we talked about voting and some of you don't feel as if when you vote that's effective.
Participant 3: Yeah, it's not effective…
Interviewer: But protesting, now that's effective?
Participant 3: Yeah.
Participant 4: Because we've seen results from that.

Simply said, protesting is a form of participation that these youth engage with frequently because they find that it is both effective and produces results. It appears as though this focus group sees voting as a passive form of participation in that it is not effective at bringing about change. Protesting, however, is seen as demanding something from government or democracy:

Participant 3: In South Africa actually I think you, you must demand everything. Because through vote and debate there is nothing much you can change…

Protesting is an active method in which action usually produces a reaction, and that's something important to these youth.

When asked whether there are other forms of participation that youth engage with, participant one suggested that, as shown in the literature review, media could be effective:

Participant 1: Another thing: media. Through media I believe government can be fought.

Interviewer: What kind of media? Are we talking social media like…?
Participant 1: Yes, like the news. If you go there, I believe they can be heard. I still remember like, uh, this year we had a problem with our sponsors there and once we promised them, well okay we're going to social media, now we're telling them what's, what's your giving us. Yeah! They started listening to us…they came back to us.

The use of media as a quick and inexpensive channel to spread a message or movement, as it was used by the Fees Must Fall campaign, shows that youth understand the possibilities and relevance that media has in today's South Africa. Like protesting – and according to participant one's story – use of social media platforms is a method of participation that produces results.

Civil Society NGOs and Democracy

The Umkhumbane Schools Project is a youth-oriented organization that focuses on educating children in less privileged schools in Cato Manor on topics like science and mathematics through mentoring by university students. Therefore, the students in this focus group are engaging directly with a civil society issue: inequality of learning within the public school system. I was interested to know if they think their involvement with this organization has brought them closer to their democracy and government because of the program's focus on an important civil society problem. All of the participants agreed that it has. One participant thought that being involved has changed his perspective on this issue, and others as well:

Participant 3: I think this thing exposes us to some heightened realities. When, maybe, when we were in high school, we didn't see it but right now, because we are much older and we are in the university and you start understanding the things…really, we have a problem and something needs to be done.

Similarly, participant two likened his involvement to being concerned for South Africa:

Participant 2: It shows how much we care about this country and, uh, as for me in high school, like, the teachers who were teaching me were not that good. So, that's

what I saw when I was growing up, so, I wanted to go back and give them what I now know. The knowledge that is, uh, quality.

His involvement, in his opinion, not only equates to caring for his country but also stemmed from going through the school system believing that it was inadequate and, in turn, wanting to do something about it.

The question remains: does involvement with an NGO like Umkhumbane make youth more likely to be engaged with civil society issues and interested in politics than those who are not members of such an organization. I posed this question to the focus group:

> **Interviewer:** Do you guys think that, uh, other people your age in their early-twenties, who aren't doing these things, aren't being mentors, do you think they're, they're less likely to want to try to change things? Like the education system and things like that? Do you think that they're less likely?
> **Participant 4:** Yeah I think they are less likely…Because they're not seeing what we are able to see.

Participant four's response is interesting. He suggests here that those who are not involved with civil society NGOs are not able to see the issues and problems that exist. In other words, participation is more than an action but a way of changing one's perspective. By participating, one is able to see and learn more. The change that they are making through being involved with their organization is the type of tangible change they yearn for at the national level in political institutions. The first step to making this change, however, is action:

> **Participant 3:** In our youth, because – you will find that…most of our peers, they go to church five days a week or four days a week and just to go there…and to go to pray. I'm…not against them going there, but you can't go four days there and pray for change and do nothing…you can't every week – they go there, pray for change and do nothing about it…

In other words, participant three – whose analysis on this was agreed with by all members of the focus group – believed that debate and talking about issues is one thing, and unlikely to cause any change. The act of doing something about a problem is an important step in the right direction. Participation and being involved equates to making change and headway for these youth.

Fees Must Fall

This focus group also featured a brief discussion on the recent Fees Must Fall campaign. It is already clear participants in this group view protesting as an effective means to bring about change. All four participants were active in marches and protests associated with the nation-wide effort to lower tuition rates earlier in 2015. They agreed with its goals. Despite the students' success in causing the national government to not raise tuition for the next academic year, participant three cautioned that the fight is far from over:

> **Participant 3:** So, I think it is very important that, eh, as we come back from the strike that…you must not relax, but we must mobilize and educate our selves. And, and try to fight this on different levels. Because we must educate ourselves and be able to engage with government, be able to debate…

His words are important because they show that, at least youth in this focus group, believe that Fees Must Fall is far from over and speaks to a larger issue - the disconnection between South Africans, specifically youth, and their government.

Durban Youth Council Focus Group[2]

Democracy – what has been learned?

The focus group for Durban Youth Council followed a similar pattern of questioning. We first began with general questions on South African democracy, democracy in general and the state of students' citizenship educational experiences. In the process of this focus group it was discovered that both participants are currently enrolled in private high schools in eThekwini. That being said, it was interesting to hear that, just as in the Umkhumbane Schools Project focus group, the youth believed they have learned only basic information regarding South Africa's democracy and government:

> **Participant 2:** So…basically [I] learned…in L.O. – life orientation class – about like the very basic political systems. There [weren't] too many things that were that in depth. Umm, but we did learn about the way that our, uh, government works: like the ministers, the parliament, like, sort of governmental systems and then we didn't, umm, learn too much about the history of apartheid and then the transformation to democracy but it was a known thing about what democracy is and from a young age I think they taught people the fundamentals of a democracy.

Participant two suggests that democracy is, at least for people in his school, taught to young people starting at a very early age. Similarly, participant one recounts her citizenship education experience:

> **Participant 1:** I haven't learned about, well we covered democracy in life orientation but it was very brief. Where I learned more about democracy was history and then discussions in English. And that was in both high school and primary school. In primary school we did, during our history lessons, we'd have discussions about democracy and what democracy is and then one a year, what we'd have is the grade sevens would run a campaign. So they'd have their own political parties, and then we as a school would get to vote who we'd want as our rulers of the school. So from a young age we were exposed to how democracy worked and that you had freedom of choice as who your leaders were, it was limited by the group of leaders that were present and then once I went…got…went into high school during history, cuz I am a history student, we learned more about the past of South

[2] Durban Youth Council Focus Group. Focus Group Audio Recording. 14 November 2014. All quotes and participant ideas in the section labeled 'Durban Youth Council Focus Group' are derived from this source.

Africa and how the transition from apartheid to a free society with democracy, and then during English class we have very interesting discussions about how you have to hold your leaders accountable for their actions and what it actually means to exercise your democratic rights.

Participant one's account brings in new elements of what has been taught about democracy and government. She believes that life orientation classes – the part of the curriculum where citizenship education is incorporated – have only taught her basic information on the subject. English and history classes, however, have been very influential to her understanding of how democracy works. Not only did she learn about issues of democracy in these subjects, even more, history class gave her and her fellow grade sevens (participant one is currently a grade eleven) a space to experiment with democracy through a mock political campaign. Her experiential encounter with democracy in a school setting stands alone as the only such account found in all four focus groups.

I asked both participants to tell me what, based on their education, the word democracy means to them. They responded similarly:

> **Participant 1:** Freedom.
> **Participant 2:** Umm, yeah, freedom. Everyone having a say. Umm, equality. All the general terms basically.
> **Participant 1:** Yeah.
> **Participant 2:** But more that the entire population basically just has a say in how the country's run.
> **Participant 1:** Freedom and equality. I actually agree with that, because the people, when you vote, um, you're putting who you want into power but those people in power are never above the law and they're not above the people that, in the country they run, that they serve the people. So, freedom and equality, because everyone's equal.

These answers are similar to those of participants in other focus groups. Equality and freedom were considered to be very important to both participants' understanding of what democracy is. Participant two believes that everyone having a say in the way that the country is run is an important component of democracy. Going a step further, participant

one mentions voting – the first instance of participation being recognized as a main pillar of democracy. This was mentioned in other focus groups as well.

I was interested to know what both participants think about the quality of education they have received regarding democracy and citizenship and the state of citizenship education in general. There was agreement that citizenship education is lacking in South Africa:

> **Participant 2:** I, I think…umm…I wouldn't call it ignorance, but there are a lot of people who don't know as much as they should about politics, or the way politics works. Cuz a lot of my peers, um, aren't like too sure about how, what the systems are in place. They're basically just, know the basic things like the ANC is in power, the…Jacob Zuma's the president, we have parliament. But, I think there's definitely more things that people in high school should learn about to become more, um, like prepared for the future.

Participant two laments that learners are often equipped with only basic knowledge about South Africa's government. Education regarding participation was not mentioned. Participant two expressed similar feelings, but believed that learners have what it takes to participate:

> **Participant 1:** So, yes we haven't been taught enough in school but we have been taught enough to be able to participate in a democracy because we kno…we know the basics of what being people living in a democratic society. We know that we need to vote and we know we have to know about the party in power and that we can hold them accountable for their actions. So that's the most important I think.

Despite believing that not enough is being taught on these topics of learning, participant one believes that the most important parts of citizenship education are points of participation – voting, keeping up-to-date on political news, and acting out if a political party or government's actions are improper or not in accordance with their promises.

I found that both participants in this focus group – both grade elevens – were incredibly informed about democracy and government. If the civic education curriculum is

as inadequate as they say it is, I was interested to know how they attained their knowledge

on the subjects. Participant two cited personal interest and family encouragement as

important components to his education:

> **Participant 2:** I enjoy politics. I'm interested in politics and I'm very fascinated by the whole way everything works. And not just in South Africa, like in American too, I'm very interested in the political system, so maybe, um, it came from my family that we knew a lot about politics and talked about it very openly…

Participants in other focus groups did not mention family discussion as a key part of their

understanding of democracy and civic education. Participant one believes that some of her

teachers have been very influential to her learning experience:

> **Participant 1:** And also, I think its partially my teachers because I've had really good teachers throughout my schooling career who've inspired me to learn more. Because, we, we have…okay…I had a very good teacher in grade five and six and basically what she did was she let us have discussions in class when she would do our timing so that we had extra time at the end of the day and we'd have discussions about different things and then you find how much you don't actually know. And once you know how much you don't know, you can go find out more.

Participant one, again, notes an experiential component to her civic education. Class

discussions and debates are indeed a space in which learners are able to actively

participate by making arguments for or against topics and issues of importance. Again, this

was the only time in all focus groups that this form of experiential learning was mentioned.

Is South African Democracy Working?

Our focus group discussion moved on to the functionality of South Africa's

democracy. Like I did with the previous focus group, I asked both participants to tell me

whether they believe South Africa's democracy is living up to their definition of democracy.

Participant two's analysis is similar to that of the Umkhumbane Schools Project and other

focus group participants:

Participant 2: I think, um, it has worked on a, like a standpoint of when a democracy's formed, these rules are put in, this legislation is passed, this is the way society is going to work. And I think it's definitely worked in the sense of being written on paper and saying that this is what the constitution says, therefore you have this right. And every person has this right in a democracy but, um, in South Africa, since there's so many issues that we have, it probably hasn't worked as well [as a country] that's had democracy for so long because there's still people who, uh, in theory do have a say but because of their circumstance or so many things that affect them, they actually have very limited say in what happens in the government. And, uh, poverty is obviously a big proponent of that.

He acknowledges that South Africa's democracy is actually quite progressive when it comes to the nation's constitution and that every citizen has been given rights to participate. That being said, he does not believe that these rights are easily accessible to all of the country's people. Poverty, he believes, is a factor that disenfranchises many people from participating in democracy. Participant one thought that democracy is working, but could be improved. An example she provided was the ANC"s dominance in government:

Participant 1: Cuz I think that links to what you're asking if, um, democracy works. Yes, I think democracy is working in the fact that you can vote and you have a say and everyone's equal. However, with the problem of ANC dominance, is you don't know if people are voting for the party that they see brought them out of apartheid…
Participant 2: Exactly, yeah.
Participant 1: Despite them not carrying up on what they promised and then, not hold, holding them accountable for not achieving that, or if they purely voting for them because they think they are the party who will do the best and should be in power?

It is troubling to her that the ANC has been swept into government again and again given what she would describe as the party in power's inaction on important policy issues. Participant one blames this on the romance of liberation – that the ANC came to power after fighting so long for freedom, and that people – maybe not youth - hold the ANC in high esteem because of its part in the struggle for liberation.

The conversation naturally progressed to the ANC and its hold on power. There was agreement that the ANC has been a force of good in South Africa. It's part in liberation and

the policies and principles it has fought for since 1994 have at times successful. That being

said, participant one states that she thinks the party has lost its way:

> **Participant 1:** I think the ANC party actually has quite a large merit with their, the statement of their party and what their goals and aims are, its just that they don't ever carry out those goals and carry out their promises. They don't, um, and people don't hold them accountable for their actions.

The ANC's inability to carry out its promises is, she believes, harmful; however, the people

of South Africa are ultimately to blame in her opinion. As she stated time and time again in

the focus group, it is up to the people of a democracy to hold their leaders and government

accountable. That has failed to happen when it comes to the African National Congress.

Participant two thinks that the ANC's hold on power is troubling for a different reason. He

believes that political competition is important to democracy:

> **Participant 2:** Exactly, there are a lot of people who don't understand that if a, if one party is in power for the rest, for hundreds of years that's not a true democracy because you need opposition. That's I think, in America you have this sort of forty-nine/fifty-one balance that is really, strengthens the democracy.

Without even venturing into the topic of the ANC's promises and actions (or lack thereof),

participant two believes that a healthy democracy must have a legitimate opposition that

keeps the majority in check. This is missing in South African democracy.

When I asked the two their opinions on existing political alternatives to the ANC,

they were more knowledgeable on the subject than participants in all other focus groups.

Participant two detailed his thoughts on two of the current opposition parties:

> **Participant 2:** I think, well, the DA definitely agrees with the ANC on so many levels. Uh, and obviously the EFF is a little bit more radical in a sense that they're more socialist. But, um, the ANC and the DA, a lot of their differences are in the people in power. So, for instance, Jacob Zuma, is a, is a target that the DA says your party is bad because of everything that Jacob Zuma does, but we still agree with you on these things, such as how to fight poverty, how to employ more people.

In sum, participant two believes that neither the Democratic Alliance (DA) nor the

Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) are that different from the ANC. Perhaps the parties'

similarities explain why the ANC has faced so little opposition for so long. I asked

participant one if she would be willing to vote for the EFF. She said that she would not, but

that she believed that, of all existing parties, the EFF had the best chance of being a threat

to the ANC because of its broader appeal to South Africans than other parties like the DA.

I found that neither participant seemed to be any more likely to support existing

opposition parties, as they were to support the ANC. I asked them to describe to me a

political party they would like to see rise in South Africa. Participant one supplied the most

in-depth response to this question:

> **Participant 1:** Changing the cabinet, because I do think that the cabinet's too large
> and we have far too many, um, ministers. Targeting money wastage and also looking
> [at] the electricity. I know, because people talk about Eskom and load shedding
> things, I think in order to have a thriving economy you first need power to run it.

She went on to include a reevaluation of the education system as an important component

of any legitimate opposition party:

> **Participant 1:** And I think that targeting education – not tertiary education – but
> targeting education from the bottom getting people, encouraging students who are
> academically inclined, and who are intelligent to go into the jobs that are often
> frowned upon. So encouraging people to become teachers and to become, um,
> nurses and just, even politicians because I know a lot of educated people don't want
> to become politicians because they see it as power-hungry, corrupt game and they
> just decide not to do it. So, I think there needs to be viable ways for people who are
> poor to become, to get into good careers but you need to start from the bottom by
> building up basic education and you can't start by helping tertiary education
> because then, there's only an elite few people who actually ever make it into
> tertiary, um, education systems and then you're basically using tax money to
> support an elite few. So it's an exclusive market.

Her response to this question is quite interesting. She is the only participant in any focus

group that mentioned such detailed policy positions in her answer to this question. Her

knowledge of the cabinet and its ministers appeared to be quite advanced. Corruption in

the form of misappropriating government funds is a similar response to that of students in

other focus groups. Her comments on the education system reaffirm earlier sentiments

from both participants that the education system is not providing all learners with an equal

and quality education. This was a topic considered important by most participants in each

focus group when asked what were the top issues they are currently concerned about.

According to participant one, the education system is unfair in that not all learners are

receiving the same quality of education. People who come from economically strapped

schools and communities are less likely to receive a quality education than those who

attend private schools.

Participation

The next section in this focus group involved youth participatory democracy. I asked

both participants how they participate in South Africa's democracy *writ large* before

talking about specific forms of participation. Participant one suggested that just by talking

with other people is a way she and her peers learn and participate:

> **Participant 1:** So, basically, learning and spreading the knowledge we have by
> discussing it with other people so that when we come of age to vote, and they come
> of age to vote they have a bit more background as to what the significance of what
> they're doing, and why they should vote and what they should consider before they
> vote for a specific party.

These forms of participation are, in her opinion, important to youth her age because they

help prepare teenage learners for their democratic duties, like voting, which they become

eligible for when they turn eighteen. Participant two cited involvement in the Durban

Youth Council as a way that he participates in democracy:

> **Participant 2: ...**we [members of DYC] organize community service projects
> ourselves but as youth, um, young people who are, who are organizing these

community projects, managing them, planning them, it, uh, creates…our aim is to create leaders through service to humanity, so as we are young leaders being created, uh, it not only puts us in a position of power, but it gives us more opportunities to exercise our voice and, of the, exercise the voice of the people that we lead.

Participants in other focus groups also mentioned this topic as a form of participation. Community service oriented participation is, in his opinion, important in that it both helps the community and causes youth to grow in both leadership ability and making one's voice heard.

Despite the fact that neither participant in this focus group was of voting age, I asked them if they believe that it is important to vote. Participant two voiced that he thinks it is quite important and that not voting is detrimental to democracy:

> **Participant 2:** I think that it's very important to vote, uh, because if you're not voting you're sort of undermining democracy and you're kind of, I wouldn't say betraying it, but you're not doing what you should be doing to create a democratic society

Our conversation went on to talk about protesting. When asked if they had ever participated in protests, participant one said that she had not. Participant two, however, recounted how he accidently found himself in the middle of a Fees Must Fall march in eThekwini while organizing a different event for Durban Youth Council:

> **Participant 2:** But I have participated in, um, this is actually an interesting story. When we had a, we had our biggest project of the year which was an event at the city hall. And we were busy setting up the whole day, it was in the evening, we were setting up the whole day in the city hall and, this was actually two weeks ago, and we, um, while our group was setting up the Fees Must Fall protesters were actually marching to city hall, and so, um, our group – the city hall kinda went on lockdown and our group was locked in, but me and, uh, my colleague the deputy mayor [were] actually out of the building and so, we couldn't get back in, and so what we did do was we started marching with them and it was a really cool experience to, uh, see that. And it really made us feel, well it made me feel very, uh, empowered and it gave me a sense of, I wouldn't say it gave me a sense of anything, but I was very happy to see so many people, um, expressing their views in a way such as marching.

Although participant two was not actively seeking to become part of the protest, he believes that the experience gave him a different perspective on this form of participation. Fees Must Fall was a campaign targeting university students; therefore, participant two's experience is likely rare for a grade eleven learner in South Africa. He would agree with participants in the Umkhumbane focus group that protesting is at least a very empowering form of participation and one that unites many like-minded individuals.

When asked if they could think of other forms of participation in democracy, participant two mentioned the internet and social media as potential ways to spread one's opinions and voice concern about political issues:

> **Participant 2:** Also, um, like the internet could be an example of this where social media use, no matter where you come from, no matter what, who you are – you can express your views on things like Facebook, Twitter and, um, like blogs where you can speak out against things you feel passionately about…

This is similar to participant one's response to the same question in the Umkhumbane Schools Project as well as those in other focus groups. Again, this participant acknowledges that social media can be put to use as a form of participation.

Civil Society NGOs and Democracy

It was clear from my interaction with both participants that Durban Youth Council has played an important role in their civic education experience. It is literally a space in which select youth in eThekwini can participate – be it community service projects to peaceful marches and rallies. Both agreed that involvement with DYC has led them to become more active in democracy and has increased their concern for many political and social issues facing South Africa.

I discovered during the interview that Durban Youth Council is not an open organization, but one that is only accessible to a select few youth in eThekwini. A few

private and public schools are part of the Council, and only four grade ten learners from

each school are allowed to be part of DYC. I asked both participants if they believe that

organizations like DYC need to be more accessible to youth in order to provide young

people with spaces in which they can experiment with democratic principles. Participant

two emphasized his belief that more such spaces need to be created:

> **Interviewer:** Is it fair to say that you think more of these spaces need to be created for people your age?
> **Participant 2:** Definitely. Um, because, uh, if you see people who aren't in DYC it's gonna be more difficult for them to, uh, become involved in, like, community service projects because they don't have the platform that DYC provides. Um, and so if more organizations like this arise and come, and are established no matter what their aim or objective is, uh, it really gives people opportunities to make a difference.

It is clear from his response that participation in organizations like DYC gives youth an

opportunity to make tangible change in their community.

Fees Must Fall

We briefly discussed the recent Fees Must Fall campaign in this focus group as well.

As already detailed, participant two actually participated by accident in the movement.

Participant one, who had never participated in a protest, believed that the campaign had

some flaws:

> **Participant 1:** The problem is it doesn't solve the root of the problem. It solves one of the effects of it…which is just the increase. What, when Jacob Zuma came to power he said that one of the things he was going to do was he was going to make tertiary education available for those who were underprivileged and unable to pay for it themselves. And he actually started a whole commission looking into the viability of, um, funding education for the underprivileged and I think the fact that the government does things like this and then doesn't ever capitalize on their results or put any systems in place…yes, I think no fee increase is good but in the long term there is always going to be increases in things…and there needs to be a system in place that helps those students who are unable to pay for their education.

Her critical analysis of the campaign is interesting in that it shows she has researched the

issue of tuition fees and is quite knowledgeable about the campaign to decrease university

fees. Her 'more work must be done' attitude towards the subject is also important in

conjunction with other focus group response to the question. She would agree with the

statements of those in the Umkhumbane and DDP focus groups that the Fees Must Fall

campaign is simply one step to solving the larger problem of South Africa's education

system.

Wentworth Community Focus Group[3]

<u>Democracy – what has been learned?</u>

As mentioned earlier, the Wentworth focus group was different than the other three

in that participants were not affiliated with any single civil society NGO. That being said, my

questions for the group remained the same. I started off by asking participants to tell me

what they have learned regarding democracy in South Africa and what the word

democracy means to them. Participant three stated that having a say in who governs is

important to democracy, and that freedom is also important:

> **Participant 3:** What I've learned about South Africa's democracy or what does democracy…mean to me? Right, now first and foremost democracy is where you are not only, okay how can I put it – back when apartheid was autocratic, therefore everyone had to vote for this specific party. Now, in our age, or our time frame, we are allowed to vote for whichever party we feel would be suitable for the certain time period. So, democracy, for me, is a matter of freedom in a broader sense. So…to be short that is what democracy means to me.
> **Interviewer:** And did you learn about that in, you know, about what that is in school or at home or where do you feel that you learned that?
> **Participant 3:** Where I learned that? No, I can't say so much in school. Although we covered a lot, but democracy on a whole is not necessarily something you can learn in school. You gotta, what I can I say, go through it.

These are familiar sentiments to participants in other focus groups. He does not, however,

believe that he has learned about voting and freedom in accordance with democracy in

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[3] Wentworth Community Focus Group. Focus Group Audio Recording. 16 November 2014. All quotes and participant ideas in the section labeled 'Wentworth Community Focus Group' are derived from this source.

school. Participant three's belief that these are not principles that can be learned in school is unique. It is the first time, and one of a few times that this view was expressed in any focus group. Democracy as something that one learns as one lives through it is an interesting thought and brings into question whether democracy in the classroom is an effective form of education to begin with. Experiencing democracy is far more important, at least to participant three. Participant two shared that freedom and the ability to do whatever one wants to do are important aspects of democracy:

> **Participant 2:** For me, I think that democracy is basically freedom to do anything that you want to do. You are not held back by anything or by anybody.

It is unclear what he means by 'anything that you want to do,' but his belief that freedom to act as one wants is a principle of democracy sets him apart from all other participants in all focus groups in that this was the only time this response was recorded.

I asked participants whether they think the state of South Africa's civic education system is adequate. Similar to participant three's answer to the previous question, participant one stated that she thinks she has learned far more in the 'school of life' than she has in the classroom:

> **Participant 1:** For me, life has taught me way more than what school can actually teach you. You get different types of schooling: you get the school of school – which is your career school – and then you get the school of life. And that's basically coming into contact with so many people and their opinions which is what, in essence, that's…where your decisions come from cuz you won't just vote on, okay, school has told me this – you're going to go there and say, 'okay, well I'm going with the ANC.' No, people are going to tell you the different promises that have been made, they're going to tell you who has kept those promises, who hasn't. So your decisions are going to be based on the school of life, not the school of school.

Participant one's response is important because it shows that, at least in her case, by talking to others and listening to peoples' opinions one can become informed and educated on political parties and democracy. Formal schooling, for her, is not a space in which things

like democracy can be learned. Why might this be? She proceeded to voice her concerns

with the school system in regards to citizenship education:

> **Participant 1:** Schooling is, I think, a bit too rigid. When it comes to [civic education], there needs to include more life experiences rather than just based on other people's opinions…Just for instance…you get your Aristotle. Those are people who had their decisions from back then. So we want decisions of now. We want opinions of now. We want real life people.

There appeared to be a large disconnect between the civic curriculum in schools and what

learners want to know in this focus group. Her comment is partially self-contradictory in

that she earlier stated that she has learned a lot about democracy from other peoples'

opinions, but in the classroom she finds that learning about 'other peoples' opinions' to be a

negative aspect of the curriculum. That being said, it is clear that democracy is not

something she thinks can be learned from a book. Participant three echoed her concerns

about civic education in the classroom:

> **Participant 3:** In school, when it came to, okay, the topic you would cover democracy on is, um, social science or history. Now, with that it covers back then, not now…therefore, it's relevant in terms of knowing your history but in terms of knowing the now it's not.

Participants one and three believes that democracy is a topic that, if covered in school, is

something best learned through modern democratic narratives and not those of people

who lived long ago, such as 'Aristotle.'

Is South African Democracy Working?

The focus group then turned its attention to whether participants believe that South

Africa's democracy is functioning properly. The conversation was, at times, quite spirited.

All of the participants agreed that South Africa's democracy is not working. The first issue

raised was a common theme in most focus groups. Participant three believes that ANC

dominance is harming South Africa's democracy and that the ANC's history as the party of

liberation is largely behind its electoral success:

> **Participant 3:** …in a sense of when it comes to election time you hear all the promises that [are] going to be said to win. That is how it works. Therefore, persuasion and, at that time, people will get…reminded about their history. Therefore, influencing their mind to think that if they make a change from the ANC, things are going to start going down hill. But in reality, I think, a sense of now, it is already going down hill.

He points out that the ANC often campaigns that voting for any other party will hurt the

country, but he believes that the ANC has already done so much to harm it already.

Participant two also touched on a point that was frequently discussed in other focus

groups. Political parties in South Africa's democracy often campaign and promise things to

citizens in order to garner support during election cycles. In a similar story to that of a

participant in the DDP focus group, he says that he himself has seen this first hand:

> **Participant 2:** Okay, for me, I have to say it is definitely not working because all [political parties] just do is they're bluffing. Like those couple of times that the IFP came into Wentsworth, they were bluffing people with blankets and stuff like that…that was just a one-day's thing and after that they, they were never to be seen or heard of again. And so, I don't think that it's working whatsoever.

Party behavior such as this is a sign that democracy in South Africa is dysfunctional, in his

opinion.

Our discussion moved on to the topic of ANC dominance. All participants agreed that

the ANC's control of the national government is hurting South Africa. Participant three

likened the ANC's time in power to a business cycle:

> **Participant 3:** It started off good with Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki for the short time period he led. And, leading up to it, you know in an economic sphere all these business cycles…it hits its peak and it drops.

What he means here is that the ANC's time in power has experienced highs and lows – just

like a company on a stock exchange – but that the party has already peaked in what it has

accomplished and is currently at a low. The participant goes on to say that corruption and

money laundering are hallmarks of South African governance, especially for the ANC:

> **Participant 3:** After the people vote, they don't necessarily know what's happening behind doors, behind the curtain. Especially now there is, with the corruption that's happening. The amounts of money that's getting stolen nobody can find – it's amazing. And, you don't know what's happening behind the closed doors.

He and the other two participants view this sort of behind-the-scenes governing as harmful

to South African democracy.

When asked about existing political alternatives to the ANC, participants were less

than enthusiastic. Pessimistic about the state of the current party system, participant one

stated that political parties make promises to people that they cannot realistically fulfill

and are generally untrustworthy:

> **Participant 1:** I think with the, the political parties – regardless of which one takes over – this, this particular government has set a precedent. So, in my opinion, as soon as [other parties like the DA or EFF] get in, everything will be cool for maybe…one year. Then, afterwards, they'll all go in the same pattern. We already know that the EFF is going to do the exact same thing, but people are so, they're so brainwashed and so uneducated that they're willing to follow somebody who just, you know they even try to speak properly but they don't even use the words in the right context and the people, they don't know that this word…doesn't even mean what they say. So they get bamboozled into believing that this person is going to go the right way, they're going to change everything for us…

Participant one was especially distrusting of the EFF and claimed to know very little about

the DA. No matter what, however, she believed that any party that currently exists if it were

to take control would likely replicate the ANC's style of governing.

When I asked participants to describe a political alternative that would best serve as

a party of opposition to the ANC, they enthusiastically embraced ideas such as uniting

South Africans and being equally supportive of all citizens. Participant one believed that,

what she considers, the ANC's original goals should be replicated:

> **Participant 1:** I think if it could employ the founding principles of the ANC when [the ANC] first came out, and it included a lot of just, including everybody. Don't just exclude because of the color of your skin, let us rather work together, try and build a nation rather than build a political power. That's pointless having this whole power over people yet you're not even concerned with what the people want, what they desire.

Her statement is quite powerful and deserves emphasis: 'try and build a nation rather than build a political power.' She believes that political parties focus far too much on their own interests and the best way to govern for themselves. Instead, they should look out for the people they govern, in her opinion. Participant three thinks that such a party should be change-oriented and truly represent the electorate:

> **Participant 3:** So if we're looking for change in our, within the parties, we need someone who's going to be all in it. Not all in it for the money. All in it for the people. Who's here to listen to the people's views, not the people that are sitting around the table. Therefore, I'll say that we need someone who's for the people, who's passionate about making a difference…passionate about changing.

His mention of money is interesting and something that was not discussed by participants in other focus groups. Money in politics is currently a heated topic in the realms of United States politics, but was not a point of interest discussed in these focus groups. Participant three's main point, however, was that political parties should be receptive and responsive to citizens' concerns and opinions.

<u>Participation</u>

Participation was the next topic covered in this focus group. Voting and the importance of voting was the first form of participation discussed. None of the participants have ever voted in any election. Compared to the previous two focus groups – in which participants nearly unanimously said they vote or think it's important to vote - the voting behavior of this group was quite different, but is similar to responses from the DDP focus group. Participant one explained that she feels as though voting is nonsensical:

Participant 1: I've never voted and I'm twenty-five. I've never taken the opportunity. I don't even want to. I just feel [my vote] is a drop in the ocean, pointless. I wouldn't even bother. I will stay this way until I die, I wouldn't vote.

Participant two elaborates on this issue stating that he feels as though voting is an ineffective method to bring about change:

Participant 2: For me, no. I haven't voted. I was [told] to vote by my maw and other people like 'eh, you know this is going to make change' and stuff like that, but for me personally I don't think it's actually going to make any change. So many years, how many people have voted, and still, still no change has come and now...what are we in? 2015? Still nothing. So I don't think that voting actually works out, so for me it's a no. I won't vote.

Change was an important factor to participants in this focus group when it comes to voting. Participant one, after stating she would never vote, said that she would be more likely to vote in a local election because she feels as though change is more likely to happen at the local level. She felt as though she could more easily navigate the local political process if she had a problem or was concerned about an issue:

Participant 1: Maybe for, for local, like we got the ANC office and the DA office – I would rather do that, I would rather vote for something like that because it's more home base, more something I can see happening every day. Where if there's a problem...we have a big problem with people burning copper...with the guys who are on these drugs, so if I can phone and say 'okay...please can you come and sort this problem out?' And if he comes I will vote for him. If you can do something for me, it's like, almost scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.

In other words, participant one would only vote for a party or elected official if they helped her in some way or provided positive change in her community.

The next form of participation discussed was protesting. As with voting, there was a generally negative reaction to protesting as an effective means to make change. Participant three lamented that protests often get out of hand:

Participant 3: ...if you're looking at protesting in a sense – big – no, big ones, we don't have protesting, we have striking. Uh, I don't know, with our country, things tend to get out of hand...very fast.

Participant one agreed with his analysis and took the side of law enforcement agencies in

their recent handling of a mineworker strike:

> **Participant 1:** They take it to the extreme-extreme. Because, I don't know, some people just don't think, don't think at all. I mean, there's the case with the protests with the mineworkers and police. I don't blame the police for shooting the mineworkers. If you're coming at me with a whole lot of, you know [weapons] and you're coming with the traditional weapons…They don't like they're…just going to stand there. [The strikers were saying] 'Hell no, we're going to go, we want hired.' No, no. It did not go down the way people are making it out to be and if the police felt unsafe, they were going to fire. If somebody comes doing that to me I'm going to fire too. I'm not even going to think twice.

Another important point from her response is that often times stories of violent encounters

differ between protesters and police officers. She is more likely to believe police narratives

of such events. Needless to say, participant one does not appear to be inclined to engage in

a protest. Again, this differs greatly from opinions on protesting from the other focus

groups that all generally agreed that protests and marches of all types are important and

effective means by which change occurs.

I asked the group if they could think of other ways one can participate in democracy.

Like participant two in the DYC focus group, participant three said that his involvement

with a youth development organization within Wentworth could be considered a form of

democratic participation:

> **Participant 3:** Now, with that…we're serving in the schools. We have programs for kids after school where they can come do homework and just chill. You know, instead of being on the streets, come let us do something that's going to benefit you…So in sense of being, working in the community, yes. Is it making a difference? It depends.
> **Interviewer:** Do you think it's making more of a difference than if you vote or you protest?
> **Participant 3:** Definitely it makes more of a difference, because actions speak louder than words.

Participant three's belief that community involvement like his is making more of a difference than voting and protesting would is important. This is a method of participating that he has both been involved in and has seen results from. It appears that participants in this focus group, and other focus groups as well are change and results-oriented. In other words, effectiveness is measured by how much tangible change has been made on an issue or problem.

Participant three also echoed other focus groups' belief that social media is a fast way to spread news and information:

> **Participant 3:** That can be the most quickest, easiest, fastest way to spread a message. Because…I'll give another example. If something has happened now, maybe there's a fight . Ten minutes, not even ten…five minutes max people in Newlands. Now Newlands is a whole [a]nother community, in five minutes. So, to spread a message…social media is the most quickest and easiest way. Will it be effective? I don't' know, but in a sense that it's fast, it's easy, it's cheap – yeah.

Note that he stated that this form of participation is easy and cheap, the same words used by other participants in other focus groups. He is not sure of its effectiveness, but acknowledges that it is a potential force in creating dialogue and debate.

Civil Society NGOs and Democracy

As already written, participants in this focus group were not affiliated with any one civil society NGO. That being said, each participant has, at one time, been part of one organization or another in the Wentworth community. Participant three provided the most in-depth description of an experience within such an organization. He felt as though organizations provide citizens with an effective way to make change in small communities like Wentworth. He detailed an event that an organization he was part of planned in the community, highlighting that too much talking and planning amongst such groups is a bad thing:

Participant 3: With this organization, it gives you a sense of hope to say, like, 'you can make a difference.' Because, okay, looking at other organizations, those that are established for years, those are supposed to make a difference. What they do is sit down, plan, have meetings. They'd rather talk than do. Like, we had an event on the grounds for, was it youth day, yeah we had an event on [the grounds]. Now, this event was hosted by the…sports and rec unit and there was a couple other NGOs that were also part of that. This event, uh, was about having a few sports, or a couple sports, brought here that we play on the day. There was basketball, netball, soccer, uh, volleyball also taking place. Yeah, now with that event I think they had about three weeks or to a month to plan it or more. But on that day, only one team showed up for basketball, the basketball court wasn't cleaned – there was glass all over. A few of the kids…some of them they played basketball, they fell, they got cut…

He believes that sometimes one must take action instead of spending a long time planning and talking about something. This could be used as a metaphor for South African government as a whole – something I think he was hinting at. Sometimes government takes a long time to reach a solution for a problem by talking and debating only to see their solution be unsuccessful. If government did something and did not spend so much time planning, their solutions might be better. He reaffirmed this by adding:

Participant 3: We are trying to make a difference. Whether it is making a difference or not you can only find out by the way you the community…so…I hope we do [make a difference], but like I said…what's the Biblical scripture?...'You can tell a tree by the fruit it bears.'

To conclude, participant one believed that work with NGOs is an effective means by which to create change and engage with civil society issues. That being said, it is important for such organizations to be doers instead of planners. Planning is important, but not nearly as important as doing.

Fees Must Fall

Towards the end of the focus group, conversation turned to the Fees Must Fall campaign. Participant one's reaction to the campaign was the most notable. Her initial reaction to the topic was that the campaign was not a good movement – stating that

protesters were not taking into account possible negative outcomes of the protests and

decried their, at times, violent tactics:

> **Participant 1:** It all dates back to when, a lot of people were saying, Nelson Mandela said that education should be free. So you're taking them to, an extreme that it shouldn't have to be because…fair, I understand that okay, some people are taking loans to study and things like that. But how are the teachers supposed to get paid? How are they also supposed to improve their lives? I mean at some point you yourself are going to get into the workplace and then where are you going to find yourself after that? What if you yourself also want to be a part of the faculty and then you realize no, man, this is not a livable wage that I can, you know, raise a family on. So, I can understand protesting. Alright, fair enough. But when they start getting violent, that's when it becomes unnecessary. And then you've lost the cause that you were fighting for, which is what always tends to happen. Always.

I questioned whether she thought change would have come about if the campaign had

simply been a peaceful demonstration:

> **Interviewer:** Well, what would you say to the argument, now I'm not saying I agree to this, but what would you say to someone who says that the government wouldn't have listened to us if we hadn't tried to storm parliament, if we hadn't gotten violent? What would you say to that?
> **Participant 1:** Yeah, you see…basically they've got a point. Cuz then I would be stumped. I've got no answer for that, cuz I'd have to agree that sometimes you have to take it to the extreme because that's what happened with Nelson Mandela. The silent protests and things weren't working so he had to, he had to escalate it a bit. And, uh, sometimes you have to.

Participant one seems to contradict herself here. She is against violent protests, but

acknowledges that Nelson Mandela and the liberation struggle's success was due to its

combative nature, and that the Fees Must Fall protesters likely would not have achieved

success if they had not been as disruptive. That being said, she concluded that South

Africans engage in violent protests too frequently:

> **Participant 1:** I mean, if we take the same extreme with everything, look at the drought that we're facing now: the price of meat has to increase. The price of living increases almost…every day. So now, are you going to strike over something like that now? Are gonna, are we going to be having permanent strikes?

Her points here are valid and are in sharp contrast with those of other participants in all of

the other focus groups. She sees disruptive protests, despite their efficiency in bringing

about change and responsiveness, as the wrong tool to use in South African democracy.

Democracy Development Programme Focus Group[4]

<u>Democracy – what has been learned?</u>

As was the case for the others, I began the conversation with participants in the DDP

focus group with questions about what they have learned about democracy in South Africa

and what the word democracy means to them. Participant two described democracy as

being a system in which all people are free and equal, but says that South Africa's

democracy does not live up to that standard when it comes to equality:

> **Participant 2:** What I know about democracy is that, democracy it means that we're
> all free, uh, of the…apartheid that…took place before. And that we are all equals
> which is not happening – we're not equals. And I feel like, as much as we are free,
> but we're not. You know, we're not. We're still oppressed within ourselves.

This is a point made by other focus groups as well – South African democracy remains

unequal and that not everyone has the same opportunities. She elaborated further by

saying that a democracy should also incorporate education and expression:

> **Participant 2:** Democracy means free education for all. It means equal rights for
> all…freedom of expression without being judged.

The term 'free education' certainly harkens to the Fees Must Fall campaign.

Unfortunately, neither participant spoke in much detail whether they felt as though

their civic education was adequate; however, the issue did emerge in a discussion on

participant two's definition of democracy:

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[4] Democracy Development Programme Focus Group. Focus Group Audio Recording. 17 November 2014. All
quotes and participant ideas in the section labeled 'Democracy Development Programme Focus Group' are
derived from this source.

Interviewer: Do you think that South African democracy lives up to your, to your definition?

Participant 2: No.

Participant 1: Not yet.

Participant 2: I think we are taught something else at school and when you see what's really happening in the world that's different from what we're taught in school.

Interviewer: Yeah. Something that, um, the research that I've done on this topic, um, one of the suggestions by, um, one of the researchers was that students need to be subjected to not just learning about [democracy] in a book, but actually having the space to act. You know, be it participating in protests, or…writing a letter to your member of parliament…but having a chance to actually engage with the system while you're learning. So, experiential learning…does anything like that exist in the schools that you went to?

Participant 1: No.

Like participants in other focus groups, both in this focus group agree that democracy as taught in the classroom is – at least in South Africa – ineffective. Participant two feels as though democratic principles taught in school are far different than what learners find once they graduate and enter adulthood. Participant one states clearly that, at least at her school, there are no spaces in which students can actively engage with such democratic principles. In other words, experiential citizenship learning was not available to her.

Is South African Democracy Working?

Our discussion turned from education and democracy to questioning whether either participant thought South Africa's democracy is working. Neither participant thought that the system is working at all – in agreement with other focus groups. Participant one pointed that the education system is a clear indicator of democratic dysfunction:

Participant 1: It's not working…while our education is still…not [on] the same level.

Inequality, be it in socioeconomic background or schooling, was a common reason why the youth did not believe democracy is working as it should. Participant two echoed sentiments that were expressed in other focus groups:

Participant 2: I also feel like it's not working. Cuz, there's so much corruption. It's like the leaders who are supposed to deliver, uh, freedom to people, they are doing it for themselves. No one is thinking about the people that voted. It's all about themselves and when you listen to news, it's...like they're all benefiting and the people are not benefiting. So it's not. And...there are many other issues...I was listening to radio the other day. They were discussing, um, the racism and...one thing that I got was that as much as we say we're free, but if you look at our government and [democracy] and, um, the people in parliament – our leaders – they are all black. Why is that? You know, why is that? Because if we are really free, then I believe we should work together, you know, we should work together as a country because it's not like this country, there are black people only. There are other people.

Her statement is loaded with reasons why she thinks South African democracy is in shambles. Corruption is a big reason, as is government not being able to fulfill promises it makes to citizens. She cites politicians benefiting from their power as a reason for dysfunction – something that was mentioned by others as well. This was interesting; given that participant two was a black South African, she feels as though the government's focus on black-oriented initiatives is a problem for the country's democracy. She would rather see government work towards solutions for all of the country's citizens instead of just those belonging to one race.

The topic of focus proceeded to the issue ANC dominance. Participant two felt very negatively towards the party in power:

Participant 2: I don't like [ANC dominance]. To be honest, I don't like it. As much as, you know, people that are older than us, they're happy that ANC is in charge because they believe that...in the days of apartheid...the way they handle the things it's not...okay.
Interviewer: How are they handling things, in your opinion? I mean, um...
Participant 2: There's so much fraud...and to think that in the past...year there were a lot of people that were found to be...hold upper positions [in government] and they're not qualified for it. And I'm sure the ANC had a hand in that because they run the country.

Participant two makes an interesting point here by directly stating that her generation has different views on the ANC than do previous generations. This suggests that she believes

that the ANC of yesteryear – the party of liberation – is largely outdated and has lost its

way, citing its fraud and problems that the party has had with appointing ministers widely

believed to be unqualified for their positions. Her comments show that disenchantment

with the ANC is likely a result of South African youth growing up in a post-

apartheid/liberation nation.

Both participants were equally as cynical on the existing slate of opposition parties

that exist. Participant one suggested that all of the parties are the same, and if any of the

alternative parties took power little change would occur:

> **Participant 1:** They all fight for the, for the same thing. Once they…they're in charge, they will do the same. Even…if it's DA is in charge or it's EFF, they will do the same thing…every party want[s] to benefit, they want to…take charge for…its own benefit. You know, they don't…want to make [benefits]…for the country.

This opinion is one that was stated in other focus groups as well. Political parties are seen

by participant one as self-centered and lack ambition to create change that will benefit the

greater population.

I then asked both participants what characteristics they would like to see in a

political party that could serve as a legitimate opposition to the ANC. Interestingly, neither

participant believed that any political party, or even politics in general would improve the

country or create positive change for South Africa. Participant one's comments reflect this:

> **Participant 1:** I suggest that if we could have more…dialogues like DDP that will…bring awareness into our communities, you know, cuz if…you think, eh Parliament and ANC and all these politics things…will change our…wealth, our country: it will never happen. So, I guess…the things that might help are…the organizations and youth development…yeah, I don't think politics might help at this stage and at this moment.

This was the only time in any focus group that this question was answered in this way.

Other focus groups at least provided things they would like to see a political party focus on

or characteristics one should exhibit. Rather, both participants in this group felt as though NGOs and youth development organizations – such as the one they belong to, DDP, are the best chance that South Africa has at making progress on issues of community development and creating solutions for the various problems that exist within the country's political and economic systems.

<u>Participation</u>

Participants in the DDP focus group were next asked questions regarding their participation in South Africa's democracy. The first method discussed was voting. Participant one said that she has not yet had the chance to vote in a national election, but participant two, who has voted in a national election, stated that she is not likely to vote again:

> **Participant 2:** Back then I was so excited to vote because I wanted to make a change…but now, I don't see change happening. I just tell myself that I'm never gonna again, I'll never.
> **Participant 1:** But you know what they say? Whether you vote or not – ANC always [will] be in charge.

It is important to note that participant two was initially excited to take part in the electoral process. In the classroom, voting is taught as a means to cause change. As participant two said in an earlier quote, the reality of participation and democracy is different than what learners are taught in school. Her belief that voting can cause change was altered once she actually participated. Participant one's comment is in agreement with what other participants in other focus groups – such as participant three in the Umkhumbane focus group – said about voting in that, no matter who you vote for, the ANC will always win.

Participant two said that her view on the unimportance of voting would likely become more widespread:

> **Participant 2:** And I also believe that sooner or later, people will stop voting because the leaders…they make these promises before the voting takes place. Then, when they've won no one is looking down to say 'oh you guys that voted for me, so I'm gonna deliver on those promises that I made.' No one does that. I believe that sooner or later people will stop voting.

Again, the lack of the government and ANC's deliverance on promises they make to the public is causing youth, in this study at least, to feel as though voting is an ineffective way to participate with their democracy.

When asked about other political parties, participants agreed that all political parties are corrupt and lack ambition to make lasting change. Participant one shared that promises have been made by the ANC in her community to build RDP houses during election years:

> **Participant 1:** You know what they do? [Policial parties] say I'm gonna…we're gonna build…RDP houses for you. And then they start building before…the voting time comes. And once…people's done voting, they will never come back. They will never come back and finish that work that they started.

This story is similar to those shared by participant two in the Wentworth focus group and participants in the Umkhumbane focus group as well. Political parties' lack of action is a turn-off from the political process for youth who see such inaction in play in their communities.

Protesting was the next method discussed. In agreement with participants in the Umkhumbane and DYC focus groups, both participants felt as though protesting in an effective means by which to cause change and action. However, both participants have found – as did participants in the Wentworth focus group - that protests localized to their township community were often unsuccessful and did little to nothing to produce a response from government:

Participant 2: [People who protest] are heard...like in our community they do protest for...a day. And then it's done...it just ends there.

That being said, participant two has participated in student marches at an eThekwini university. These protests are far different from the ones that did nothing in her home community. She recounted her feelings about protesting in a positive light:

Participant 2: I did march at school, yeah, last year. I did that a lot. I would go to school only to march, I...knew that I didn't have money for transport but I would...make up excuses because I wanted to be part of the march. Yeah, it just means so much. You know...I fell in the group of students who didn't have money...to register. So the fee increment was really affecting us.
Interviewer: Yeah, and you felt as though your voice was heard when you marched? It did something?
Participant 2: It did something.

It should be noted that this participant was forced to drop out of university because she had insufficient funds to continue her education. Yet, even though she had very little money, she always tried to get to the university to march with her peers. Protesting made her feel as though she belonged to something bigger, that her voice was making a difference.

Civil Society NGOs and Democracy

Both participants in this focus group have participated in events coordinated by the Democracy Development Programme, including community forums where people can engage in debate with each other on important issues. I asked both participants if they felt as though their involvement with the organization has made them more inclined to feel closer to their democracy and more likely to participate. Both agreed that their time with DDP has been very influential. Participant two believes that after attending DDP hosted dialogues, her entire perspective has changed:

Participant 2: Before, I didn't really care much about what's happening. I would watch news but, you know, just watch it for no reason, not because I was interested

in it. But…to go there and to see it, and to hear the people's opinion and to have a voice…to voice out what you think about…that issue. Yeah, I really, I feel like it's really good and it's empowering cuz you can see the people that are like-minded and you can discuss the issues…

Her involvement with DDP has opened her eyes to how empowering it is to discuss important issues and problems facing South Africa. It has definitely helped her find her voice and to care more about democratic principles. Other participants in other focus groups shared similar views as well – meaning that involvement with a civil society NGO has given them a new perspective on what it means to engage with democracy.

Participant one believes that DDP is doing more to help her entire community. By participating in DDP's programming, she believes that better-informed people are likely to cause change and become leaders:

Participant 1: You see a lot of change in our community. They're developing a lot of young people to develop others…the young people have more power, even develop others, you know, so yeah, I think…[DDP] are doing more change than…government.

Even more than creating leaders, DDP's development programs are influencing people to become more involved in their communities and participate than government is. It is clear from the participants' words that DDP is effectively creating and opening new channels for youth to experience and experiment with democracy. Furthermore, these experiences go beyond participating directly with DDP. Participant two shared that she takes the topics and information she learns in DDP programming back to her community to share:

Participant 2: When I go back to my community I do share whatever topic we were talking about. I do, we all discuss it…yeah, some of [the community members] might not be interested, but I do it anyway because…I want everyone's voice…what their thoughts [are] about it…[on] whatever topic that we were discussing…because I believe that's exactly what we should be doing…we go to DDP and use that knowledge that you got there, you know, transfer it to other people.

According to participant two, elements of DDP's programming are transferable to her

community in general. Therefore, the topics and issues discussed in dialogues she

participates in are pertinent to her community as well. Talking and debating, based on their

experiences with DDP are incredibly important aspects of the democratic process.

DDP has also opened up both participants to a whole new world of contacts and

networking. For youth who live in impoverished conditions back home, being able to

discuss issues with some of South Africa's top political thinkers and doers is an incredible

chance to become connected:

> **Participant 1:** When you go to DDP, you always find, we…always seeing new
> speakers, you know, that we can network with, eh, talk about all the things that we
> face…

DDP's programming is unlike that of other NGOs who I talked to for this study in that they

directly link youth to community leaders and some of South Africa's best political minds.

Fees Must Fall

Both participants strongly believed that the Fees Must Fall campaign was important

and a positive catalyst for change. As mentioned earlier, participant two has taken part in

such protests in the past. That being said, both participants were weary to say that the

campaign was completely successful. The fact that tuition simply remained the same and

did not decrease was troubling to them. Still, participant two was optimistic that future

marches may be even more successful:

> **Participant 2:** I really did love it. Even though, um, I just thought that fees didn't
> fall, it's just that they didn't increase. You know, they still the same level it's just that
> they didn't increase. Who knows, maybe next year…but I think that this was a very
> powerful march. It helped a lot because, you know, these issues…the financial issues
> have been affecting students for a long time, you know, and we've been
> protesting…for fees must fall. But this was huge, you know, people were united and
> our voice was heard. Yeah…
> **Interviewer:** So democracy worked this time?

Participant 2: Yeah. It did.

Her comments show that she believes that protests like Fees Must Fall are usually quite effective, but – like participants in the Umkhumbane and DYC groups - that the struggle must continue and more change must be fought for. Despite democracy's pitfalls in South Africa, however, she believes that, at times, it still works how it should.

Conclusions

Simply said, my research has confirmed my hypothesis to be true. Youth, or at least the youth I studied in the eThekwini municipality are engaged with their democracy in many different ways – including non-duty bound methods such as protesting and community involvement - and hold quite strong opinions on the state of South African democracy, ANC dominance, political alternatives and the Fees Must Fall campaign of 2015. Furthermore, Born-frees in my study, despite knowing quite a lot about democracy and governance, feel that the state of South Africa's civic education system is detrimental to creating informed and empowered citizens.

After a careful examination of the literature that exists in relation to citizenship education and youth participatory democracy, I found that researchers generally agree that it is incredibly important for young people to learn about civics and democracy starting at an early age. This learning experience must incorporate traditional, in-the-classroom lessons on democratic principles and forms of participation as well as experiential platforms that give learners opportunities to directly engage with democratic processes and political issues. Existing literature suggests that South Africa's system of citizenship education lacks in both areas of focus. Teachers are neither trained nor qualified to instruct learners on participatory methods and democratic principles in a way that will create long-lasting interest in the South African political system and increase the odds of learners growing up to be informed and engaged citizens. This was reflected by the responses of participants in each focus group.

The literature also shows that, despite claims of the opposite, young South Africans are as engaged and/or interested with democracy in their country as are people of older

generations. This takes into account the belief that participation transcends duty-bound forms like voting and participating in political campaigns. Youth are heavily involved in protesting – both peaceful and disruptive – as well as social media, community action and development programs. They are also actively engaged with duty-bound methods of participation like voting, according to quantitative data.

My own research backs up the literature's conclusions. There was disagreement among participants in my focus groups on whether voting is an effective means by which to bring about change. That being said, about half of participants say that they vote often and/or think that voting is an important component of South African democracy. The fact that many youth in my study felt attached to voting and its importance is key given the fact that most claims of youth political apathy focus on young peoples' voting habits. Despite the fact that even those who have voted see it as a waste of time or ineffective method of participation, many still vote anyway.

There was general agreement amongst participants that protesting is an effective method of participation that both grabs the attention of government and provides an impetus for change. There were some participants who felt as though violent protests are not constructive, but there was unanimous agreement that peaceful demonstrations are positive ways to make one's voice heard and/or create change. This busts the myth that South African youth are violent-minded radicals. Violent exchanges have occurred between youth and police at protests, but most participants in my study agree that those sorts of interactions are harmful to democracy. Many of the youth have either participated in protests – including the Fees Must Fall protest of 2015 – or are supportive of protesting in eThekwini and South Africa in general. It is seen as a method that produces results.

There was also general agreement that the internet is a useful tool for spreading political opinions and/or waging campaigns regarding specific issues of importance in South Africa. Participants frequently cited social media, like Facebook and Twitter, as a cheap and quick method of participation. Many participants in different focus groups also mentioned participation through community service and involvement with NGOs as viable ways to engage with civil society and democracy.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from my research is that youth who belong to civil society nongovernmental organizations feel as though their involvement is positive in the sense that it makes them feel more engaged with their democracy and allows them a space to make effective change in their communities. A greater ability to debate issues, an increased willingness to get involved, and a better familiarity with the political process were all attributed to involvement with civil society NGOs. Community awareness programs, projects to help those in need, and open dialogues to discuss issues of importance are all aspects of NGO involvement that youth in my study believe are important to their personal development and to eThekwini as a whole. More research must be done on connections between youth and civil society NGOs before any conclusion is reached on whether NGO involvement is the 'key' to creating informed, young citizens; however, it is clear that giving youth a platform to engage and experiment with democracy is an incredibly important process on the road to making democracy a way of life.

Participants agreed that South Africa's democracy is dysfunctional to at least some extent. Some believed that it is not working at all, while others are optimistic that change is possible and the system can become less corrupt and confusing. When asked what the word democracy means to them, participant responded with phrases such as 'equality for

all,' 'freedom,' 'access to information,' and 'freedom of expression,' just to name a few. They generally felt that South Africa's democracy fails to live up to their definition of what democracy means and what it should look like.

Through my questioning, I am able to drawl other conclusions on the political choices of youth in eThekwini. In general, they are disenchanted and quite critical of the ANC and its dominance in South African government. So, too, are they disappointed with existing political alternatives such as the DA, IFP, and the EFF. There was agreement amongst many participants that political parties are inherently corrupt and unlikely to provide positive change. A major theme found in every focus group was the belief that political parties often make attractive promises to voters to get elected. Once they are elected and take power, however, they fail to follow through on their promises. That was seen as big problem in South Africa, and I consider this to be one of the leading reasons why youth feel detached from political parties and the political process. When asked what characteristics they would like to see a legitimate political party feature, many participants agreed that increased accountability, respect and genuine interest in the opinions of the populous, increased access to education for all South Africans and more transparency in the governing process would be considered favorable and are not currently instilled in existing political parties.

These issues have created problems to both internal and external political efficacy for South African youth. ANC dominance, a lack of a legitimate opposition party, and governmental mismanagement has led youth to believe that when they vote their voice does not make a difference. Although statistical evidence states the contrary, even if South African youth were less likely than older generations to vote it is no wonder given their

thoughts on the electoral process. External efficacy, or lack thereof, in at play as well. Youth

feel as though their government is not responsive to their voices and concerns. This has led

many youth, including some from within my study, to disengage entirely from duty-bound

methods of participation and rely solely on community development and civil society

NGOs. Both of these problems, which pose a real risk to South African democracy, are in

desperate need of attention.

Despite a few who believed that protesting should not be considered a viable form

of participation in South Africa, there was widespread agreement that the recent Fees Must

Fall campaign was a force of positive good in universities across the nation. Many

participants were active in this campaign in eThekwini, or have been active in similar

campaigns in recent years. There was also, however, general agreement that the campaign

should not end in 2015, but should simply be one step in a greater cause to mobilize the

nation's youth to continue to call on government to make change at the local and national

levels. Participants agreed that this goal is a long way off, and that a long, hard fight is on

the horizon in South Africa.

Youth in South Africa are not apathetic or lazy when it comes to democracy and the

political process. I found, in both the literature and focus group discussions, that they are a

very active and engaged generation that has the potential to bring about drastic changes to

South Africa's political systems. Their dedication to change and economic, political and

social development within their communities and country is quite apparent and is capable

of producing response and action from government. The future of South African democracy

is still uncertain; however, if the youth I talked to and studied are willing and able to be the

doers they so long for in their political system and institutions, a political revolution of

sorts may be just around the bend that will dramatically alter the landscape of South

African politics and government. In the meantime, a quality and equal, multi-layered

citizenship education curriculum is direly needed in South Africa's schools to teach youth

methods of participatory democracy and how to engage with government to create change.

Recommendations for Further Research

Reflecting upon the process of conducting this study, I have a few recommendations for those who wish to research youth participatory democracy in eThekwini in the future. Regardless of the time of year, I highly encourage researchers to begin planning and coordinating focus groups with youth organizations as soon as possible. It is, at times, a long process to plan these events, and organizations need time to get a group of young people together, especially during busy times of the year like end-of-term exam periods. Although my co-advisor Quinton Kippen was very helpful in getting focus groups scheduled, I would suggest that future researchers schedule focus groups themselves. This helps in personal development in that contacting organizations on your own and explaining what it is that you are trying to do helps one better understand what it is that you are studying and builds social skills that researchers desperately need to conduct quality field studies such as this.

I would also encourage future studies to seek more diversity in focus groups. Although I feel as though my study contained quite a lot of diversity – in race, education, socioeconomic status and sex – there is always room for improvement. None of my participants, for example, were of Indian decent. This would have been an important perspective to have in the study. Focus groups should also have at least four to five participants to ensure that your study has a truly diverse and rich base of opinions and perspectives.

Any future study must also look at examples of instruction books and exercises that public and private schools are using to educate learners. I was unable to do this in my research, but I think that such an examination would only help strengthen the argument

that South Africa's citizenship education curriculum is inadequate and is in desperate need of revision.

I highly suggest that future researchers being transcribing focus groups immediately. This is a long, slow process that takes much longer than one might think. It is not something you want to leave until the end, and it is so important to have transcripts in order to expedite the writing process, for this topic in particular. Including them makes it easier for the researcher to see what participants said in the context of the focus group and provides an accurate depiction of how focus groups unfolded. It also insures that the researcher will not have to listen to focus group audio three to four times.

Lastly, I think that this topic requires at least some amount of quantitative research to be included in either the literature review or even in the data analysis section. My study contains very little quantitative information. This will only help the argument that youth are active citizens within their democracy – further derailing the myths that exist about youth apathy and ignorance.

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Focus Groups:

Democracy Development Programme Focus Group. Focus Group Audio Recording. 17 November 2015

Durban Youth Council Focus Group. Focus Group Audio Recording. 14 November 2015.

Umkhumbane Schools Project Focus Group. Focus Group Audio Recording. 4 November 2015.

Wentworth Community Focus Group. Focus Group Audio Recording. 16 November 2015.

Appendix A

SIT: Social and Political Transformation Fall 2015
Anthony L. Wagner V, Gettysburg College
wagnan02@gettysburg.edu / (76) 689-3266

World Learning
SIT Study Abroad

My name is Anthony Wagner. I am a student in the School for International Training Program in Social and Political Transformation in Durban. I am conducting a short field study. The data that I collect today will be used to write my final project paper for this program. My research and paper seek to help understand born-free participation in South Africa's democracy by examining how born-frees participate, their views towards their government, and how they use community centers and civil service organizations to make change.

Researcher agreement:
1. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw your consent at any time during and after the interview.
2. All the information you give me will be treated confidentially.
3. I will not disclose your name, unless you give your express permission for me to do so.
4. During today's research and when reporting on the findings I will use other names in place of your name (e.g. coded/disguised names).
5. The information will be stored in a safe manner at all times in a place to which I alone have access. I may use this data in further research.
6. The conversation we have in this focus group will be electronically recorded to ensure accuracy in my final project paper.

Participant Agreement:
The above information has been explained to me and I understand it. My name will not be disclosed. I allow my information to be used in a confidential manner that will not harm me, my professional or private life in any way. My individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from this study. I understand that you will record the interview as data for the study. I understand that the recordings will not have my name on them and no one will be able to use them for commercial purposes or any form of publication without my express written permission. I understand that if I have any questions or complaints about this study or the researcher that I can anonymously contact Imraan Buccus of the School for International Training – at (031) 207 5513, or 082 644 6088

I acknowledge reading and understanding this consent form, and furthermore, I agree to participate in this study.

Signature (Participant) _____ Date: _____

Signature (Researcher) _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

World Learning
SIT Study Abroad

My name is Anthony Wagner. I am a student in the School for International Training Program in Social and Political Transformation in Durban. I am conducting a short field study. The data that I collect today will be used to write my final project paper for this program. My research and paper seek to help understand born-free participation in South Africa's democracy by examining how born-frees participate, their views towards their government, and how they use community centers and civil service organizations to make change.

Researcher agreement:
1. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw your consent at any time during and after the interview.
2. All the information you give me will be treated confidentially.
3. I will not disclose your name, unless you give your express permission for me to do so.
4. During today's research and when reporting on the findings I will use other names in place of your name (e.g. coded/disguised names).
5. The information will be stored in a safe manner at all times in a place to which I alone have access. I may use this data in further research.
6. The conversation we have in this focus group will be electronically recorded to ensure accuracy in my final project paper.

Participant Agreement:
The above information has been explained to me and I understand it. My name will not be disclosed. I allow my information to be used in a confidential manner that will not harm me, my professional or private life in any way. My individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from this study. I understand that you will record the interview as data for the study. I understand that the recordings will not have my name on them and no one will be able to use them for commercial purposes or any form of publication without my express written permission. I understand that if I have any questions or complaints about this study or the researcher that I can anonymously contact Imraan Buccus of the School for International Training – at (031) 207 5513, or 082 644 6088

I acknowledge reading and understanding this consent form, and furthermore, I agree to participate in this study.

Signature (Participant) _____ Date: _____

Signature (Researcher) _____ Date: _____

If participant is under the age of 18, the legal parent/guardian must sign to acknowledge that they give permission to their child to participate in this research study.

Signature (Parent/Guardian) _____ Date: _____

Appendix C

Questions for Focus Groups

1) What have you learned about democracy in South Africa?
   a) What does the word democracy mean to you?
   b) Do you feel you have been sufficiently educated about democracy and government? (at school and at home)

2) Do you feel like South Africa's democracy is working? If so/if not – why/why not?
   a) How do you feel about the African National Congress's dominance in governing the country?
   b) How do you feel about other political parties, such as the Democratic Alliance and the EFF?
   c) Do you think that there needs to be a legitimate political alternative to the ANC? What should that alternative look like/what sorts of issues would you like an alternative party focus on?

3) How do you participate in South Africa's democracy?
   a) Do you vote?
      i) Do you think it is important to vote?
   b) Do you engage in protests?
   c) Have you found other ways to participate?

4) When/if you vote or protest do you feel like your voice is heard by the government?
   a) How do you think the government should change to become more effective?
   b) Does this organization (the youth center/NGO) help you make your voice heard/participate?
   c) Are there other organizations/NGOs that you feel are better at helping you than the government?
   d) Of the people you know/are friends with who are not involved with organizations/NGOs like you are, do you think they are as engaged with democracy as you are?

5) In the last month thousands of students on university campuses protested against a hike in the cost of tuition. They were successful and the cost of tuition will not rise for the next school year.
   a) How do you feel about this protest in particular?
   b) What do you feel about these sorts of protests as means to create change in society?

6) What issues are important to you/what are your political needs?

Appendix D

The Umkhumbane Schools Project
4/11/2015   12:30pm
University of Kwa-Zulu Natal - Westville Campus

Anthony L. Wagner V
October 27, 2015
SIT: Social and Political Transformation

Questions for Focus Groups

1) What have you learned about democracy in South Africa?
   a) What does the word democracy mean to you?
   b) Do you feel you have been sufficiently educated about democracy and government? (at school and at home)

2) Do you feel like South Africa's democracy is working? If so/if not – why/why not?
   a) How do you feel about the African National Congress's dominance in governing the country?
   b) How do you feel about other political parties, such as the Democratic Alliance and the EFF?
   c) Do you think that there needs to be a legitimate political alternative to the ANC? What should that alternative look like/what sorts of issues would you like an alternative party focus on?

3) How do you participate in South Africa's democracy?
   a) Do you vote?
      i) Do you think it is important to vote?   - Why?
   b) Do you engage in protests? ya hae famd
   c) Have you found other ways to participate?
      What erc

4) When/if you vote or protest do you feel like your voice is heard by the government?
   a) How do you think the government should change to become more effective?
   b) Does this organization (the youth center/NGO) help you make your voice heard/participate?
   c) Are there other organizations/NGOs that you feel are better at helping you than the government?
   d) Of the people you know/are friends with who are not involved with organizations/NGOs like you are, do you think they are as engaged with democracy as you are?

5) In the last month thousands of students on university campuses protested against a hike in the cost of tuition. They were successful and the cost of tuition will not rise for the next school year.
   a) How do you feel about this protest in particular?
   b) What do you feel about these sorts of protests as means to create change in society?

6) What issues are important to you/what are your political needs?

Appendix E

Durban Youth Council
14/a/2015 2:00pm
BAT Center

Anthony L. Wagner V
October 27, 2015
SIT: Social and Political Transformation

Questions for Focus Groups

1) What have you learned about democracy in South Africa?
   a) What does the word democracy mean to you?
   b) Do you feel you have been sufficiently educated about democracy and government? (at school and at home)

2) Do you feel like South Africa's democracy is working? If so/if not – why/why not?
   a) How do you feel about the African National Congress's dominance in governing the country?
   b) How do you feel about other political parties, such as the Democratic Alliance and the EFF?
   c) Do you think that there needs to be a legitimate political alternative to the ANC? What should that alternative look like/what sorts of issues would you like an alternative party focus on?

3) How do you participate in South Africa's democracy?
   a) Do you vote?
      i) Do you think it is important to vote?
   b) Do you engage in protests?
   c) Have you found other ways to participate?

4) When/if you vote or protest do you feel like your voice is heard by the government?
   a) How do you think the government should change to become more effective?
   b) Does this organization (the youth center/NGO) help you make your voice heard/participate?
   c) Are there other organizations/NGOs that you feel are better at helping you than the government?
   d) Of the people you know/are friends with who are not involved with organizations/NGOs like you are, do you think they are as engaged with democracy as you are?

5) In the last month thousands of students on university campuses protested against a hike in the cost of tuition. They were successful and the cost of tuition will not rise for the next school year.
   a) How do you feel about this protest in particular?
   b) What do you feel about these sorts of protests as means to create change in society?

6) What issues are important to you/what are your political needs?

Appendix F

Wentworth Focus Group
16/11/2015 11:30am   - The Blue Roof Wellness Centre

Anthony L. Wagner V
October 27, 2015
SIT: Social and Political Transformation

Questions for Focus Groups

1) What have you learned about democracy in South Africa?
   a) What does the word democracy mean to you?
   b) Do you feel you have been sufficiently educated about democracy and government? (at school and at home)

2) Do you feel like South Africa's democracy is working? If so/if not – why/why not?
   a) How do you feel about the African National Congress's dominance in governing the country?
   b) How do you feel about other political parties, such as the Democratic Alliance and the EFF?
   c) Do you think that there needs to be a legitimate political alternative to the ANC? What should that alternative look like/what sorts of issues would you like an alternative party focus on?

3) How do you participate in South Africa's democracy?
   a) Do you vote?
      i) Do you think it is important to vote? ~ Why?
   b) Do you engage in protests? ya how far
   c) Have you found other ways to participate? What are   Social media & th internet? Do you think like Trevor Noah is a good source of info. to hear you are people

4) When/if you vote or protest do you feel like your voice is heard by the government?
   a) How do you think the government should change to become more effective?
   b) Does this organization (the youth center/NGO) help you make your voice heard/participate? ask this more specially
   c) Are there other organizations/NGOs that you feel are better at helping you than the government?
   d) Of the people you know/are friends with who are not involved with organizations/NGOs like you are, do you think they are as engaged with democracy as you are?

Do you belong to an NGO/org that you feel helps your vote be heard? help you partic.?

5) In the last month thousands of students on university campuses protested against a hike in the cost of tuition. They were successful and the cost of tuition will not rise for the next school year.
   a) How do you feel about this protest in particular?
   b) What do you feel about these sorts of protests as means to create change in society?

6) What issues are important to you/what are your political needs?

What would you say to someone who says your generation is apathetic to the political process?

Appendix G

D.D.P. Focus Group

10:00am 17/11/2015 J.G. Zuma Library, Chunder

Anthony L. Wagner V
October 27, 2015
SIT: Social and Political Transformation

Questions for Focus Groups

1) What have you learned about democracy in South Africa?
   a) What does the word democracy mean to you?
   b) Do you feel you have been sufficiently educated about democracy and government? (at school and at home)

2) Do you feel like South Africa's democracy is working? If so/if not – why/why not?
   a) How do you feel about the African National Congress's dominance in governing the country?
   b) How do you feel about other political parties, such as the Democratic Alliance and the EFF?
   c) Do you think that there needs to be a legitimate political alternative to the ANC? What should that alternative look like/what sorts of issues would you like an alternative party focus on?

3) How do you participate in South Africa's democracy?
   a) Do you vote?
      i) Do you think it is important to vote?
   b) Do you engage in protests?
   c) Have you found other ways to participate?

4) When/if you vote or protest do you feel like your voice is heard by the government?
   a) How do you think the government should change to become more effective?
   b) Does this organization (the youth center/NGO) help you make your voice heard/participate?
   c) Are there other organizations/NGOs that you feel are better at helping you than the government?
   d) Of the people you know/are friends with who are not involved with organizations/NGOs like you are, do you think they are as engaged with democracy as you are?

5) In the last month thousands of students on university campuses protested against a hike in the cost of tuition. They were successful and the cost of tuition will not rise for the next school year.
   a) How do you feel about this protest in particular?
   b) What do you feel about these sorts of protests as means to create change in society?

6) What issues are important to you/what are your political needs?

Your generation has been called apathetic to politics and democracy. What would you say to that.