Changing lives of ordinary people through human and social sciences
DGSD Elections 2019 Seminar

Young Lions revisited: Youth, democratic evaluations and electoral predispositions

Ben Roberts, Jarè Struwig, Steven Gordon, Yul Derek Davids, Thobeka Radebe, Ngqapheli Mchunu and Samela Mytingizane, DGSD, HSRC

Venues: Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town
Time: 12:30 – 14:00

Date: 28 March 2019
Background

• Election 2019 and commemoration of SA democracy@25
  o Important to reflect on generational change
  o Much global and local discussion of democracy in crisis; democratic recession

• Why youth participation in elections matters
  o Arend Lijphart: In 1997 warned of challenges that unequal participation in voting would pose for democracies
  o Unequal participation could lead to unequal influence

• Two prevailing social representations of youth
  o A) Politically engaged, #FeesMustFall
  o B) Politically disillusioned and disengaged generation; narrative of democratic decline
  o Russell Dalton: 2017 – “The good news is, the bad news is wrong” - Millennials / born frees: potential to expand the democratic process: citizens becoming more politically active.
DGSD and election studies

- DGSD team: more than 15 years of experience with national representative surveys
- South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS)
- IEC commissioned research
  - *Voter Participation Surveys*: official, nationally representative pre-election survey series
  - *Election Satisfaction Surveys*: representative sample of voters conducted on Election Day to provide insight into the electoral experience; used as an input into declaration of elections as free and fair
SASAS Survey design

• Responses to the survey voluntary and confidential, collected by face-to-face interview
• Nationally representative of adult population living in private residence
  • Primary sampling units: 500 census small area layers (SALs)
• All protocols and instrumentation will be submitted for approval by the HRSC REC
• Of 3,500 addresses will be issued – we have an average realisation rate of more than 75%.
• Data weighted to yield a nationally representative sample of adults.
  • Benchmarked to the latest Mid-Year Population estimates produced by Statistics South Africa
Results I

Prevailing political mood

+ Satisfaction with democracy
+ Political trust
+ Confidence in political leaders
Satisfaction with democracy

By age group, 2017 (%)

“How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way democracy is working in South Africa?”
Satisfaction with democracy

By age group, 2003-2017 (%)

18-25 years

26-35 years

36+ years

• General consistency in trends irrespective of age
• Growing concern about the functioning of democracy
• Late 2017: most negative view for all age groups; unless it improves in coming months, the political mood ahead of the national election is the most sombre seen over last 25 years.

Source: HSRC SASAS 2003-2017
Satisfaction with democracy

Right/wrong direction, by age group, 2010-2017

Country going in the right direction (%)

Source: HSRC SASAS 2010-2017
Political trust
% trusting key institutions 2017

Source: HSRC SASAS 2003-2017
Political trust
% trusting key institutions 2003-2017

Source: HSRC SASAS 2003-2017
Political trust

% trusting key institutions 2003-2017

Source: HSRC SASAS 2003-2017
Results II

Psychological involvement in politics

+ Political interest
+ Duty to vote
+ Personal political efficacy
+ External political efficacy (responsiveness & accountability)
Political interest

Assumption of life-cycle model that young are less politically engaged

Commonality in levels of political interest across age groups

Levels of interest quite circumscribed
Duty to vote
A key factor informing citizenship norms in South Africa

• Robust belief that “It is the duty of all citizens to vote”
• Distinguishes RSA from other European and N. American countries
Personal political efficacy

Critical determinant of intention to vote

Vote makes a difference, by age group, 2017

• Fairly critical assessment of the contribution one’s vote makes.
• Patterns again similar across age groups

"Whether I vote or not makes no difference"
External political efficacy

*Critical determinant of intention to vote*

External political efficacy, by age group, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36+</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South Africa</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36+</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Public equally critical of the degree of responsiveness of the elected to the electorate
- Little variance by age

After being elected all parties are the same, so voting is pointless
Voting is meaningless because no politician can be trusted
Results III

Intention to vote

+ Intention to vote
+ Reasons for non-voting
+ Electoral responses to unfulfilled expectations
Intention to vote
(*...if there were an election tomorrow*)

Intention to vote, by age group (2017)

- **Would vote**
  - 18-25: 65
  - 26-35: 64
  - 36+: 75

- **Would abstain**
  - 18-25: 16
  - 26-35: 14
  - 36+: 8

- **Unsure**
  - 18-25: 10
  - 26-35: 8
  - 36+: 5

- **Refused**
  - 18-25: 9
  - 26-35: 14
  - 36+: 12
# Reasons for not intending to vote (2017)

**Predomiance of disinterest, disillusionment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons why would not vote if was an election tomorrow</th>
<th>18-25</th>
<th>26-35</th>
<th>36+</th>
<th>RSA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative barriers</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not registered</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not possess necessary documents to register</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polling station too far away</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disinterest and disillusionment</strong></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not interested</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disillusioned with politics</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much effort required</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only one party could win</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual barriers</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health reasons</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: HSRC SASAS 2017*
**Party identification**

Party attachment, by age group (2017)

To which party do you feel most close?

- ANC remains the party most identified with across age groups
- Higher shares of youth report no party attachment than those older than 35 years; also higher level identifying with no party
Electoral choice

*(If there were an election tomorrow, who would you vote for?)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>18-25</th>
<th>26-35</th>
<th>36+</th>
<th>RSA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFF</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other party</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstain</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Refused)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- ANC again dominates across age groups; support increases with age
- EFF more popular among 18-25 year-olds
- Abstention higher among youth cohorts
Electoral responses to unfulfilled expectations

*Swing Voters, Loyalists and Abstainers (2017)*

If the party you voted for did not meet your expectations, the next time there is an election would you…?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>18-25</th>
<th>26-35</th>
<th>36+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swing voters</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstainers</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalists</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional loyalist</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refused/don't know</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results IV

A unified or divided generation?

+ Internal political efficacy
+ Intention to vote
+ Electoral choice
Internal political efficacy

Within-youth differences (%)

- All: 18-35s
  - Vote makes no difference: 57
  - Neutral: 7
  - Vote makes a difference: 34

- Gender:
  - Male
    - Vote makes no difference: 56
    - Neutral: 6
    - Vote makes a difference: 36
  - Female
    - Vote makes no difference: 58
    - Neutral: 8
    - Vote makes a difference: 32

- Race:
  - Black African
    - Vote makes no difference: 57
    - Neutral: 6
    - Vote makes a difference: 35
  - Coloured
    - Vote makes no difference: 55
    - Neutral: 9
    - Vote makes a difference: 35
  - Indian/Asian
    - Vote makes no difference: 72
    - Neutral: 3
    - Vote makes a difference: 25
  - White
    - Vote makes no difference: 49
    - Neutral: 16
    - Vote makes a difference: 32

- Class:
  - Low LSM
    - Vote makes no difference: 58
    - Neutral: 10
    - Vote makes a difference: 28
  - Medium LSM
    - Vote makes no difference: 57
    - Neutral: 6
    - Vote makes a difference: 36
  - High LSM
    - Vote makes no difference: 49
    - Neutral: 12
    - Vote makes a difference: 36

Legend:
- Vote makes no difference
- Neutral
- Vote makes a difference
- DK
## Intention to vote

### Within-youth differences (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Would vote</th>
<th>Would abstain</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black African</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian/Asian</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low LSM</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium LSM</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High LSM</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend:
- **Would vote**
- **Would abstain**
- **Unsure**
- **Refused**
Electoral choice among youth
(*if there were an election tomorrow, who would you vote for?*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ANC</th>
<th>DA</th>
<th>EFF</th>
<th>Other party</th>
<th>Abstain</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>(Refused)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black African</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian/Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low LSM</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium LSM</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High LSM</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

• Myth of a generation apart?
  • Substantive areas of commonality between youth and older cohorts
    • A growing climate of discontent
    • Significant declines in public confidence in the state
    • Need to understand how such declines influence behaviour
  • But also points of divergence: especially policy choice...
    • Swing voters and political change
    • Much more substantive support for the EFF amongst the youth
    • Youth more likely to switch political party when unhappy

• A politically heterogeneous generation
  • Significant variation among young citizens
  • Need for an intersectional approach
Conclusions (cont.)

- Revisiting the disengaged youth and democratic crisis hypotheses
  - Emergence of critical (young) citizens, who want to hold the elected to account
  - Dalton: potential vs risk
    - Positive signs for democracy: more engaged young citizens
    - Cautionary note: Political inequality (voice) if electoral turnout declines due to administrative factors and growing disillusionment with state of accountability and responsiveness
- Need to strengthen voter efficacy through civic education
  - Low levels of both personal and external voter efficacy bad for democracy accountability
  - Over the long-term voter efficacy will undermine civic duty to vote
  - Civic education can arrest low voter efficacy and ensure commitment to democratic norms amongst youth
  - Electoral reform may also lead to improvements in attitudes towards voting – recent proposals for new representative elections.
thank you

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contact information
For more info, please contact us at
upcoming events

4 April  
Perceptions of corruption and the election  
Yul Derek Davids and colleagues, DGSD HSRC

10 April  
Election Hotspot monitoring  
Lizette Lancaster & Lauren Tracey-Temba, ISS

23 April  
Democracy’s dividend: Trends in political support since the late 1990s  
Jarè Struwig and colleagues, DGSD HSRC