



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG  
SCHOOL OF GLOBAL STUDIES

How does the youth perceive democracy given  
the history of general elections in the post-  
colonial city of Nairobi, Kenya?

Masters Thesis in Global Studies

30 Credits

Spring Semester 2018

Author: Anita Mureithi

Supervisor: Sören Stapel

Word Count: 19800 (minus references and attachments)

## Table of Contents

<b>List of Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 Background .....	7
1.1.1 Kenya and Politics .....	8
1.1.2 Kenya and Ethnicity .....	9
1.1.3 Kenya and Elections .....	9
1.1.4 Kenya and Youth.....	10
1.2 Research Problem and Research Question.....	12
1.3 Delimitations.....	12
1.4 Relevance to Global Studies .....	13
1.5 Thesis Outline.....	14
<b>2. Previous Research.....</b>	<b>15</b>
2.1 Kenyan democracy.....	15
2.2 Youth and democracy .....	17
2.3 Kenyan youth, democracy and general elections .....	18
2.4 Summary .....	19
<b>3. Theoretical Frameworks and Key Concepts .....</b>	<b>21</b>
3.1 Theoretical Reflections: Post-Colonialism and Constructivism...21	
3.2 Problematizing Democracy: Generational learning in Virtual democracies .....	24
3.3 Summary .....	26
<b>4. Research Methods.....</b>	<b>28</b>
4.1 Epistemology .....	28
4.2 Data Collection .....	30
4.2.1 Selection of participants .....	31
4.2.2 Semi-structured interviews.....	32
4.3 Data Analysis .....	34
4.3.1 Transcription.....	34
4.3.2 Coding .....	34
4.3.3 Thematic Analysis.....	35
4.4 Ethics .....	37
4.5 Reflections.....	39

<b>5. Analysis.....</b>	<b>41</b>
5.1 Functioning of Democracy .....	42
5.1.1 General Elections and violence.....	44
5.1.2 Power.....	45
5.1.3 Accountability and Corruption .....	46
5.1.4 Media .....	48
5.2 Participation in Democracy .....	51
5.2.1 Education.....	52
5.2.2 Freedom.....	53
5.2.3 Change.....	56
5.3 Availability of Democracy .....	58
5.3.1 Ethnicity and Tribalism .....	59
5.3.2 Rural- Urban divide .....	60
5.3.3 Inclusivity.....	62
5.4 Summary Discussion .....	63
<b>6. Conclusion and Further Research.....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>7. References .....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>8. Appendices .....</b>	<b>79</b>

## List of Abbreviations

<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>ACE</b>	American Council on Education
<b>ADMI</b>	African Digital Media Institute
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>ICLD</b>	International Center for Local Democracy
<b>IEBC</b>	Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission
<b>KTN</b>	Kenya Television Network
<b>MCA</b>	Member of County Assembly
<b>MENA</b>	Middle East and North Africa Region
<b>NTV</b>	Nation Television
<b>OECD</b>	Observation of Economic Complexity
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>V-Dem</b>	Varieties of Democracy project

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank all those who were an integral part of writing my Masters Thesis. Those who gave up their time to read parts of my thesis or send me literature which helped me think through and make sense of my data.

I would like to thank the Swedish Institute for funding me throughout my Master's Degree in Sweden. Being a Swedish Institute study scholar and a digital ambassador for the Study in Sweden Program have been two of the best years of my life. I look forward to promoting and being a friend of Sweden for life.

Acknowledgment and thanks to the ICLD for funding my fieldwork in Kenya. Thank you for organizing an amazing program for International master's students and allowing us to explore issues surrounding local democracy and governance in various contexts.

I would like to thank ADMI for providing a safe space in which young people can express their views and their opinions without fear.

I would like to thank Akinyi and Nina, two friends who made my fieldwork that much bearable. They enabled me to gain access to respondents whom my research would never have been possible without. Also, my friends and family who provided encouragement and support throughout this entire process.

This thesis would not have been possible without the incredible input of my thesis supervisor Sören Stapel. He has tirelessly guided me through my thesis, fieldwork and been a great sounding board when I needed someone to think through my ideas.

And finally thank you to my interviewees for taking the time to answer all my questions and give me their candid opinions on all things politics and democracy in Kenya. It might not be an easy topic to discuss considering our history, but I believe as seen in this paper and as aptly pointed one of my interviewees 'The youth are the future'. We have a responsibility to ourselves and future generations of Kenyans to not be afraid to challenge what we feel is not right.

Most of all, I'd like to thank God.

### **Abstract**

Kenya has had a tumultuous history with general elections. In a country with 42 ethnic tribes, post-election ethnic based violence has been witnessed in both the 2007 and 2017 general elections. After the first round of general elections in 2017, the Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling for the nullification of the results and fresh Presidential elections were conducted on the 26th of October 2017. This makes Kenya the third country in the world and the first in Africa to nullify a Presidential election (Tubei 2017). With '67% of all voting-age citizens in Kenya being young people below the age of 35 (Kenya National Youth Charter 2012, 12) the youth form an integral part of the voting population. The purpose of this study is to explore the main research question: How does the youth perceive democracy given the history of general elections in post-colonial Nairobi, Kenya? Majority of the academic research surrounding Kenyan elections and democracy is quantitative in nature and is centered on ethnicity and politics. There is a gap in qualitative literature on the relationship between young people and issues surrounding democracy within a post-colonial framework.

This research adopts the theoretical lenses of post-colonialism and constructivism. The use of qualitative semi-structured interviews is done to understand the ways in which young people construct their realities and understandings of democracy and how this affects their participation. This thesis suggests that although the youth remain generally optimistic about democracy, young people believe that democracy is not equally available to all citizens. The negative perceptions of the way in which democracy functions are influenced by concerns such as power grabs, the lack of inclusivity in decision making, the lack of accountability and transparency during general elections and semi-functioning media control.

This research also finds that young people have adopted the use of coded language such as 'we' and 'them' which is reminiscent of colonial language, to negotiate sensitive conversations on democracy and politics, ethnicity, generational gaps and media. Analyzing this through a constructivist lense. This can be used as a tool of empowerment or a method of ethnic polarization.

**Key words:** Post-Colonialism, Globalization, Democracy, Youth, Kenya, Elections

## 1. Introduction

This study deals with four main overarching themes of post-coloniality, democracy, general elections and the youth. It has been suggested that there has been a global decline in democracy. According to V-Dem (varieties of democracy project) ‘the number of democracies worldwide declined slightly from 100 in 2011 to 97 today; 16 countries transitioned to; and in 2013 alone, five countries transitioned to democracy but nine went the other way’ (Mechkova, 2017).

As I young Kenyan I feel that it is important to explore the understanding of democracy and democratic processes such as general elections by the youth in Kenya and how this has been shaped within a post-colonial context. As the youth form a significant percentage of voting age citizens in Kenya, their understanding and feelings towards these processes present an important sphere for analysis. On a larger scale across the Africa continent, the number of youths is growing rapidly. In 2015, 226 million youth aged 15–24 lived in Africa, accounting for 19 per cent of the global youth population (UN, 2015). Currently Africa is the youngest continent in relation to its demography.

Given an increasing young population in both Kenya and across the African continent, this research seeks to understand the construction of democracy and the ways in which its processes are understood and constructed by young people today within a post-colonial context. This thesis seeks to raise important questions surrounding nuances in challenging democracy as a functioning system in Kenya, Africa and across developing countries across the world.

### 1.1 Background

In this section I will explore Kenya’s political history and its relation to elections as a democratic process. I will explain the history of general elections and the way in which ‘devolution’ as a process of the new constitution has shaped economic and social spheres of Kenyans. I will

also explain the significant role that the youth plays in terms of being the largest cohort of voting age citizens in the country.

#### 1.1.1 Kenya and Politics

Kenya is a multiparty democracy that holds regular elections (Freedom House, 2017). Nationwide elections have taken place since 1969 when Kenya changed into a one-party state and the only party winning all the seats was KANU (Africa News, 2018). With the founding President Jomo Kenyatta dying in office in 1978, he was succeeded by Daniel Arap Moi. President Moi restored multiparty politics in 1978. In 2003, Kenya's second president, Daniel Arap Moi ceded succession to Emilio Mwai Kibaki after his second term signifying political democratization in Kenya.

The constitutional referendum ratified on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2010 also 'introduced a bicameral legislative house, devolved county government, a constitutionally tenured Judiciary and electoral body' (World Bank, 2018). It was also deemed that "a general election of members of Parliament shall be held on the second Tuesday in August in every fifth year" (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). During these general elections registered voters from the 47 counties of Kenya also vote for the member of the National Assembly, Governor, Senator and the member of the County Assembly (MCA).

Devolution is defined as 'the transference (as of rights, powers, property, or responsibility) to another; especially: the surrender of power to local authorities by a central government' (Merriam-Webster, 2018). The process of devolution has had far reaching impacts on the political, economic and social spheres of life. Undeniably it has given smaller minority ethnic groups access to natural resources within their home counties. However, it has also allowed for the National governmental budget allocation to be done through the counties rather than the previous system in which the government would allocate funds to various regions managed nationally. A downside of the county system is that it

has also reproduced patterns of exclusion that are present on the national level such as the reproduction of majority ethnic group dominance.

#### 1.1.2 Kenya and Ethnicity

Kenya has 42 ethnic tribes that span across the country, they each hold a unique part of the country's heritage, diversity and culture. Kenya is a multilingual country that has Kiswahili and English as its national languages and 68 other spoken languages (Ethnologue, 2018). The Kikuyu ethnic group represents 22% of the population with the Luhya's representing 14% of the population followed by Luos that represent 13% of the population and Kalenjins who represent 12%. The other 39 ethnic groups make up the rest of the population. Kenya also has a large population of persons with Somali, Sudanese, Indian and Arab origin.

#### 1.1.3 Kenya and Elections

Voting in Kenya is widely perceived to be politically ethicized. For the President to be declared winner, a candidate must win more than 50 percent of the votes and no single tribe has that number on its own (Mohamed, 2017). Therefore, since no one tribe has the majority, political parties form coalitions to gain votes from the other ethnic groups. These coalitions usually form during an election period and tend to break up quickly after the four-year term is up. This type of ethnic mobilization is illustrated throughout Kenya's political history with a Kikuyu and Kalenjin alliance constantly repeated, two Presidents have been from the Kikuyu tribe and one President and Vice President from the Kalenjin tribe. This has resulted in deep ethnic and tribal rifts amongst the other tribes that usually awake during the general election period. It is widely said that Kenyans live in harmony until the election season comes around.

As noted by Edgell et al. (2018, 422) 'democracy cannot exist without disputed elections, the Kenyan election period is occasionally marred with violence due to the contested electoral process'. In late December 2007, Kenyans voted in general elections and the chaos that ensued almost brought 'Kenya close to collapse and the status of a failed state' (Kagwanja

and Southall 2009, 259). After the announcement of the Emilio Mwai Kibaki as the winner, the election results were contested by the opposition. This caused a national outcry with non-violent protests turning into targeted ethnic violence. The post-election violence resulted in more than 1,200 deaths and 300,000 internally displaced persons (OHCHR 2008). In a country with 42 tribes, this violence raised concerns in Kenya and around the world over the democratic processes and their impact on ethnic based violence.

The Kenyan political scene is marred with allegations of corruption. In terms of wages, an audit conducted with the Auditor General in 2018 found that the Parliamentary budget for the house was 2% of the national budget. This is “against a global average of 0.57%” for countries where the population is between 10 and 50 million” (Mwiti, 2017). This results in Government positions being highly sought after meaning that politics becomes a dirty game.

In comparison, the 2013 general elections were perceived to be largely peaceful. More recently, on the 8th of August 2017 general elections were held in Kenya to elect a President and various members of parliament. With the incumbent President Uhuru Kenyatta re-elected, the leader of the opposition, Raila Odinga contested the results in the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court consequently issued a landmark ruling for the nullification of the results and fresh Presidential elections conducted on the 26th of October. This makes Kenya the third country in the world and the first in Africa to nullify a Presidential election (Tubai 2017). The re-elections which were have resulted in unrest and violence across the country and again has raised concerns on the transparency and freedom of the electoral process.

#### 1.1.4 Kenya and Youth

In terms of Kenya’s population, 67% of all the voting-age citizens of Kenya are young people below the age of 35’ (Kenya National Youth Charter 2012, 12). The Kenyan Constitution defines the youth as any

individual between the ages of 18 and 35 (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). In a country where, 80 percent of the population is aged below 35, just 13 percent of those running for various offices are in that age band (Namu, 2017). This shows a mis-match between the number of representatives within government and the largest demographic in Kenya. The youth have always presented a stronghold in terms of demographic significance and historically they have played a significant part in the building of the nation. Various authors have noted the use of the youth as a tool by the political elite to carry out various objectives including and not limited to vote buying and inciting violence. As the largest percentage of the voting population it is thus important to analyze their negotiation of topics surrounding politics and democratization. With 'young people's inclusion and addressing disenfranchisement is therefore not only a socioeconomic imperative but also key to preserving stability and building peace' (Electoral Knowledge Network. 2018).

A large majority of literature focusing on democracy in Kenya is based on elections and ethnicity. Although there is qualitative literature available, it does not touch on how young Kenyans construct their understanding of democracy and how they navigate its processes such as general elections. It is hoped that this study seeks to analyze the youth understanding of democracy and democratic processes to understand how this affects their understanding of democracy, their participation in democracy and their perceptions of its availability.

## 1.2 Research Problem and Research Question

### ***Research problem***

The overall purpose of this research is to understand the way in which young people experience and understand the concept of democracy in the post-colonial city of Nairobi, Kenya. How have their life experiences with democratic processes such as general elections in post-colonial Kenya shaped their construction of the political world around them.

To answer this my research poses the following questions:

- How do young Kenyans perceive and understand democracy to function?
- What is the willingness of young people to participate in democracy?
- Do young people perceive democracy to be available equally to all Kenyan citizens?

## 1.3 Delimitations

The research is geographically limited to Kenya and to Nairobi County within Kenya. Locally, Nairobi County presents an interesting case as with rural to urban migration there is a mix of many ethnic groups living together in tightly clustered areas as compared to the rural context in which ethnic groups tend to live geographically in one area. As my study is related to the youth, I will only select participants who are aged 18-35 years and who currently reside in Nairobi full time. The Kenyan Constitution defines the youth as any individual between the ages of 18 and 35 (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). I also recognize that 'the youth' can be categorized in several ways, however for my research I have chosen to use this definition for consistency with the Government of Kenya definition. This is because my research is related to the 'youth' in Kenya and the governmental definition defines their access to various resources including and not limited to voting.

The impact of the selection of young people between 18-35 within Nairobi County will limit this study's scope and results for this reason, this thesis will not make claims beyond youth in Nairobi in Kenya. This is not a study that is generalizable beyond this scope although it might produce insights that might be relevant in other contexts as well.

#### 1.4 Relevance to Global Studies

This study can add to learnings about democracy, voting and freedom not only for Kenya but for other countries facing similar issues with similar histories. Elections across the continent of Africa and across the world are increasingly marred with issues of violence, lack of accountability and transparency. On a general global context, these challenges greatly affect today's youth.

For countries across Africa this research may help in understanding the repercussions of general elections on the youth of the country as well as illustrating the ways in which processes such as elections have carried on from colonialism and have impacted constructions of identities in relation to politics and voting.

Colonialism impacted the African continent economically, politically and socially. Kenya like many other colonized countries still feels the lasting impacts of colonization today. On a global level, young people especially in the 'third world' experience and understand democracy and its processes in different ways than their counterparts in the global North.

According to V-Dem (varieties of democracy project) 'the number of democracies worldwide declined slightly from 100 in 2011 to 97 today; 16 countries transitioned to; and in 2013 alone, five countries transitioned to democracy but nine went the other way' (Mechkova, 2017). It is thereby important to understand how the youth as important stakeholders and change agents in a country are navigating spaces that can allow for enhanced sustainable democracy and good governance.

## 1.5 Thesis Outline

This Thesis is structured into six chapters:

The **first chapter** presents an introduction to the research study and present the background history, the research questions, delimitations and the relevance to Global Studies.

The **second chapter** presents previous research focusing on literature already written in relation to the subject matter associated with youth and democracy in Kenya.

The **third chapter** discusses the theoretical framework adopted for the study as well as key concepts that are used to make sense of the research question.

The **fourth chapter** looks at the research methods, the research design, data collection and data analysis methods used for the study.

The **fifth chapter** delves into the discussion of the findings through an analysis of the data collected via three themes 1) Functioning of Democracy, 2) Participation in Democracy and 3) Availability of Democracy.

Finally, the **sixth chapter** closes with the conclusion and opportunities for further research.

## 2. Previous Research

This section identifies key literature relating to youth and democracy in Kenya. Looking at previous literature written on this topic will help me to create my research design and inform the way I approach my research methods. In the case of my thesis looking for gaps within the broader research area of youth, democracy and general elections will help me to focus on what aspects of the problem description would be useful to analyze.

### 2.1 Kenyan democracy

Much of the academic research surrounding Kenyan elections and democracy is quantitative in nature and is centered on ethnicity and politics. There is a gap in qualitative literature on young people and topics surrounding understandings of democracy and its processes. A focus on ethnicity and politics which most scholars on the topic of youth and democracy have focused on may not adequately capture reasons for why the youth participate and understand democracy the way they do.

A history of Kenyan democracy provides us with an understanding of the current relationship between citizens and democracy. During “the immediate post-colonial period in Kenya was characterized by efforts geared towards consolidation of political power on the part of the new ruling elite in a process that nurtured the emergence of an authoritarian regime” (Nasong’o and Murunga 2013, 29). The mentality of authoritarianism although absent on paper, is still present-day politics through establishments such as the rule of the political elite who are seen to just pass on power through their families or ethnic and political connections. The repercussion of this can be said to be felt through prominent levels of corruption and stifling of political opposition. Issues of land inheritance and the way it influenced interethnic relations within the country have been discussed by multiple authors including (Kagwanja and Southall, 2009). The impacts of colonization continue to influence African politics of today.

On the much-researched topic of ethnicization and politics, Bratton and Kimenyi find that ‘people often judge the fairness of the political system with reference to the ethnic character of the political elite’ (2008, 278). They also highlight that ‘Horowitz coined the term ‘ethnic census’ to describe elections in which racial, linguistic or tribal solidarities so strongly predict voting behavior that elections are little more than a head count of identity groups’ (Bratton and Kimenyi 2008, 272). This can be understood to mean that voting is conducted by Kenyans in correlation with the strength of the tie to their ethnic group. On a global level, issues surrounding post-colonial democratic processes and colonial inheritance affect various developing countries (Thomson 2010, 22). The way in which democracy is carried out and adopted in countries such as Kenya highlights the negative effects of colonial inheritance. This may be true, however by only focusing on the ethnicization within voting and politics there is a risk of washing over the deeper issues that determine and influence the ways Kenyans interact with democracy and processes such as general elections in the present day.

Historically, Kenya has had issues with frail institutions, ethnic polarization, corruption, rising inequalities and debt (Kagwanja and Southall, 2009). These problems have had drastic impacts on the economic, social and psychological lives of the common citizen (*mwananchi*).

In their 2017 report, Varieties of Democracy (V-DEM) ranked Kenya 92<sup>nd</sup> out of 174 countries on their Electoral Democracy Index. Various literature on democracy points out the importance of electoral democracy as it is said to be an indicator of a healthy and functioning democratic system. It should be noted that there is a difference between democracies in general which may be taken to mean liberal democracy as opposed to electoral democracy which deals with free and fair elections. In Kenya, ‘indigenous political cultures have continued to evolve in the creation of endogenous understanding of democracy’ (Nasong’o and Murunga 2013, 130). Democracy means different things to different people; however, a

basic understanding of democracy entails a system in which all persons rule directly or indirectly through nominated representatives.

## 2.2 Youth and democracy

Nasong'o and Murunga speak on 'youth' and 'democracy' and the way 'Kenyan understandings of these terms have manifested in everyday discourse in the public sphere' (2013, 130). The youth in Kenya are regularly referred to as a 'hegemonic group' especially when referring to negative characteristics such as crime, drugs, unemployment and incitement to violence. A common saying in Kenya is (*watoto wa siku hizi*) meaning 'kids of these days', it is used by people from older generations when they are speaking about the youth in mostly a negative light. These types of negative connotations associated with the youth paint a daunting picture of a demographic that is portrayed as being a cite of frustration. This positionality of the youth is highlighted aptly as given the nature of politics in Kenya "youth as a social category has traditionally been viewed as a burdensome category that needs to be 'carefully handled' and whose energies need to be channeled to 'productive' endeavors ostensibly by elders and more 'responsible members of society'" (Nasong'o and Murunga 2013, 395).

An increasing phenomenon occurring across the world is that of waithood. Defined by various authors such as Honwana (2014), Mcevoy-Levy (2014) and Singerman (2013), it is as the period that a person occupies between leaving childhood and not having yet achieved adulthood. This period is critical as it is the time where a young person forms their perceptions and understanding of the world around them.

Using Mannheim's 'theory of generations', 'Bartles and Jackman (2014, 7) note that 1) 'historical periods are characterized by shocks to existing political opinions' and 2) 'that individuals of different ages may attach different weights to those political shocks' Through the understanding of the youth using Mannheim's theory of generations, I would argue that the political learnings done during adolescence and young adulthood

which include tumultuous elections informs their understandings of politics and democracy at large.

On the other hand, for older Kenyans having seen several changes of regimes and both peaceful and violent elections would have more generational memory and experiences of politics and democracy thus not attach larger weights to single general elections events.

### 2.3 Kenyan youth, democracy and general elections

The youth as a demographic category in Kenya wields power in numbers. An example of this was in 2007 ‘with almost 60% of Kenya’s population of some 36 million aged 15 to 35, demographic growth of the youth stratum expanded the electoral register by 6 million to nearly 14 million voters’ (Kagwanja and Southall, 2009). It was also noted that the “increase in the proportion of younger voters turned generational competition into an important axis in the electoral politics” (Kagwanja and Southall, 2009).

Youth participation in politics is considered as an integral indicator of good governance and healthy democracy. This is recognized by various institutions including the United Nations Program of Action for the Youth (PAY) who state that “every young person shall have the right to participate in all spheres of society” (African Unions Youth Charter art. 11, para. 1). Participation therefore is identified as a major indicator of a healthy democracy.

Dealing with the perception of democracy, ‘Kenyan youths perceive democracy in terms of the classical elements of freedoms offered in the definition of liberal democracy’ (Makori 2017, 105). Young people in Kenya understand democracy to encompass freedom of the individual as well as freedom of the majority. This point is important to note, as I am interested in understanding the youth perceptions of democracy in terms of its functionality, availability and their participation, understanding what democracy means to the individual will be a key starting point for towards addressing my research question.

The study by (Makori,2015) also finds that ‘most of the youths vote along tribal lines where the interplay of clientelism and strategic and well calculated political behavior characterize most of their political engagement (Makori, 2015). This idea that the youth vote according to tribal lines but in a calculated matter is also identified by various authors including Nasong’o and Murunga (2013) and Diouf (2003). This key aspect shows the agency illustrated in that young people vote according to tribal alliances but are also tactical. This is displayed in the way they wield their voting power in political engagement in accordance to what they stand to gain from it. This shows a sort of power in that the youth are not the puppets they are perceived to be. Both by the older generation and by politicians.

It would be interesting to see if this conclusion will feature in my finding regarding the youth’s willingness to participate in democracy and democratic processes such as general elections.

## 2.4 Summary

This section on previous research on the youth and democracy provides an overall understanding of research done on youth, democracy and post colonization.

Apart from voting along tribal lines, previous research also finds that youth participation in democracy is also determined by more complex notions such as clientelism. A colonial history has instituted issues surrounding colonial inheritance that include are not limited to land inheritance, interethnic relations as well as frail institutions, corruption and rising inequalities and debt that plague today’s political arena.

Drawing from Nasong’o and Murunga (2013, 130), when they state that ‘indigenous political cultures have continued to evolve in the creation of endogenous understanding of democracy’ and relating this to Manheim’s ‘theory of generations’, the Kenyan youth have inherited the impacts of colonization which has influenced their understanding of democracy. As discussed in this section, the youth are often positioned as a hegemonic

group and identified as a sign of frustration and burden by the older generation.

As research has shown the increasing notion of youthhood is a critical time in which a young person forms their perceptions and understanding of their world around them. In the case of young people in Kenya, the political history and by virtue their experiences of democratic processes have been shaped by post-election violence as a result of deeply rooted ethnic polarization and tension that has origins within the colonial and the landmark nullification of the presidential elections in 2017. These two great events in Kenyans political history have both been experienced by the youth of today.

Taking this into consideration, though previous literature has identified that the youth are not only a tool used and manipulated by the older generation and political elite, it has not yet addressed the way in which young people understand democracy itself and how this impacts the way they navigate democratic processes such as general elections. The gap that my research seeks to understand is with the insight of issues experienced in the post-colonial, how do young people perceive and understand democracy to function?, what is the willingness of young people to participate in democracy? and do young people perceive democracy to be available equally to all Kenyan citizens?

The next chapter will focus on the theoretical frameworks and key concepts that will build the framework for this study.

### 3. Theoretical Frameworks and Key Concepts

This chapter will focus on the theoretical framework that will guide my research. In this thesis, the post colonialism theory and constructivism theory for my theoretical framework. I will also use concept of virtual democracies and the generational learning model in relation to the overarching theories to make sense of my research question.

#### 3.1 Theoretical Reflections: Post-Colonialism and Constructivism

By applying the post-colonial lense towards my research I seek to understand the repercussions and impacts that colonialism has had on the democratization of colonized nations such as Kenya. I am interested in finding out the way young people perceive the system of democracy to work in Kenya.

A simple definition of post-colonialism is ‘a theoretical approach in various disciplines that is concerned with the lasting impact of colonization in former colonies’ (Oxford, 2018). Ahluwalia highlights two important aspects of post-colonialism 1) it ‘needs to be used with careful consideration, considering the specific historical processes and the way colonialism has affected a particular colony’ and 2) ‘post-colonialism embodies the effects of colonialism, whilst recognizing the specificity of each case in which it is deployed’ (Ahluwalia 2001, 4). Following this, post-colonialism cannot be used as an umbrella term to analyze the impacts and lasting effects that colonialism has had on all colonized nations.

In Kenya, the history of colonialization by the British had impact on the post-colonial nation state in terms of its economy (trade in tea and coffee), social structures (polarized ethnicization) and the political (democracy). Specifically, within the Kenya context, the theory may be used to gain understanding of “the dilemmas of modernization and the manner in which African state negotiate their way through complexities that have grown out of the colonial” (Ahluwalia 2001, 1). The rationale behind this

research deals with the construction of liberal democracy within Kenya. In terms of post-coloniality it will look at how young people understand democracy to function as well as how they relate with it in their everyday lives as well as during periods such as elections. Literature on the process of colonization shows that the pre-colonial period recorded African societies as having self-rule (see Dibua 2006). Liberal democracy may be defined as ‘representative democracy’ and has been the dominant system of democracy in the Global North for the past one to two hundred years’ (Democracy Renewal, 2018). However, its adoption by the Global South has been a great cite of contestation.

By looking at the issue of democracy and general elections in Kenya through a post-colonial lense I seek to make sense of how the extension of power by hegemonic and dominant colonial nations has affected the nation state and people who have been colonized. As democracy was enforced on most African states in the post-colonial this has had effects on the way the system of democracy has been operationalized. The impacts of the imposition of democracy done without considering critical characteristics such as African traditional and cultural forms of governance and practices that were present before colonization has had far reaching consequences on the way young people have related with democracy and its processes such as general elections today.

Post-coloniality has had an impact on the construction of post-colonial identities. In relation to identity politics and democracy, constructivism takes on an idealistic approach in which “transplanetary connectivity is said to have arisen because of the way that people have mentally constructed the social world with symbols, language, interpretation, and so on” (Scholte 2005, 131). Thus, the way in which people form ideas and construct the world and attached their belonging of society is subjective. This construction also relates to the way in which people negotiate and frame themselves in relation to certain concepts. This approach looks at identity formation due to inter-personal communication. The theory applies to the view of youth and their use of communications as having

the ability to build bridges and create a public sphere to address democracy.

As Scholte (2005, 147) notes 'notions of identity underpin frameworks for community, democracy, citizenship and resistance'. Agency therefore plays a significant role in intercommunication with the 'construction of social reality occurs in a context of political struggle and as an expression of resistance' (Scholte 2005, 132). With the advent of globalization, we are all living in a world that has allowed us greater access to communication and knowledge that cuts across boundaries of space and time. Young people today have the increased ability to gain information from various contexts. As young person's ability to construct subjective meanings of their world and environment is continuously informed by what is going on around them and across the world. The Arab Spring can be used to highlight this point as the youth in the MENA became disenfranchised with the oppressive regimes they were living under. They also had access to social media that allowed them to see youth across the Middle East rising together. In this instance they were able to construct their identities across intersections to which they were able to relate to. In the case of my research, I am interested in the way young people navigate the public sphere and the way they construct their identity in relation to democracy. How do young people understand the concept of democracy, how do they construct their identities and navigate their understandings of democratic systems and processes especially in relation to a post-colonial history?

Using the constructivism theory "patterns of production and governance are second-order structures that derive from deeper cultural and socio-psychological forces" (Scholte 2005, 131). Meaning that construction of identity by the youth is a form of sociological construction that informs power structures. As a theory, constructivism suggests that people construct knowledge and meanings from their life experiences. Therefore, since learning is active and continuous for the youth, it relates that though the constructivism theory and post

colonialism the creation of young people's identity and constructions towards understanding and navigating the political sphere is found within a system that has been influenced and has been shaped by coloniality.

Using these theories to make sense of my research question is important as it helps to guide you towards understanding the way in which the democratic system in post-colonial states works.

### 3.2 Problematizing Democracy: Generational learning in Virtual democracies

Following the theory of constructivism, I also look at the model of 'generational learning'. This model suggests that the 'most salient lessons about a political regime are learned during formative periods of late adolescence and early adulthood: lessons that then structure or filter subsequent political learning' (Mattes and Bratton 2007, 198). It follows that young Kenyans classified as the 'youth' form an understanding of politics during the early years of adulthood and their understanding of politics will be different amongst the young and older generations. It is assumed that older generations who have witnessed and experienced longer reigns of regimes as well as shifts such as Kenya from a single party nation state to a multi-party nation state have formed a difference understanding of politics and democracy. As noted in research on generational learning in relation to politics using Mannheim's theory of generations 'Bartles and Jackman (2014, 7) note that 1) 'historical periods are characterized by shocks to existing political opinions' and 2) 'that individuals of different ages may attach different weights to those political shocks. The youth today has lived in a crucial period where post-election violence has occurred i.e. during the 2007 elections, as well as where the rule of law has been upheld with the landmark ruling of the nullification of the 2017 Presidential elections. The theory of generational learning could then be applied to a constructivism point of view in that their understanding of politics and democracy is forming in an era where they

were learning formative lessons about politics and democracy in Kenya marked with events that had never occurred in the nations history.

An interesting concept that I came across whilst studying the relationship between democratization and the African continent is that of ‘virtual democracies’ (Uwizeyimana, 2012). ‘Virtual democracies’ are a result of the post-colonialism democratization project on the global South. It deals with the way in which Africa transitioned from monarchic self-rule into liberal democracies and the reasons for successes such as Botswana and South Africa with ‘full democracies’ and the failures of ‘virtual democracies’ such as Uganda and Rwanda (Uwizeyimana, 2012). These ‘virtual democracies’ or as the author also calls them ‘pretend democracies or face democracies’ have the institutional framework and are based on the principles of democracy however they continue to follow traditional African forms of unilateral rule. Literature on the process of colonization shows that the pre-colonial period recorded African societies as having self-rule (see Dibua 2006). As previous research has pointed out, African societies are struggling to actualize democracy as the construction of democracy is said to be done through local culture. Historically the ‘democratic culture’ of Kenya has been seen to include authoritarian rule reminiscent of colonial structures.

Consequently, Euro-centric theories of democracy are failing to define political realities outside of Europe. Because colonialism did not historically allow governance to grow and form naturally the effects of the democratization project on the nation states such as Kenya is that full democracy is not being achieved. According to the Democracy Index published in the (Economist, 2017), Kenya ranks as a hybrid regime at 5.0 out of 10 which indicates full democracy. Being rated as a hybrid regime means that Kenya is not fully democratic, however it is not a failed democratic state. This is further emphasized by the world’s largest democracy database VDEM, as Kenya is ranked 88<sup>th</sup> in the World on the Liberal Democracy index (Lührmann et al. 2017).

Other issues surrounding the post-colonial African nation state include factors such as the creation of nation state borders. Thompson highlights this issue by noting that ‘when they were delineated, these state boundaries rarely matched existing pre-colonial political, social or economic divisions’ (Thompson 2010, 14). This further entrenched ethnic tensions between minority tribal groups. These African nation state boundaries drawn up were without the inclusion of its people thus creating conflicts in relation to division of ethnic tribes, natural resources and geography. Land allocation is another post-colonial factor that has played into the barriers of democratization within Kenya. Land allocation that was done by the British colonialist elevated certain ethnic groups leaving out minority tribes and vulnerable individuals such as the youth. As noted previously, various authors see (Nasong’o 2007, Diouf 2003, Young 2012 and Makori 2015) have noted the use of the youth as a tool by the political elite to carry out various objectives including and not limited to vote buying and inciting violence. This violence is usually created to be ethnically polarizing with the narrative that ‘the other’ tribe must be stopped. This type of ethnic division is a result of and affects the youth directly who are the largest percentage of the voting population it is thus important to analyze their negotiation of politics and democratization. With ‘young people’s inclusion and addressing disenfranchisement is therefore not only a socioeconomic imperative but also key to preserving stability and building peace’ (Electoral Knowledge Network. 2018).

### 3.3 Summary

In this section, to make sense of my research question, I related the theories of post-colonialism and constructivism to show the ways in which colonialism has impacted politics in Kenya today. Constructivism is used to describe the way in which young people today within the post-colonial context are constructing their identities in relation to the social world

around them influenced both by their local Kenyan post-colonial context living in Nairobi but also the world around them.

Virtual democracies exist in the African context today because democracy was not allowed to naturally grow taking into consideration the African rules of governance in the pre-colonial.

Using the generational theory, the youth of Kenya today are having experiences that are shaping the way they understand and relate to concepts such as democracy and its processes.

So, how do Euro-centric notions of democracy and democratization play into the third world formations of liberal democracy?. The meta-theories of post-colonialism and constructivism relate to virtual and face democracies as citizens of post-colonial states construct their identities through their subjective experiences. Post-colonialism has left a legacy of ethnic polarization that has at times led to violent and turbulent general elections. By generational learning, these experiences by young people are happening in a time in their lives when they are forming their understanding of what politics and democracy is and how they fit into the system. This is what I hope to uncover, how have their perceptions of democracy been influenced by the history of general elections in the country?. By using this theoretical framework as discussed in this section, I hope to now delve into my research questions to discover the following;

- How do young Kenyans perceive and understand democracy to function?
- What is the willingness of young people to participate in democracy?
- Do young people perceive democracy to be available equally to all Kenyan citizens?

How I plan to do this is discussed in the next section where I present my research methods.

## 4. Research Methods

This section of my thesis presents the research methods used and the way in which the research was conducted. I explain the epistemological approach, the theoretical background for the chosen methods as well as touch on ethical considerations. The section will conclude with reflections of undertaking research. I also discuss potential problems that occur with the selected research method.

The method of choice for conducting this research was semi-structured interviews and for the analysis I used 1) transcription, 2) coding and 3) thematic analysis. During the process of creating the research design, consideration of the potential research questions, theoretical framework, methods and form of analysis was done.

The table below (Research Methodology, 2018) highlights the concepts associated with qualitative and quantitative methods.

	<i>Concepts associated with quantitative methods</i>	<i>Concepts associated with qualitative methods</i>
<b>Type of reasoning</b>	Deduction Objectivity Causation	Induction Subjectivity Meaning
<b>Type of question</b>	Pre-specified Outcome-oriented	Open-ended Process-oriented
<b>Type of analysis</b>	Numerical estimation Statistical inference	Narrative description Constant comparison

Table 1: Qualitative and Quantitative methods

### 4.1 Epistemology

As the research seeks to deal with the perceptions of the general elections amongst the youth, semi-structured interviews were identified as a method that will allow me to capture individual perceptions of democracy. By using research questions which were formed from the research problem and using theories such as post-colonialism and constructivism,

the research methods takes on a positivist approach. The concept of inductivism is that “empirical observations tend to lead to conclusions that are not meant to prove or disprove a theory” (Bryman 2012, 26). However, as I will be using the pre-defined themes to make sense of the data collected, this suggests that I will also be using a deductivist approach towards analyzing my data. This is not uncommon for research as the researcher may find that they may have some preconceived notions on their research topic but they find that as the research progresses it naturally becomes informative. Deductivism may be defined as theories that are deductively tested against data (Hoyningen-Huene 2006). The use of both inductivism and deductivism can be related to a positivist approach towards research (Bryman 2012, 163). Using mixed methods.

Following this, by choosing qualitative research methods the research falls into the constructivism paradigm as it deals with collecting individual ideas and perceptions by the youth towards democracy given the past general elections in Kenya. This paradigm ‘asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors’ (Bryman 2012, 33). This is also highlighted by Mojtahed et al (2014, 87) who asserts that ‘one of the main requirements of the constructivist approach is the establishment of a reciprocal and communicational ground between the research project participants and researchers in the co-construction of meaning’. Through this process the interviewer must rely on the participant’s experiences and understanding of the chosen research topic.

Issues surrounding the constructivist approach is that it is wholly dependent on the researchers’ interpretation of the interviewees’ perceptions. This is highlighted by Mojtahed et al (2014, 88) in that ‘the difficulty in constructivist research is exactly demonstrating that the participants’ view of the situation as reported in research findings is not simply the result of researchers’ interpretive whim, and that negotiation of meaning has in fact occurred’. As content analysis and coding were chosen as the method of analysis this is key to note.

## 4.2 Data Collection

The method I chose for this thesis is the semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interviews are qualitative in nature and give the interviewees the ability to ask for clarification and the researcher to ask for elaboration of information. Within semi-structured interviews “questions are normally specified, but the interviewer is freer to probe beyond the answers in a manner which would appear prejudicial to the aims of standardization and comparability” (May 2011, 134). This method can be said to be the best of both worlds as it uses the advantages of both the structured interview in terms of set questions but also allows greater interviewee participation in terms of answers as the unstructured interview method. The semi-structured interview process can highlight views and opinions of the interviewees thus illustrating a better picture of their ideas and feelings on research topics.

I chose to incorporate feminist-based research methods in relation to conducting my interviews. This deals with the fact that there should be an “open and active exchange between the researcher and participant in a partnership of co-research” (May 2011, 65). By using this method, it allowed me as the researcher and the participant to interact and play off each other’s answers to encourage trust where there is a safe and free flow of dialogue as well as the collection of information.

The research also takes a feminist perspective. ‘Feminism alerts us to the importance of studying silences, absences in familiar institutions, marginalized and excluded peoples’ experiences for understanding our local and global world’ (Ackerly & True 2010, 7). This was a key aspect of my research and the interview method that I chose because historically the topics of politics and democracy are sensitive in the Kenyan context. Many young people are often grouped together and studied in clusters of ethnic identity and age meaning results are generalized. With my research, I hope to understand young people’s perceptions and understanding based on their ‘intersectionality’. Intersectionality is a

theory that asserts that people are affected and have different lived experiences based on their multiple intersections including race, class, gender, age and religion. An important part of doing feminist-based research is understanding that a person's interaction with the world and the way they conduct their everyday lives is based on intersecting categories such as their race, age, sex, class, gender and educational background. Individual perceptions are based on individual experiences.

One of the fallbacks of choosing to do semi-interviews is that due to time and budget constraints as in my case, you may not be able to use a larger sample group as compared to another method i.e. a survey. This would limit my sample group diversity as the number of participants are limited. This issue is addressed in the next section.

#### 4.2.1 Selection of participants

Due to the nature of my topic and fixed variables within my research topic such as age, my participant selection was prioritized and done first during my fieldwork process. My selection criteria was participants who were Kenyan, between the ages of 18-35 and were full time residents in Nairobi County. As my allocated time for fieldwork was short, my method of participant selection was informed by ways in which I would be able to access participants across various intersections within the category of the youth.

Therefore, I chose to use small scale snowball sampling also referred to as 'chain referral sampling' (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981, 141). This type of method falls under the general category of 'purposive sampling'. It 'yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest' (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981, 141). Another reason why this method was beneficial in relation to my research was that it enabled me to gain access into areas that I would not have accessed on my own. This method of sampling was chosen to try to be more randomized and representative with a sample of only 12.

To try and be as representative as possible within my sample group, I identified multiple areas within Nairobi County that could give me variances within socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds for my participants. Therefore, this method of sampling allowed me to start my first chain with a person that has ties within areas such as Kibera which holds 'approximately 2.5 million slum dwellers in about 200 settlements in Nairobi representing 60% of the Nairobi population and occupying just 6% of the land (Kibera.org, 2018). I noted that my ethnicity may also have led to barriers in the comfortability and safety of accessing persons from various ethnic groups as I am a member of the tribe of the current sitting President. I started my second chain with an Educator at a college in the central business district of Nairobi to allow me access to students of various ages. Without the use of chain sampling I would not have been able to gain access to such a varying range of respondents.

Thus, in this way, this method allowed me to 1) gain access to young educated participants and 2) allow me to be more randomized and 3) help me get access to marginalized participants. However, one of the fallbacks of choosing to use this method is that it is not possible to make assumptions about the population at large as the sample size is too small.

In the beginning of the data collection process a phone call and email script (appendix 1) were created to maintain a standard interpretation of the purpose of my data and the type of participants that were required.

#### 4.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

To allow for an easier interview process, an interview protocol was prepared that allowed me to remember the flow and the way in which the interview should proceed. The protocol created also included prompts for collecting informed consent and prompts to remember what information was of key interest as suggested by Jacob and Ferguson (2012). An interview guide (appendix 3) was also prepared with 17 questions which were used to conduct the semi-structured interviews. The questions were grouped into various themes including; What is Democracy? Youth and

Democracy, Participation and Democracy and Elections and Transparency. These themes were chosen from the three sub-questions formed from the research questions. The inclusion of three Likert scale questions was done to gauge the extent of certain aspects such as the perceived level of democracy, transparency and free and fair elections. As semi-structured interviews are open ended and process oriented in nature, there was freedom of ease to create additional questions or prompting for further elaboration from both the interviewer and interviewee.

The interviews began with an introduction from me and then the reading out of an introduction of my thesis and the consent form (appendix 2). This was done to informally give my respondents an entry point understanding into my research. The reading of the consent form was done to assure my respondents that confidentiality most importantly would be maintained in terms of the information that they gave me. All the interviewees preferred to give a verbal form of consent rather than written consent. As I was recording the session, I thought it was important to also mention that I was recording the interviews for my own transcription purposes. After conducting the first few interviews, I realized that the reading of the introduction of my thesis and the consent form went a long way in building rapport with my respondents. I also intentionally left out information about myself including my full name which would have given up my ethnicity as well as my nationality. In two interviews the interviewees inquired my ethnic background to which I gave. I found that since I used the method of chain sampling, I was able to maintain an atmosphere of anonymity as my respondents were not immediately curious about my background it seemed that they assumed that my background was attached with those whom I began the chain with.

I managed to conduct 12 interviews in total. One was left out since it only lasted six minutes and did not contain a sufficient amount of data. The interviews varied in length with the shortest taking 15 minutes and the

longest taking one and a half hours. As my interviewees came from diverse backgrounds I noted that some had the time and were willing to give me longer responses while others rushed through the answers. For the profile of my interviewees, I chose to create an index of respondent names (appendix 4) that I used to transcribe and store their details under. The details of the index are described in the ethical considerations section below.

### 4.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process by which preparation is undertaken to be able to make sense of the data collected during the fieldwork process. The data analysis followed three steps outlined by Bryman (2008, 13) which are 1) transcription, 2) coding and 3) thematic analysis.

#### 4.3.1 Transcription

Transcription of the interviewees was undertaken after the completion of fieldwork in Nairobi on the return to my University. This time taken between the conducting of interviews and the transcription allowed me to re-read my interview notes and familiarize myself with the information. Once transcription of all the interviews was completed, re-reading of the data was done to intensely familiarize myself with the data. I also re-listened to the interview audio recording and noted down any interesting points such as laughter or pauses between answers which could be useful indicators later.

#### 4.3.2 Coding

This phase also included the initial coding which entailed collecting various codes surrounding the three sub-questions from my research questions within the entire dataset. This process involved looking for latent content and emergent subjects while reviewing the transcripts and noting them down on the margins of the transcripts. The general overarching theories selected to guide the research were also taken into consideration.

#### 4.3.3 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is described as ‘a method of identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within data; it minimally organizes and describes your data set in rich detail’ (Braun and Clarke 2006, 6). This method is used to analyze data in which overarching themes are used to organize and sort data making it easier for analysis to be undertaken. When analyzing the data and looking for themes and sub-themes, I made sure to keep relating back to the research questions. For the selection of my themes, I based them on the three research questions that were posed for this study. The research questions were:

- How do young Kenyans perceive and understand democracy to function?
- What is the willingness of young people to participate in democracy?
- Do young people perceive democracy to be available equally to all Kenyan citizens?

---

*From this I created the following themes and sub-themes:*

##### **Theme 1**

Functioning of Democracy

##### **Sub-themes**

General Elections and Violence, Power, Accountability and Corruption, Media

##### **Theme 2**

Participation in Democracy

##### **Sub-themes**

Education, Freedom, Change

### **Theme 3**

Availability of Democracy

#### **Sub-themes**

Ethnicity and Tribalism, Rural-Urban divide and Inclusivity.

---

The main criteria I used to identify the sub-themes were repetition, transitions, theory-related material, metaphors and indigenous typologies identified by (Ryan and Bernard 2003) as highlighted in Bryman (2008, 580). An example of this could be that the sub-theme of change was repeated by various participants thereby repetitions was used as an identifier of the sub-theme. As compared to a sub-theme of accountability and corruption that is used as a metaphor to signify the perceptions surrounding a functioning democracy.

These themes and sub-themes were then used to base my discussion of my analysis and results towards contextualizing it in relation to my research questions.

Next, following the inductive methodological approach, I conducted a thematic analysis of the data. Next the framework approach outlined by Bryman (2008, 579) was used. An index of central themes and subthemes were created and presented in table format that displayed various cases across the respondents in relation to the selected theme and subthemes.

This is illustrated below in an extract of the first theme:

Theme: 1			
Functioning of democracy			
		Sub-Theme	
Interviewee number	Line Number	3) Performance of democracy	Analysis
1	18-19	H: Because eh, Yes democracy is there but it's not... don't right... yes I mean people know they have a right to it but at the same time you are scared to practice. Yah so, that's why I'd say its 50:50	'Democracy is present, however it is not being done right' 'The will of the people is not adhered to' 'Elections do not reflect what majority wants'
	40-43	H: I think the... So far it's not working. Because democracy, is supposed to be like everybody is supposed to be happy with it. Everybody is supposed to be happy with the decision made. But, the general elections we've been having. Whether you are happy with the outcome, whether you are not happy with the outcome. Nobody cares.	
	65-66	H: Because those elections don't follow any democracy. The only, I think the only thing that they follow is yah, they give the people the right to choose but they don't follow what the people are choosing.	
2	11-13	Y: Because, every year people choose and not everyone feels fulfilled. Because if it was a good democratic country. Everyone will feel like their needs are being catered for and at this point I don't think most people's needs are being catered for.	'Individual and group choice are ignored' 'Elections are not working'
	27-28	Y: My understanding is that after 5 years we come together to choose a leader and most of the times it doesn't really work out.	
3	170-172	In rural Kenya, people are put out if they don't do their job. Because I think, the fact that there's no tribal or something. The fact that its competitive... some people who understand each other than. There	'Democracy makes more sense and works better in rural Kenya due to the lack of tribalism' 'Expectations to reality and control of democracy: The

Table 2: Theme 1 on functioning of democracy

#### 4.4 Ethics

This subsection entails the ethical considerations throughout my research process. It begins with the interview process followed by the handling of the data collected.

In adherence with pre-determined research standards, all research should be guided by ideals that take into consideration ethical practices (APA, 2003). Such practices include the respect of interviewee rights, overall interviewee safety, the purpose of the research, and the access to the research by the participants, the control of the research process and its outcomes and any potential fall backs or gains to either the interviewer or the interviewee concerned. Following this, “ethics are fundamental in maintaining the integrity and legitimacy of research in society and in protecting practitioners and participants in its practices” (May 2011, 61).

One main ethical issues surrounding research is that of consent. This is an important aspect that was considered during the creation of the research design. While creating the interview guide, a consent form was created in tandem. This was done to ensure that the interviewees knew their privacy and safety was assured as well as the fact that their interviews will only be used for academic purposes. The reading of the consent form was done at the beginning of the interviews as mentioned previously.

In terms of the overall ethical theory, my research takes a deontological stance. Deontology is a theory that guides research and asks that “research would, follow a set of principles which guide the conduct of research itself” (May 2011, 62). Following this, the acceptance of the consent form, in the case of my interviewees who accepted of verbal consent is used to demonstrate the participant’s approval.

Due to the nature of my research question that can be perceived to be sensitive as questions surrounding politics and ethnicity are in Kenya, the main ethical considerations centered on anonymity of my interviewees. As noted by Hammersley and Atkinson, ‘being observed or interviewed can sometimes be a source of anxiety and strain’ (2007, 224). However, as a researcher I sought to create an atmosphere of comfort and trust by the way in which I encouraged open dialogue during the interviews. This was informed by the feminist-based research methods discussed in the method of section. I understand that the aim of the interview is to create an enabling space where the participant feels safe to share their subjective experiences.

To ensure anonymity, the transcripts and recording were stored under pseudonyms. The selection of these names was done by choosing random names beginning with the same letter as original interviewee names. The random names were selected from a list of top 100 girl and boy names from Kenyan pen pal statistics (Student of the World, 2018). The index which consist of the format used to store the transcripts and recordings includes the interviewee’s age, current occupation and ethnic tribe that were collected at the end of the interview. These categories were chosen to see the various characteristics of the sample group.

In terms of data handling, security of the stored information was important. The transcripts and recordings were stored on a secure password protected Hard Drive.

#### 4.5 Reflections

Some of my reflections from the research process include the fact that I should think about what is in it for my interviewees. When conducting the pilot interview in Gothenburg to test out my research method, I offered to buy my friend who agreed to test pilot my interview questions some lunch as a thank you. As noted by Chege (2015, 465), 'a rather generalized and perhaps naïve assumption was that interviewees' interests would be fully served, through the opportunities to 'raise their voices'. It made me realize that on a larger scale I should be able to justify to my interviewees the benefits to them of participating in my research.

For all my interviewees I presented after the conclusion of the interviews each participant with a Ksh 250 (\$3) airtime voucher to say thank you. In terms of ethics I note that this may be perceived as 'buying' the participation of my participants. However, I did not mention the airtime to any of the participants before I started. At the end of the interviews I told them that it was to show appreciation for the time that they had spent.

Some of the participants also requested that I share the final thesis with them which I gladly agreed to. I also hope that my research will be able to feed into larger conversations surrounding the importance of the youth in participating in topics that have direct influence on their lives especially with them holding such a great percentage and impacting the results of the general elections.

Another reflection is whether my ethnicity and 'insiderness' as a member of the tribe that the current sitting President belongs to affected the comfortability of my interviewees to answer my questions without hesitation. Although I cannot change my intersectionality, it is good to be aware of this and note it down.

Issues experienced the data analysis was the reduction of the data. As I conducted 11 interviews. I found that more than 22 initial codes appeared when I created the framework and that made it appear overpopulated. I

initially found it difficult at first to collapse the data into the three main themes and subthemes. However, taking the time to work through the data helped me as well as getting feedback from my supervisor who I bounced ideas off greatly helped.

## 5. Analysis

In this section of the thesis, I will present three main themes that I will use to analyze my data. My research question seeks to understand how does the youth perceive democracy given the history of general elections in post-colonial Nairobi, Kenya? While going through the process of coding for my interviews, I used the three sub-questions to form the three themes and ten sub-themes that I used to analyse my data. During the formation of my research design I sought to connect the form of analysis with the type of qualitative research methods I chose.

These main themes are the functioning of Democracy, participation in Democracy and the availability of Democracy. Under each theme I chose to relate the data to sub-themes for ease of analysis.

<i><b>Themes</b></i>	<i><b>Sub-themes</b></i>
1. Functioning of Democracy	General Elections and Violence
	Power
	Accountability and Corruption
	Media
2. Participation in Democracy	Education
	Freedom
	Change
3. Availability of Democracy	Ethnicity and Tribalism
	Rural-Urban divide
	Inclusivity

*Table 3: Themes of analysis*

The results highlight the youth's views in relation to the way in which they negotiate their relationship to democracy. By analyzing the respondent data according to these three themes I find that youth

perceptions of democracy remain largely positive. However, barriers to the participation of the youth in democratic processes have attributed to respondent's negative perceptions of participation. Examples of these include education, lack of recognition of democratic freedoms and stagnation due to a lack of dynamism in politics. Despite these barriers the youth still have a general interest in democracy and democratic participation. Although this is encouraging it is important to recognize that some young people have become increasingly dissatisfied to the extent of complete disengagement with politics until they see tangible changes towards higher levels of democracy in Kenya. I also find that the use of the categories like 'we' and 'them' can be interchangeable both positive and negative. Positive when used as an empowerment category for the youth, but negative when othering member of other ethnic groups. For analysis, I will refer to my interviewees as respondents and use their interview numbers to highlight specific experiences.

### 5.1 Functioning of Democracy

A first theme relates to the ways in which the youth perceive and understand democracy to function. To what extent do young people in Kenya believe that democracy is a functioning system? In relation to the key concepts used in the thesis this theme relates to the idea of 'virtual/pretend democracies' (Uwizeyimana, 2012). I will present, analyze and discuss the ways in which the youth perceive the realization of democracy in Kenya and various problems that still are present in Kenya. Does the youth think that Kenya has the characteristics of a virtual democracy?

Within the Kenyan constitution the word democracy is mentioned five times in relation to the national values of governance, political parties, the parliamentary service commission and national security (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). The Preamble clause also recognizes and acknowledges the need for a government that is based on democratic principles (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). Constitutionally Kenya has set up the

relevant frameworks and institutions required to be defined as democratic. However, as I will discuss, these frameworks and institutions are perceived to not be fully functioning by the respondents. This sentiment is echoed by Respondent 3 who says that *'the Government says the country is very democratic, however this does not reflect the situation on the ground'*

All except one of my respondents believe that Democracy is present in Kenya however it is not fully functioning. Respondent 9 highlights the fact that *'Democracy is not a true reflection of what people want and choose or decide because decisions are influenced'*. This is also echoed by Respondent 2 who feels that *'individual and group choice are often ignored'*. This contrasts to Respondent 10 who feels that *'Democracy is present and is being exercised correctly because the elections are free and fair, and you have freedom of opinion'*. As pointed out by Scholte (2005:348), 'democracy prevails when the members of a public determine collectively, equally, freely, openly and responsibly, the policies that shape their joint destinies'. In following with this, respondents' comments reflect the acknowledgment of the present of election as free and fair, however they also note that the results of these elections are not acknowledged.

Even if respondent 10 believes that democracy is present and is being exercised correctly when asked how democratic Kenya the respondent was gave a score of six out of a maximum total of 10. Regarding the sample group at large, apart from one respondent who chose not to score, using a Likert scale of 1-10 with 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest the group gave Kenya a rating of 44 out of a total 100. A Likert scale is 'is a type of rating scale used to measure attitudes or opinions' (Statistics How to, 2018). This measurement echoes previously discussed by the Kenya's rating as a hybrid regime on the 2017 democracy index by the economist and 88<sup>th</sup> in the world on the VDEM Liberal Democracy Index.

The repercussions of Kenya's 'hybridized regime' is that respondents feel that this is the nature of why violence occurs during the election period.

Respondent 11 felt that *'lack of proper democracy causes people to fight and violence to break out'*. This relation with violence and democracy is also mentioned by Uwizeyimana is that one of the signifiers of 'virtual democracies' is the 'string of incidents of electoral violence and flawed elections' (2012, 152).

#### 5.1.1 General Elections and violence

Majority of the respondents believe that elections are at the core of the democratic process. Even if they have not presented this as part of their definition of democracy, many respondents are drawn to the principle of free and fair elections. They elaborate on various problems that they perceive with regards to past conduct of general elections in Kenya.

The levels of transparency surrounding the general elections plays a significant role in the way in which the youth rate democracy. Multiple respondents commented that transparency is not present during the elections especially when it comes to the results. On the importance of transparency, respondent 11 remarks that *'transparency is important, where nothing is hidden from the public and citizens of the country'*. Respondent 3 remembers that *'only during the 2002 elections was there transparency because the counting of votes was done in the open'*. This sits in contrast with the respondent also remarking that *'the IEBC wasn't able to fill in the gaps by answering questions that people had causing problems for the repeat 2017 elections'*.

Kenyan elections have not always been violent, although ethnic tension and the threat of ethnic violence was present in the 2002 and 2013 elections which were heralded as largely peaceful. If we estimate the reference point for each of the respondents we see that the oldest respondent was born in 1986 and the youngest in 1999 by the time the oldest respondent had begun to understand politics, Kenya had transitioned into having multiparty elections. For the youngest respondent, they were born in the era of multiparty politics and elections that were both perceived as peaceful and violent. For both respondents

and the group at large, they have no experience of one-party democracy that was present in Kenya before 1992. Therefore, their reference points would be from their historical records and information from parents or those from the older generation. This discussion will further be analyzed in the participation in democracy section in relation to the generational learning model.

Several respondents also feel that the elections themselves are not functioning and that they otherwise do not reflect what people have chosen or that results are already pre-determined. Respondent 9 in speaking of 2017 the election results, said that *'at least they try to relay the results, but the results are already pre-determined'*. Respondent 7 echoes this sentiment and says that *'results are altered'*. These feelings of a lack of the electoral process reflecting the will of the people results in major unrest post-election 2017, and as noted by human rights groups who say that *'more than 50 people have been killed by police since the election in August'* (BBC, 2017).

#### 5.1.2 Power

While the general elections should ensure that the will of the people and the general population, young people perceive power relations and power dynamics to be an important feature of Kenyan democracy. Power was a major talking point in all the interviews with respondents discussing power in relation to the President, the youth, the government, the political elite and ethnicity. Respondent 4 commented that *'power is held by certain tribes, it belongs to the Kikuyus and the Kalenjins'*. Respondent 3 noted that *'there is a perception that power is to be handed down within families and wielded by certain persons'*. When talking of the power of politicians and the political elite it was felt that *'power is exercised in the background by powerful people'* (Respondent 7) and *'power is created by a few loud people and a lot of oppressed people'* (Respondent 3). The topic of oppression follows through with respondent 11 commenting on the loss of citizen power by saying that *'citizens don't even have the power to affect change or help*

*themselves*'. Sentiments such as these are reminiscent of the dichotomy between colonizers and the colonized. Here we can see the reproduction of post-colonial issues. During colonial periods power was wielded by the British colonialists and was exercised on the Kenyan people.

The system that is created results in young people feeling that power which is the essence of democracy that should be exercised by the people to govern themselves is taken away and seen as an assault on their democratic rights. This also feeds into the ethnic tension because certain tribes are seen to wield power and not engage in power sharing. Therefore, the division of power in the country is seen to counter the progress of democracy.

### 5.1.3 Accountability and Corruption

The topic of accountability and corruption relates to both the aspect of free and fair elections and power. In relation to free and fair elections the government through the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) is responsible for conducting and supervising any elections within the country and thus accountable to the citizens of Kenya. The elections according to the Kenyan constitution (Constitution of Kenya, 2010) are supposed to be 'free from violence, intimidation, improper influence or corruption'. It also states that 'political party shall not engage in bribery or other forms of corruption' (The Star, 2018). Aspects of these standards are drawn upon loosely by multiple respondents and shows that they understand the role that the government and various institutions should play in relation to being answerable to citizens. However, there is confusion on the exact deliverables that certain institutions are supposed to deliver. Four respondents mentioned issues of the lack of accountability by the government, politicians and various leaders. Respondent 8 states that *'there is a lack of accountability amongst leaders which causes ripple effects that everyday citizens also do not want to be held accountable'*. Respondent 11 narrates that *'there is a lack of accountability when it comes to service delivery*

by the government' and Respondent 3 echoes that '*institutions that are supposed to be held accountable are not performing their duties and don't understand what role they are supposed to play*'. The respondents don't give exact description on what exactly the various stakeholders are supposed to carry out however, they are aware that they are not functioning at full capacity. Reasons for this are mainly attributed to the nexus between power and corruption.

According to transparency international, Kenya ranks 143/180 on the corruption perceptions index 2017 (Transparency International, 2018). Corruption may be simply described as '*the misuse of public power (by elected politician or appointed civil servant) for private gain*' (Corruptie, 2018). The respondents' views on corruption varied as some thought it results in the reason why the democratic system in Kenya does not work while others thought that the word corruption is used as a scapegoat to explain away various other problems within the country. Respondent 4 in terms of elections and corruption, they feel that '*there is no need to waste your time voting because there is corruption, so nothing will change*'. Whilst respondent 8 feels that '*corruption is used to explain away a lot of things that go wrong in the Kenyan society*'. Respondent 8 feelings toward corruption being used as a buzz word to describe various issues that occur in Kenya is reflective of sentiments made by high ranking government officials. The late Minister of Interior and Coordination of National Government Joseph Ole Nkaisseri in 2015 stated that 'corruption and the media reporting of it is 'an internationalized hysteria aimed at harming the nation.' (YouTube, 2015). However, respondent 8 whilst acknowledging that corruption is used as a 'scapegoat' still believes that '*corruption causes a broken system*'.

This is echoed with the fact that corruption is a word commonly used by Kenyans and is a widespread practice with 'the average city-dwelling Kenyan having to pay as many as 16 bribes each month just in the course of everyday life' (Kenya Advisor, 2018). Corruption has become such a daily occurrence for Kenyan citizens and the youth are brought up within this culture. This results in an embedded culture of clientelism for young

Kenyans today. As mentioned in the previous research section of this paper, the complex interaction between clientelism and politics is one that young people in Kenya have become accustomed to. They have also learned to manipulate this connection to their advantage. Clientelism is categorized as the ‘giving material goods in return for electoral support’ (Stokes, 2013). In speaking on changing the corruption culture and broken system, Respondent 8 comments that *‘when we have kids eventually, we have to make sure they don’t mess up because we’ve already been messed up, we can’t fix what has happened cause it’s already deep in the system’*. This view is also adopted by majority of the respondents who feel that it is the role of the youth to fight for democracy for future generations as well as teach younger people and those entering adulthood the importance of freedom and fairness in relation to elections as well as the importance of keeping those in charge accountable. This notion of constructing themselves as the champions of change is picked up in the next theme on participation in Democracy. In this regard, the lack of accountability and misuse of power by leaders and institutions is causing mistrust and disbelief in democracy as a functioning system.

#### 5.1.4 Media

The media also plays a significant role in the way young people understand and rate democracy. The role of the media in many liberal democracies is to spread information that advocates for democratic values and citizen empowerment. However, several respondents hold the media responsible for not playing this crucial role.

Respondent 3 argued that *‘democracy is also bad because of the media, they don’t understand their role, instead of keeping the government accountable they wait for public outcry and then investigate’*. Respondent 7 commented that *‘there was no communication or false communication during the election period’* and respondent 1 remarked that *‘the media houses were also confused on their side’*. Going back to the understanding that free media is an important indicator of liberal democracy, according to the respondent the media

have also played their part in the levels of democracy within the country. In terms of bias, the media is supposed to remain neutral and not be seen to be taking either side in terms of the political parties or candidates who are running for office. It is a customary practice during the election period for various media houses to invite candidates on shows to discuss their stance and opinion in relation to the country at large or identified topics. Of these instances, respondent 8 mentions:

*‘the debates and conversations they had with politicians on TV were great because it showed that they know what they were talking about. However, the media was bias in they would ask baiting questions and wait for the politician to reply only to state their own opinion, it’s like you are the news, don’t do that, they lack professionalism’.*

In this extract we can see that politicians do participate on platforms in which they get to address issues and speak about their plans if elected. However, the media at times and journalists also take it upon themselves to question these politicians at times in aggressive and controversial ways. It was interesting to note that amongst my respondents, number 5 was a journalist and when asked about what the general elections meant, the respondent replied that *‘Because I am a journalist, so I was on both sides’*. This illustrates that the respondent understands their role as remaining impartial in relation to politics especially during the election period.

I also note that when discussing the topic of media, this is the first instance in which the respondent constructs their identities in opposition to the ‘other’. By this I mean that when speaking of the media multiple respondents use the word ‘they’ when speaking of journalists and media houses and use ‘we’ to speak of the youth as a homogenous group. Throughout the analysis we will see two other occasions where the respondents do this. I will analyze the impacts of their language in this and the other instances in the summary discussion.

Following the second round of the 2017 general elections ‘The government shut down three major TV stations - Citizen, NTV and KTN

shortly before Raila's event at Uhuru Park in Nairobi on January 30' (The Star, 2018). This ban effectively cut off news and transmission for majority of the Kenyan population as the stations were live broadcasting their content on YouTube. Although it is reported by the Communication Authority of Kenya that as of 2017 there is a 'mobile penetration rate of 88.7 percent' a significant percentage of the population could not access the news. It should also be taken into consideration that to livestream on YouTube you would need to purchase 'internet bundles' of a significant amount which is considered too expensive for majority of the country's population. This sentiment was echoed by respondent 4 who complains that *'we were not allowed to see the news, we didn't know what was happening, we have a President and we don't know where the country is heading to, there should be transparency'*. By largely failing in terms of not being accountable and being bias in relation to reporting the media is also playing a role in the way young people are relating with the way democracy functions and is being carried out in Kenya. In a report commissioned by the World Bank done by Well told Story in 2015 they recognized that 'mass media can reboot public perceptions & engagement by catalyzing relevant, topical, informed conversation among youth about government systems'.

This has laid out the main topics associated with young people's perceptions of democracy as a functioning system in Kenya. The theme has presented issues such as the lack of accountability and transparency by then government and the electoral body IEBC during the election period. It has also laid out the repercussions of having a government and country that is fully democratic in theory as it has implemented and set up all the bodies and institutions needed for democracy to thrive but fails to address the will of its people and respect the notion of freedom of choice. In this sense the concept of 'virtual democracy/pretend democracy' coined by Uwizeyimana, 2012 is characteristically present in Kenya. This sub-theme has shown that as the media plays an integral role in young people perception of democracy in the country. A positive shift in the perception of the media can go a long way in the youth's adoption

of their role when it comes to accountability and transparency within the democratic process.

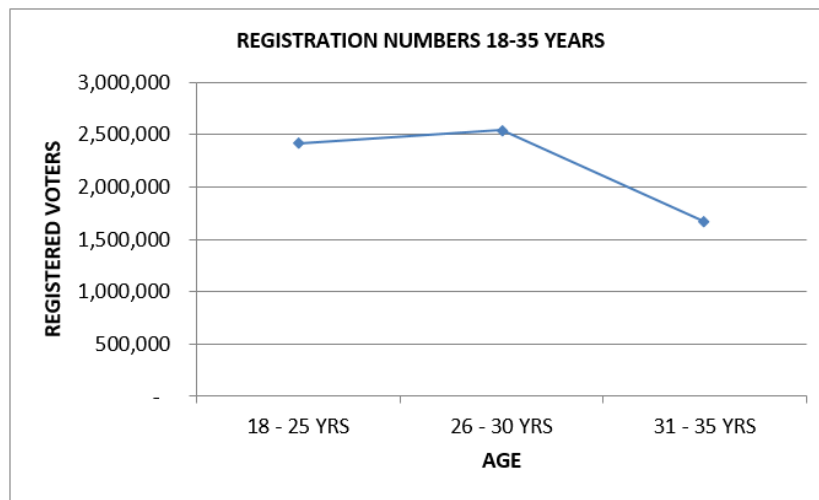
The theme of functioning of democracy has highlighted the youth's belief that democracy is present in Kenya. They recognize the presence of institutions and frameworks that have been set up to ensure the legitimacy of democracy. Technically they consider that this should enable democracy to function fully, however there are issues such as lack of transparency, accountability, power sharing as well the presence of ethnic violence that work against a fully functioning democracy. This links to the next section in which I analyze how their understanding of democracy affects their participation within its processes.

## 5.2 Participation in Democracy

This theme deals with willingness of young people to participate in democracy. For this thesis, I will look at the willingness of the youth to participate in the general elections and their views on electoral democracy. This section will also refer repeatedly to the generational learning model. Following Scholte's (2005, 371) third pillar of democracy, public participation is considered as part of the 'institutional process'.

The conversation surrounding the respondents and participation varied with most respondents feeling that participation formed an integral part of democracy whilst some felt that their participation does not hold any significance therefore there is no need to participate. Respondent 2 commented that *'voting during the election is the only time when you get to be involved in government and politics, you get to choose a leader you like, that's the only opportunity you have to contribute in the making of the country'*. Respondent 3 also feels that *'it's important for the youth to participate in politics and the general election'*. On the other hand, respondent 4 believes that *'nothing will change after you vote so you shouldn't vote because you will just waste your time'* and Respondent 8 who feels that yes *'the youth participate in election but for me I refuse to vote whatsoever, I don't do politics because it's a lost cause'*. In terms of active participation, 7 out of the 11

respondents voted in the 2017 elections. None of the 7 respondents reported to have voted in the second-round elections held 60 days after the nullification of the first round. In the report by Well told story for the World Bank (2015) they found that ‘Most youth have already made up their minds based on experience or misinformation & are dismissive of participation in government systems’. The graph below illustrates voter registration numbers amongst the youth during the 2013 election voter registration period.



Source: IEBC 2015

*Figure 1: Registration numbers for the Youth in Kenya during 2013 elections*

According to the ACE project (Electoral Knowledge Network, 2018) ‘only about 57 per cent of the eligible youth were registered during the last registration drive prior to the 2013 presidential elections, leaving approximately 43 per cent of the eligible not registered’ (2018). These figures reflect the sample group’s participation during the first round of the last 2017 elections. The reasons for the lack of participation in the election vary and will be discussed in the following sub-themes.

### 5.2.1 Education

A reason that respondents gave for the participation or lack thereof participation was education. It has been noted by various authors that for citizen participation to occur on a large scale there must be an understanding of the meaning of democracy and the way that it functions.

Citizens may choose not to participate in democratic processes by the sheer fact that they do not understand them. All the respondents mention that their first contact with democracy came from primary school around the ages of 9-11. This they attributed as a basic description and understanding of what democracy is. With acknowledging that the Kenyan school curriculum taught a basic introduction to politics and democracy, there was an overall feeling from the respondents that the youth need to be re-taught the meaning of democracy to have a better understanding of the part that they are supposed to play. Respondent 2 noted this and said that *'as young people grow up it is important to teach them about politics because if they don't form their own opinions they'll grow up to follow the crowd'*. This opinion was also echoed by respondent 11 who said that *'we need to educate the youth at an early age instead of letting them learn for themselves, ukifunzwa unaeza (if you are taught then you can)'*.

Others thought that education is key as it helps younger generations understand the past and where Kenya has come from. Respondent 9 notes that we should *'educate the youth about democracy because of the young people who are growing up who might have not experienced the 2007/8 election, they need to understand where we came from'*. For this reason, education is key in that it informs the way in which the youth understand the concept of democracy itself and acts as a mnemonic tool that teaches them the historical context of democracy and Kenya. A mnemonic is a pattern used as a learning technique that assists in remembering something (Pressley et. al, 1982) Suggestions made by the respondents include the need for county-wide drives in which citizens are re-taught the basic principles of democracy and the importance of political participation starting at the county level and then moving to a national level.

### 5.2.2 Freedom

This takes us to the subject of choice. Relating to the question of how young people understand democracy, more than half of the respondents associated the meaning of democracy as associated with freedom of

choice. When asked what their understanding of democracy was, respondent 1 replied that '*democracy is about choosing the leaders you want*', Respondent 7 argued that '*democracy is the ability to choose and elect leaders*'. Although majority of the respondents equated democracy with freedom of choice, some differentiated it as having the ability to choose but the lack of reflection of that choice. Respondent 2 and 9 both pointed out that yes, the elections present an opportunity for citizens to vote and make a choice, but that *it doesn't matter who you choose because the decision has already been made*. For these respondents the reasons surrounding their understanding of democracy has been tainted by their views that their free choice and those of other citizens is taken away.

The feeling that choice is not respected leads some respondents to completely removal of self from politics. This is a scenario in which they otherwise believe that the youth participates in elections but they themselves say that they are not involved in politics. For Respondent 5 his reasons for not participating in politics is that as a journalist remaining impartial is of immense importance. For the others it was interesting that they believed that the youth participated in politics but they themselves have chosen not to take part or speak of themselves in opposition to politics. This is illustrated by Respondent 2 who narrated that '*I am not part of politics since last year I really when I saw what politics was*'. Respondent 8 commented that '*I don't do politics because it is a lost cause*' and Respondent 11 said that '*personally I am not routed in politics*'. These respondents by placing themselves in opposition to politics are creating and shaping subjective constructions of their worlds. This falls into the constructivism theoretical approach. These respondents see themselves as removed from politics and thus it has resulted in their lack of participation and can be taken to symbolize resistance to participation in general elections.

This moves us into the topic of freedom of speech and expression. This follows the thinking that if a person feels that they are free to express

themselves and speak without fear of retribution then they will consider themselves as a part of the citizenry. It is noted that ‘the 2010 constitution strengthened protections for freedoms of speech and of the press, and there is a large, independent, and active media sector in Kenya’ (Freedom House, 2018). The media and freedom of speech and expression play a crucial role in the perception of democracy in Kenya. Accordingly, Respondent 3 exclaims that *‘expression is an important part of democracy’* while respondent 4 says that *‘people should be allowed to say what they feel’* and respondent 2 says that *‘it is important as a young person in Kenya to say what you think’*. These attitudes illustrate that young people consider freedom of speech and expression to be a key part of democracy.

In the interviews with respondent 3 and 6 they both mention the name of Boniface Mwangi and use him as a sign of great freedom of speech and expression. Boniface Mwangi is an award winning photo-journalist known by Kenyans for his activism, daring and extreme demonstrations against issues such as corruption, lack of transparency, electoral freedom and fraud. He is an award-winning journalist whose tireless efforts to speak out against injustices have made him synonymous in Kenya. Respondent 3 mentions Boniface in a passionate way saying that:

*‘After hanging around with people who have very strong opinions about why to participate and listening and being part of a lot of activities then you realize that it is important to make people hear me. Like people will not. You know like Boniface Mwangi, he started PAWA 254, I hanged around because I liked art. And then hearing the discussions and stuff like that then you get to learn that it’s important for you to actively participate and ask you what’s your opinion I want to represent you?’.*

This extract depicts the way in which Boniface Mwangi is used as a symbol to explain how freedom of speech can be used to inspire participation from young people. Boniface Mwangi’s platform while running for the position of Member of the Parliament for the Starehe constituency vowed that as a member of the youth he would advocate for change. As respondent 3 sees the importance of being able to use your voice to encourage participation, respondent 6 sees freedom of speech and

expression as a link to issues surrounding safety. They highlight that they *'feel free to express myself, the only time you might feel unsafe is if you do it like Boniface Mwangi then you are at risk'*. Safety was a big issue when it came to the ability to be able to speak freely about politics and the general elections. Multiple respondents said that they were either uncomfortable or felt unsafe when speaking about politics. Respondent 10 noted that *'I feel uncomfortable and unsafe speaking about politics, everyone has their own opinion, you can be speaking, and someone supports the other person'*. In this instance we see that speaking in support of one political candidate is perceived as a danger because the person whom you are speaking to could support an opposing member. This speaks on the nature of politicized voting in which you are expected in support of your candidate to reject the opposition. This sort of polarity is thought to be reminiscent of ethnic polarized voting. This notion is further discussed in the availability of democracy section in the analysis of young peoples 'othering'.

### 5.2.3 Change

The biggest reason given for the participation in politics and voting in the general elections is change. In this sense, the respondents all identify participation in elections as an avenue to evoke change. Even if sometimes they believe that their choices and decisions are not reflected on the ground. Respondent 8 notes that *'the most important thing in democracy is the feeling that when you vote something will change'*, this is echoed by respondent 4 who says that *'the youth vote and participate because they want to see change in their lives like finding jobs'* and respondent 3 *'the youth has to run for more office and participate more in the government'*. The views ran across all the interviews and is a signifier that young people are willing and wanting for change. This sub-theme connects to the view that the youth is a key tool for change and that the power that they yield is what will in turn reflect positively on democracy in Kenya. Respondent 1 notes that *'the youth are the future and if they are not happy we won't progress'*,

respondent 3 notes that *'the youth are a powerful tool for change and they should participate as the majority more in matters that affect them'*.

By seeing the youth as a catalyst for change is also cognizant of the fact that the youth make up the largest percentage of the population. According to the Business daily (Otuki, 2017) 'Kenya's ratio of youth (aged 15-24) to the population stands at 20.3 per cent, above the world's average of 15.8 per cent and 19.2 per cent for Africa'. This is also coupled with the fact that 'a World Bank report released last year shows that Kenya leads the region in youth unemployment at 17.3 per cent compared to only six per cent for neighboring Uganda and Tanzania each (Business Daily, 2017). A combination of being a high percentage of the population and having a high rate of unemployment creates a condition of desperation amongst the youth. As noted by respondent 5 *'democracy is the fight for the people to bring in a new government and create new opportunities and beginning for themselves and a new rule of power'*.

There is also an acknowledgment in the difference between the younger and the older generations. Several respondents spoke about the fact that their participation was forced or influenced by their parents, whilst other acknowledge that young people are paid during political rallies by politicians to vote for them. Respondent 2 notes that *'older people are trying to tell us what they think is right but at some point, we have to choose for ourselves and not keep quiet because it doesn't help the country'*. While respondent 9 thinks that *'the youth don't participate willingly but because of pressure, my mum pressured me to vote'* and respondent 1 noted that *'you can't just talk, the older generation want everyone growing up to think a keep with their way of doing things'*. The idea of paternalistic politics is highlighted by respondent 3 who advocates that *'we as the youth have to participate in politics to counter the idea that old men will stay in those positions until they die'*. This need for change also signifies a shift from old political ideology and methods that are adopted by the older generation. This is also highlighted in an article on who young Kenyans vote for. It is highlighted

that 'In a country where 80 percent of the population is aged below 35, just 13 percent of those running for various offices are in that age band' (Namu, 2017). In a country where the youth are the majority, the government and politics should be more reflective of the demographic. Here we see the second instance of othering in which these young people construct themselves in opposition to the older generation by using the categories of 'we' and 'them'. They refer to 'old' as 'they', other respondents use terms such as 'them' to also denote the older generation.

This theme has laid out the foundation of the perceptions by young people of participation in democracy and the general elections. Barriers to youth participation in politics and general elections include the lack of acknowledgment of the freedoms of all citizens in choosing their elected leaders. There have also been realizations that in the rural and grassroots area as there is a general lack of ethnic tension democracy principles are followed and adhered to. Education was also highlighted as a means to educate the youth about democracy so as to increase their participation. A change from the old guard to the new was also identified as a major step forward toward the realization of a more democratic Kenya. It is also noted that increased contact with the outside world through globalization has increased the demand for democracy by young people as they get to see and understand the way democracy is carried out in various contexts.

This theme has discussed the willingness of young people to participate in democracy. Participation in democratic processes is seen as important by a large majority of the youth except by those who deem participation to be a lost cause. It is however interesting to note that even the youth who don't believe in participating and completely remove themselves from politics still believe that young people participate in processes such as the general elections. This could reveal that even though they feel disenfranchised they might be hopeful that participation has positive effects on the larger scale of democracy in Kenya.

### 5.3 Availability of Democracy

This theme introduces and discusses the notion of insider and outsidership through the sub-themes of ethnicity and tribalism, rural – urban divide and inclusivity. How do these features work in post-colonial Kenya. Do young people think that democracy in Kenya is inclusive? Is it available to all persons? And how does a history of colonialism in Kenya shape/affect and impact this.

#### 5.3.1 Ethnicity and Tribalism

In the Gettysburg address (1863) Abraham Lincoln stated that ‘this government of the people, by the people, for the people’. Though written within the American context, this section of the address was selected to reflect the citizens as a unified body with equal rights. During the interviews the issue of the availability of democracy was marked with feelings that democracy only served certain groups and people. It does not function as a system that works for all the citizens of Kenya. The Kenyan political arena is marked by tribal and ethnic features as continuously discussed throughout this text. This is highlighted by the fact that all the respondents spoke about ethnicity and tribalism in several ways. Respondent 1 noted that due to living in Kibera *‘you can’t speak about your open opinions about elections’*. Respondent 4 noted that *‘the presidency belongs to the kikuyus and the Kalenjins’* while respondent 7 noted that *‘the government and the police attacked and killed people and targeted people from one ethnic group’*.

A large majority of literature surrounding democracy and politics in Kenya is centered on the salient ethnic divisions that lead to contentious elections that sometimes lead into violence. From a post colonialism perspective, ethnic tribalism does play a leading role in politics and the elections in Kenya, but it is worthy and positive to note that the young people from this sample did not only focus on ethnicity and tribalism. They can look past the issue of ethnicity and tribalism to discuss other matters that occur when rating democracy and general elections. This is aptly noted by respondent 9 who describes that *‘when we were divided*

*during colonialism and each tribe was fighting for themselves 'we' never defeated the Europeans but when 'we' came together to fight is when 'we' defeated 'them'.*

The third instance in which othering occurred is when some respondents used 'them' and 'those' to describes members of a certain ethnic group. In one instance respondent 1 said 'I don't even want to imagine what those people might do' when speaking about feeling free to express views on politics. The second instance referred to the tribe of the sitting president as 'them'. This illustrates the further effects that ethnic polarization and tension have had on young people in Kenya.

### 5.3.2 Rural- Urban divide

In terms of availability of democracy, several respondents mentioned that democracy is more present and works better in the rural areas of Kenya as opposed to the urban areas. Respondent 3 noted that *'in the rural areas people are invested in voting, they put out politicians who are not doing their jobs because there is no tribal conflict, democracy in the rural areas is more sensible in Nairobi'*. Respondent 7 argues that:

*'In shagz you should see how people relate to politicians, they keep them accountable. You know where your MCA stays, he attends functions like funerals and weddings. They are part of the community. So, if something goes wrong you can go directly to them and ask them what is happening or even seek help from them. In Nairobi, you don't even know who most of the politicians are for your area and you only see them on TV. When something goes wrong who do you ask'*

Respondent 9 also noted that *'in the grassroot rural areas democracy is kinda applied, it makes more sense because you can make the choices and decisions for who will be the leaders'*.

For these respondents there is a difference between the ways democracy works in the rural (shagz) areas as compared to urban areas. Kenya is geographically and regionally divided among the 47 ethnic groups with

Nairobi and other larger metropolitan cities harboring a large mix of various ethnic groups. This can be seen on the map (Doyle, 2008)

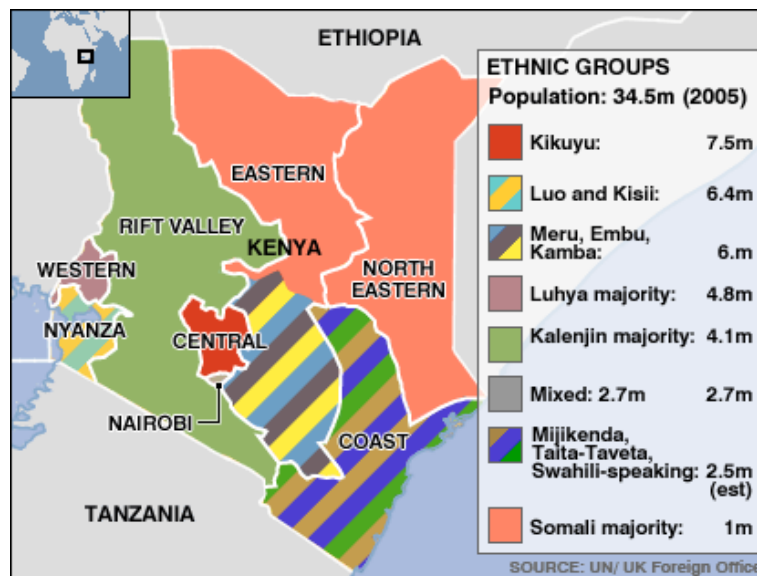


Figure 2: Geographical distribution of Ethnic Groups in Kenya

This regional grouping of ethnic groups has resulted in local elections at the county level being perceived as more democratic as there is little to no intertribal tension. The process of devolution that the country underwent in 2010 has further consolidated those boundaries. Before devolution there were eight provinces which were subdivided into 46 districts now there are 47 counties. It is interesting to note that the respondents believe that the presence of ethnic cleavage results in singular ethnically dominated local county elections allow for more accountability and success of democratic processes. This ties into the theoretical background of post colonialism as majority of colonial districts were formed as the main administrative unit for British colonies. Due to rural-urban migration there is a mix of ethnic groups living together in tightly clustered areas as compared to the rural context. Nairobi being the capital city and having a mix of people from various tribes. As democracy is perceived to ‘work in rural areas’ and people are free to choose their leaders young people believe that democracy is more ‘available’.

### 5.3.3 Inclusivity

This links to the topic of inclusivity of democracy. Although respondent 3 identifies that *‘democracy is inclusion, making sure everyone feels represented in some way’*, the general feeling amongst the group is that democratic processes such as general elections are manipulated to create division amongst Kenyans. This is highlighted by respondent 4 who says that *‘the government area fighting one another and hiding it from us’* and respondent 1 who notes that *‘Kenya doesn’t want to be one nation, it just wants to be divided especially during the election season’*. These views of elections diving the nation cut across all three themes as it relates to the way in which young people rate the success of the democratic system in Kenya.

Other views on inclusivity include the lack of availability of certain citizen freedoms by virtue of the location and economic position that someone lives in. An example of this is when the respondents who live in Kibera remark that they feel unsafe. Respondent 1 explains that *‘in Kibera, before and after the election there is heavy police presence and they are armed, you just choose to stay indoors, at night it’s unsafe and you just hear gunshots everywhere’* and respondent 9 says that *‘we just need peace, we have already experienced bloodshed, we never know what will happen in the future though’*. During the 2017 election violence by the police was concentrated in places such as Kibera which is one of the largest slums in Africa as well as cities that were opposition strongholds. Instances such as these has led young people from across different intersectionality’s to note that democracy is not available equally to all persons.

Another view on the lack of inclusivity in democracy deals with the lack of representation of young people within government. In a country where 80 percent of the population is aged below 35, just 13 percent of those running for various offices are in that age band (Namu, 2017). This shows a mis-match between the number of representatives within government and the largest demographic in Kenya. It is interesting to note that the constitution makes provision for ‘two members, being one man and one

woman, representing the youth;’ within the senate (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). However, these positions are not formally recognized.

The three sub-themes highlight issues that affect the availability of democracy to all citizens in Kenya. Young people believe that the inclusivity of democracy is determined by what ethnic group the political elite are, what tribe is currently in power and the location. The overall perception of the inclusivity of democracy is that it is not inclusive as politicians use ethnic polarization to divide the country especially during the election season. The youth also believe that democracy is more accessible and available in the rural areas as they are devoid of ethnic tension and conflict. Apart from ethnicity, factors such as socio-economic positionality such as living in low income areas don’t allow citizens to feel like there are accorded their democratic rights.

#### 5.4 Summary Discussion

In this concluding section of my analysis, I will relate to the key findings from the three themes in relation to my research question of ‘How does the youth perceive democracy given the history of general elections in post-colonial Nairobi, Kenya?’

The three themes of functionality of democracy, participation in democracy and availability of democracy has been explored in the in this section. To be able to make sense of the data and findings the sub-themes were used as categories in which to analyze various aspects of young people’s feelings towards democracy in Kenya.

In discussing the first theme of the functionality of democracy, the respondent narratives illustrate that they believe that democracy is present in Kenya. They also acknowledge that Kenya has a democratic system that is governed ideally through democratic principles. However, they also think that the action of democracy is not being realized as it is distorted by the lack of accountability, transparency, power sharing and the presence of ethnic tensions that were borne through a legacy of colonialism. This is aptly captured during Fatoumata Waggeh’s TedX

Talk on Africa and Post-Colonial development when she says that ‘ethnic polarization during the colonial leads to ethnic violence in the post-colonial’ (2013).

Relating this to the concept that of ‘virtual/pretend democracies’ coined by Uwizeyimana (2012), as Kenya shifted from self-rule in the pre-colonial to authoritarianism in the colonial, the impacts of this have been that democratic processes such as general elections being used as tools to legitimize transfer of power by the political elite. Because of this perception surrounding liberal democracy in Kenya are positive but perceptions on the way which liberal democracy functions in Kenya is negative. In summary young people believe that Kenya needs to do democracy better.

The role of the media was also identified as young people as playing a crucial role in the way that democracy functions. But they lack professionalism and bias which makes them fail in their role at keeping the government accountable.

In relation to participation in democracy, the sample youth group has mixed feelings about participation in politics and the general elections. A few of the respondents have completely dis-attached themselves from politics by constructing their identities in opposition to politics. Taking a social constructivism perspective, these young people construct their social realities within the context of political hardship, and this can be seen to mimic forms of resistance to participation. It is interesting to note however, much of the sample group including those who oppose politics still believe that participation in general elections is important. Young people believe that the ‘youth’ can participate in democratic processes by exercising their right to vote.

Barriers to the participation of the youth have attributed to respondent’s negative perceptions of participation. Examples of these include education, lack of recognition of democratic freedoms and stagnation due to a lack of dynamism in politics.

Education is seen to be a barrier that excludes many citizens' participation. There was an overall feeling from the respondents that the youth need to be re-taught the meaning of democracy to have a better understanding of the part that they are supposed to play in it. Due to misinformation and misunderstanding of democracy and its principles and processes it is believed that peoples chances of participation will increase if they understand what is going on and how they can affect change. Therefore, education is key in that it informs the way in which the youth understand the concept of democracy itself and acts as a mnemonic tool that teaches them the historical context of democracy and Kenya and how it ties in with coloniality.

The right to express oneself is the cornerstone of any democratic society. Perceptions of the freedom of speech and expression by these young people has resulted in different outcomes. While some see this as a motivating force to speak louder and express themselves in a big way to encourage other young people to do the same in terms of general elections and participation in politics, others take this restriction on freedom of speech and expression as a threat to their safety which evokes fear amongst the youth especially those who live in low income areas like the slums of Kibera where tension during the election period is pronounced.

The call for change was also noted by a large majority of the respondents especially when it comes to a shift in the political thinking disseminated by the older generation. Multiple respondents noted the role of older generations if 'forcing' or 'influencing' their participation. This in relation to the generational learning informs that early learning of concepts such as democracy and politics become pronounced during periods of late adolescence and early adulthood. This period which has been discussed in previous research as 'waithood' is a time in which young people experiences shape the way they construct their world view for the rest of their lives. Living in a time where period of the worst post-election violence in 2007 has happened in the country and where landmark rulings such as the nullification of the Presidential results in 2017, young people

have identified the need to understand their world and construct their identities from their subjective experiences.

In the section on availability of democracy, young people believe that democracy is not equally available to all citizens. Ethnicity plays a big role in their understanding and perception of the inclusion of all citizens in the democratic system. Some respondents note that the availability of democracy is affected by factors such as socio-economic conditions and geographical location. Socio-economic factors exclude certain citizens from exercising their full democratic rights and freedoms. Examples of these are young people from lower-income backgrounds such as the respondents who live in the slums of Kibera noting that during election periods they have heavy police presence and when ethnic violence or police brutality commences they are usually the first point of contact.

Democracy is also perceived to work better in the rural areas of Kenya. Some respondents felt that because rural areas are devoid of ethnic tension and citizens can exercise their rights as their elected representatives are accountable to them. This also leads into the issue of politics itself as a system that is not inclusive of young people even though they represent the largest demographic of citizens as well as voters in the country. As discussed previously, just 13% of those running for office are under the age of 35 (Namu, 2017). This has resulted in young people feeling that politics is an 'old man's game'.

In larger urban areas, most young Kenyans and Kenyans in general have never met their area representatives. However, in the rural areas because of relative close proximity, everyone knows or has even been to the houses of their political representatives. In these areas, since traditional 'African democracies' still exist to some extent. The political elite still have to consult with elders and the community at large to be able to perform their functions well. In urban areas, where the traditional type of democracy is less present this is when we encounter issues of the political elite dictating the terms of which democracy will function.

A last point of interest is the use of othering done by multiple respondents when speaking of the media, the older generation and members of another ethnic group. Young people have adopted the use of coded language such as 'we' and 'them' when they must negotiate sensitive conversations on democracy and politics, ethnicity, generational gaps and media. This use of language can be connected through a colonial lens and seen to mirror an (us-other) mentality. The choice of young people to form themselves as a homogenous youth group is seen to be beneficial when speaking of topics such as change and power that the youth must change the democratic system and its processes. However, when speaking in speaking of other ethnic groups, this language use has the potential to become dangerous as it increases tribal polarization as well as cultivates further division amongst Kenyans. Therefore, the use of the categories 'we' and 'them' can be interchangeability positive and negative.

In conclusion, for these young people the reasons surrounding their understanding of democracy has been tainted by their views that their free choice and those of other citizens is taken away. The negative perceptions of the way in which democracy functions are influenced by concerns such as power grasps, the lack of inclusivity in decision making, the lack of accountability and transparency during general elections and a semi-functioning media control. These factors all have an impact on the way these young people exercise their right to vote and participate in politics and the general elections. The current is greatly determined and shaped by the past especially when it comes to general elections and participation in democratic processes. Despite this the youth do still have a general interest in democracy and democratic participation. Although this is encouraging and shows that some remain enthusiastic a few of the young people have become increasingly disillusioned and to some extent disengaged with politics until they see tangible changes towards higher levels of democracy in Kenya.

The youth is usually identified as a marginalized group. However, as the interviews have shown, young people believe that they hold great power

as catalysts for change towards a more democratic Kenya. Even if they are at times dejected by the fact that their choices are not reflected and issues such as lack of accountability and transparency affect democracy and the political landscape in Kenya, that does not stop them from believing that they are responsible for change especially for the future generations that are growing up. This is summed up by respondent 7 who says that *'the youth are the ones who can improve democracy, they just have to be ready to change the situation themselves'*. The optimism of young people towards democracy that is inclusive and representative also stems for the fact that they see themselves as the tools that will enact change. Young people also see themselves as responsible for instilling the change needed for future generations to come.

Positive reasons for youth participation include the fact that respondents note that globalization is having a progressive impact on their demand for democracy. Respondent 3 notes that *'the youth are participating more in politics because of exposure and globalization, you hear news from other countries and young people participate for the right reasons.'*

## 6. Conclusion and Further Research

In summary, youth perceptions of democracy remain largely positive. Ethnicity as identified by various scholars and previous literature as playing a significant role in politics and democracy in Kenya is not the only feature of youth perceptions on democracy. By looking at previous research relating to youth, democracy and Kenyan elections we see that young people understand democracy to entail the basic elements of liberal democracy. We also identify the ways Kenya's colonial historical context and social perspectives have shaped the construction of the post-colonial category of 'youth' as a homogenous problematic group.

Through the lens of post-coloniality, as Kenya shifted from self-rule in the pre-colonial to authoritarianism in the colonial, the impacts of this have been that democratic processes such as general elections being used as tools to legitimize transfer of power by the elite. The results of this have been that using a constructivist perspective, young people use their subjective experiences to construct their worldviews and in turn the way they relate to democracy in Kenya. This also relates to the findings that young people have adopted the use of coded language such as 'we' and 'them' which is reminiscent of colonial language, to negotiate sensitive conversations on democracy and politics, ethnicity, generational gaps and media. Analyzing this through a constructivist lense, this can be used as a tool of empowerment or a method of ethnic polarization.

By using semi-structured interview to collect data, the analysis has shown that for these young people the reasons surrounding their understanding of democracy has been tainted by their views that their free choice and those of other citizens is taken away. This follows the generational learning theory as these views are forming in a critical period when young people are beginning to understand their place and role in society.

To answer the research question, on how young Kenyans perceive and understand democracy to function. The negative perceptions of the way in which democracy functions are influenced by concerns such as power

grasp, the lack of inclusivity in decision making, the lack of accountability and transparency during general elections and a semi-functioning media control. The history of previous general elections has also directly affected the youth's perception of the way that democracy appropriately functions. Factors such as these show characteristics of the 'virtual/face democracies' identified by Uwizeyimana (2012). The youth within this research believe that yes democracy does exist in Kenya, however it is not fully functioning. Perceptions surrounding liberal democracy in Kenya are positive but perceptions on the way which liberal democracy functions in Kenya is negative.

The perception that democracy does not fully function in Kenya also has an impact on the way these young people exercise their right to vote and participate in politics and the general elections. Despite only a portion of the youth still having a general interest in democracy and democratic participation. It is encouraging and shows that some remain enthusiastic as on the ground young people have become increasingly disillusioned and to some extent disengaged with politics until they see tangible changes in regards to higher levels of democracy in Kenya.

As Scholte (2005, 147) notes 'notions of identity underpin frameworks for community, democracy, citizenship and resistance'. Agency therefore plays a significant role in intercommunication with the 'construction of social reality occurs in a context of political struggle and as an expression of resistance' (Scholte 2005, 132). Thus in order to counter resistance to participation the idea of democracy and its processes, young people who construct their identities in opposition to the older generation and at times to other tribes need to be incorporated into the political system in Kenya through increased representation. Following constructivism in that these young people form their understanding of world through their experiences and thus reflecting those experiences, allowing them to have agency and have a seat at the political table would go a long way in improving their participation in democracy.

On democracy being available to all Kenyan citizens equally, the results from this research have also shown that there is a need for the activation of the youth member of the senate that has been made provisions for in the Kenyan constitution. This would go a long way in pushing the agenda of inclusivity within democracy but also make young people feel that they are contributing to building the nation. Multiple respondents noted that participation in general elections is affected by people's lack of understanding of democratic processes. On the county level, the media should be utilized aggressively to spread information through mass media. Communication is a powerful tool that can be used to re-teach citizens about democracy.

Ethnicity plays a big role in politics in Kenya. However, it is not the only factor that affects young Kenyans perceptions and participation of democracy. It does feature heavily in the discussion on the equality of the availability of democracy to Kenyans. A large majority of the respondents spoke about democracy not being fully available to some ethnic tribes in comparison to others. An example could be the ethnic violence that is brought upon the Luo community during post-election violence. Ethnic polarization and its relation to land inheritance, power and natural resources in result of colonialism has played a large role in the way that people perceive democracy to relate to equality.

Other factors however also play a role in this which include migration. With a large number of Kenyans migrating into urban populated areas. Respondents believe that democracy is more present in the rural areas than in the urban areas. Reasons for this are given as in the rural areas, residents are more likely to keep their politicians accountable. Non-performance causes politicians to be cast out of their seats in some cases. In larger urban areas, most young Kenyans and Kenyans in general have never met their area representatives. However, in the rural areas because of relative close proximity, everyone know or has even been to the houses of their political representatives. In these areas, since traditional 'African democracies' still exist to some extent. The political elite still have to

consult with elders and the community at large to be able to perform their functions well. In urban areas where the traditional type of democracy is less present this is when we encounter issues of the political elite dictating the terms of which democracy will function.

Relating this to the concept that of 'virtual/face democracies' coined by Uwizeyimana (2012), as Kenya shifted from self-rule in the pre-colonial to authoritarianism in the colonial, the impacts of this have been that democratic processes such as general elections being used as tools to legitimize transfer of power by the political elite especially in the urban areas.

Due to the size of my small sample group I realize that I am not able to make general or sweeping statement about the 'youth in Kenya'. As the size of the sample is small, further research would aim to replicate the research design on a larger scale and involve the use of focus groups to see how youth relate to each other when faced with the same questions.

This research focuses on how the youth perceive democracy given the history of general elections in post-colonial Nairobi, Kenya?. The respondents mostly came from different economic, social, gender and ethnic backgrounds. Their perceptions of democracy in Kenya remain generally optimistic but their reasons for participating in general elections vary according to their subjective experiences and understanding of the Kenyan democratic system. Further study into this subject should increase the number of participants to broaden the sample group to see if this research findings apply to young people across Kenya. It would also be interesting to note the differences in perception of the youth towards democracy across larger intersectionality including rural vs. urban, low-income vs. high-income, educational background etc.

Further research could also investigate cross generational comparisons of older generation perceptions of democracy given the history of general elections. It would be interesting to see how the findings would be similar or different.

## 7. References

- American Psychological Association. 2018. Five principles for research ethics. Accessed May 16, 2018.  
<https://www.apa.org/monitor/jan03/principles>
- Ackerly, Brooke, and Jacqui True. (eds.). 2010. *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Afrobarometer. 2018. 'WP95: Voting in Kenya: Putting ethnicity in perspective'. Accessed May 16, 2018.  
<http://www.afrobarometer.org/publications/wp95-voting-kenya-putting-ethnicity-perspective>
- Africa News. 2018. 'A look at Kenya's elections history since independence in 1964'. Accessed May 3, 2018.  
<http://www.africanews.com/2017/10/25/a-look-at-kenya-s-elections-history-since-independence-in-1964//>
- Africa Union Youth Charter. 2016. art.11 para 1. Accessed May 16, 2018.  
[http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/african\\_youth\\_charter\\_2006.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/african_youth_charter_2006.pdf)
- Ahluwalia, Pal. 2001. *Politics and Post-Colonial Theory: African Inflections*. London: Routledge
- Bartels, L.M. and Jackman, S., 2014. A generational model of political learning. *Electoral Studies*, 33, 7-18. DOI: 10.1016/j.electstud.2013.06.004
- BBC News. 2017. 'Kenya general election 2017'. Accessed May 3, 2018.  
<http://www.bbc.com/news/topics/cm6pmm4v266t/kenya-general-election-2017>
- Biernacki, Patrick and Waldorf, Dan. 2018. Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 10(2) 141-163. DOI: 10.1177/004912418101000205
- Bratton, Michael and Mwangi S. Kimenyi. 2008. Voting in Kenya: Putting Ethnicity in Perspective, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 2(2), 272-289, DOI: 10.1080/17531050802058401
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2), 77-101, ISSN 1478-0887  
Available from: <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/11735>

Bryman, Alan. 2012. *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Centre for Multi-Party Democracy Kenya (CMD-K), *The Kenya National Youth Charter 2013*, 2013. Accessed: 01/05/18. Available: <http://cmd-kenya.org/cmdold/files/The-Kenya-National-Youth-Charter-2013.pdf>

Chege, Njeri. 2015. "What's in it for me?' Negotiations of asymmetries, concerns and interests between the researcher and research subjects", *Ethnography* 16(4), 463-481. DOI: 10.1177/1466138114552953

Corruptie. 2018. 'Corruption'. Accessed February 5, 2018. <http://www.corruptie.org/en/corruption/what-is-corruption/>

Democracy Renewal. 2018. 'What is "Liberal Democracy?"'. Accessed March 5, 2018. <http://democracyrenewal.edu.au/what-liberal-democracy>

Dibua, Jeremiah. I. 2006. *Modernization and the Crisis of Development in Africa*. London: Routledge.

Doyle, Mark. 2008. 'Kenya stokes tribalism debate'. *BBC News*. Online accessed: January 6, 2018. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7168551.stm>

Diouf, Mamadou. "Engaging postcolonial cultures: African youth and public space." *African studies review* 46, no. 2 (2003): 1-12. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1514823>

Edgell, Amanda B., et al. 2016. "When and where do elections matter? A global test of the democratization by elections hypothesis, 1900–2010." *Democratization* 25.3 (2018): 422-444. DOI: [10.1080/13510347.2017.1369964](https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2017.1369964)

Electoral Knowledge Network. 2018. 'Elections and Youth: The case of Kenya' *Ace Project*, Accessed April 4, 2018. <http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/em/elections-and-youth/the-case-of-kenya>

Ethnologue. 2018. 'Kenya'. Accessed May 15, 2018. <https://www.ethnologue.com/country/KE>

Freedom House. 2018. 'Kenya Profile'. Accessed April 21, 2018. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2018/kenya>

Government of Kenya. 4 August 2010. CONSTITUTION OF KENYA. Retrieved from <http://www.kenyalaw.org/lex/actview.xql?actid=Const2010>

Hammersley, Martyn. and Paul Atkinson. 2007. *Ethnography - principles in practice*. New York: Routledge.

Honwana, Alcinda. 2014. "Waithood': Youth transitions and social change." *Development and equity: An interdisciplinary exploration by ten scholars from Africa, Asia and Latin America*. 28-40.

Hoyningen-Huene, Paul. 2006. *Context of Discovery Versus Context of Justification and Thomas Kuhn*. In Schickore and Steinle (Eds.) (2006), 119-131.

Jacob, S. A., & Furgerson, S. P. 2012. Writing Interview Protocols and Conducting Interviews: Tips for Students New to the Field of Qualitative Research. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(42), 1-10. Retrieved from <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol17/iss42/3>

Kagwanja, Peter and Roger Southall. 2009. Introduction: Kenya – A democracy in retreat? *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 27(3), 259-277, DOI:10.1080/02589000903216930

Kenya Advisor. 2018. 'The Facts About Corruption in Kenya'. Accessed May 1, 2018. <http://www.kenya-advisor.com/corruption-in-kenya.html>

Kibera.org. 2018. Kibera Facts & Information. Accessed May 12, 2018. <https://www.kibera.org.uk/facts-info/>

Lincoln, Abraham. "The Gettysburg Address." 1863. *America's Most Famous Speeches*, by Dale Salwak, Random House, 1984. Online accessed: May 3, 2018. <http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm>

Lührmann et al. 2017. V-Dem Annual Report 2017. Democracy at Dusk? University of Gothenburg: V-Dem Institute. Accessed May 5, 2018. [https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer\\_public/b0/79/b079aa5a-eb3b-4e27-abdb-604b11ecd3db/v-dem\\_annualreport2017\\_v2.pdf](https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/b0/79/b079aa5a-eb3b-4e27-abdb-604b11ecd3db/v-dem_annualreport2017_v2.pdf)

Makori, Consolata, M. 2015. Youth perception of and Participation in electoral Democracy in Kenya. (master's Thesis). Norwegian University of Life Sciences. Accessed May 4, 2018. URL: [https://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/293804/makori\\_master2015.pdf?sequence=1](https://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/293804/makori_master2015.pdf?sequence=1)

Mattes, R., & Bratton, M. 2007. Learning about democracy in Africa: Awareness, performance, and experience. *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(1), 192-217. DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-5907.2007.00245.x

May, Tim. 2011. *Social research: Issues, Methods and process (4th Ed)*. England: Open University Press.

McEvoy-Levy, S., 2014. Stuck in circulation: children, 'waithood' and the conflict narratives of Israelis and Palestinians. *Children's Geographies*, 12(3), 312-326. DOI: [10.1080/14733285.2014.929368](https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2014.929368)

Merriam-Webster. 2018. 'Devolution'. Accessed May 10, 2018. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/devolution>

Mohamed, Hamza. 2017. "Kenyan elections: The ethnicity factor" *Aljazeera.Com*, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/08/kenyan-elections-ethnicity-factor-170806081143385.html>

Mojtahed, Reza, Miguel Baptista Nunes, Jorge Tiago Martins, and Alex Peng. 2014. "Equipping the Constructivist Researcher: The Combined use of Semi-Structured Interviews and Decision – Making maps." *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 12(2)

Pressley, Michael, Joel R. Levin, and Harold D. Delaney. "The mnemonic keyword method." *Review of Educational Research* 52, no. 1 (1982): 61-91.

Mwiti, Lee. 2017. 'FACTSHEET: How much do Kenyan members of parliament earn – and are they overpaid?' *AfricaCheck*, Last Modified January 15, 2017. Accessed May 5, 2018. <https://africacheck.org/factsheets/factsheet-much-kenyan-members-parliament-earn-overpaid/>

Namu, John-Allan. 2017. "What Will Young Kenyans Vote For?" *Aljazeera.Com*, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/07/kenya-election-young-people-vote-170720100333040.html> Accessed 7 May 2018.

Nasong'o, Shadrack W. and Godwin R. Murunga. (eds.). 2007. *Kenya: The Struggle for Democracy*, Africa in the New Millenium series. Senegal and New York: CODESERIA and ZED BOOKS.

Observatory of Economic Complexity. 2018. 'Kenya'. <https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/ken/>

Otuki, Neville. 2017. 'Kenya's youth percentage among the highest globally'. The *Business Daily*. Online accessed May 3, 2018. <https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/economy/Kenya-youth-percentage-among-the-highest-globally/3946234-4072946-jvv2x2/index.html>

Oxford living dictionaries. 2018. 'Postcolonial'. Accessed February 16, 2018. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/postcolonial>

Research Methodology. 2018. 'Inductive Approach (Inductive Reasoning)'. Accessed March 21, 2018. <https://research-methodology.net/research-methodology/research-approach/inductive-approach-2/>

Scholte, Jan Aart. 2005. *Globalization: A critical introduction*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Singerman, D., 2013. Youth, gender, and dignity in the Egyptian uprising. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 9(3), 1-27. DOI:10.2979/jmiddeastwomstud.9.3.1

Statistics How To. 2018. 'Likert Scale'. Accessed May 16, 2018. <http://www.statisticshowto.com/likert-scale-definition-and-examples/>

Stokes, Susan C. "Political clientelism." In *The Oxford handbook of political science*. 2007. <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199604456.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199604456-e-031>

Student of the World. 'Penpal Statistics: Kenya'. Accessed March 1, 2018. <http://www.studentsoftheworld.info/penpals/stats.php3?Pays=KEN>

The Economist. 'Democracy Index 2017'. Accessed May 10, 2018. <https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>

The Star. 2018. 'Accept Uhuru re-election and lift media ban, EU tells Kenya'. Accessed April 21, 2018. [https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2018/02/02/accept-uhuru-re-election-and-lift-media-ban-eu-tells-kenya\\_c1707766](https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2018/02/02/accept-uhuru-re-election-and-lift-media-ban-eu-tells-kenya_c1707766)

Thomson, A. 2010. *An Introduction to African Politics*. London: Routledge.

Transparency International. 'Kenya profile'. Accessed April 4, 2018. <https://www.transparency.org/country/KEN>

Tubei, George. 'Kenya nullifies Presidential Election results 2017'. *Business Insider* [Nairobi] 1 September. 2017: Web. Accessed 3 May. 2018. Accessed. Available online <http://www.businessinsider.com/kenya-nullifies-presidential-election-results-2017-9?r=US&IR=T&IR=T>

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 2015. 'Youth population trends and sustainable development' *POPFACTS 2015(1)*. Accessed May 16, 2018.  
[http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/popfacts/PopFacts\\_2015-1.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/popfacts/PopFacts_2015-1.pdf)

United Nations, High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Report from OHCHR Fact-finding Mission to Kenya, 6-28 February 2008, available from*  
<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/OHCHRKenya-report.pdf>

Uwizeyimana, Dominique E. 2012. "Democracy and pretend democracies in Africa: Myths of African democracies." *Law Democracy & Dev.* 16. 139

Valeriya Mechkova and Anna Lührmann and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2017. How Much Democratic Backsliding? *Journal of Democracy* 28(4), 162-169. Johns Hopkins University Press. Retrieved May 17, 2018.  
<https://muse.jhu.edu/>

Well Told Story for the World Bank. Young People Democracy & Governance in Kenya: What They Know and How They Engage. 2015.  
<http://welltoldstory.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/World-Bank-Report-Well-Told-Story-29.05.2015.pdf>

World Bank. 2018. 'Kenya Overview'. Last Modified April 19, 2018. Accessed May 12, 2018.  
<http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kenya/overview>

Young, Crawford. *The postcolonial state in Africa: Fifty years of independence, 1960–2010*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2012.

YouTube. 'Africa Post-Colonial Development: Fatoumata Waggeh at TEDx Gallatin'. 2013, September 23. [Video File]. Retrieved from  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7lmz4UL4wE&t=313s>

YouTube. 2015, November 10 [Video File]. Retrieved from  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-CLon6e-VE>

## 8. Appendices

### Appendix 1.

#### Email and Phone Call Script

Dear \*,

I am interested in conducting research for my master's degree to explore young Kenyans perceptions of democracy, transparency and freedom of opinion. The background for my research will be formed by young people's experiences of the past General elections undertaken in Kenya.

I would like to conduct a 45-minutes interview with young Kenyans from the age of 18-35 on the topic of youth and democracy in Kenya.

My research question will center on:

- How does the youth perceive democracy given the history of general elections in post-colonial Nairobi, Kenya?

Please note that it will be an informal interview that will be conducted with the utmost respect for your privacy. All data recorded will be kept securely and only be used for the purposes of my Thesis and your name will remain anonymous.

I would like to suggest the date of \* at x, if you are available, if not kindly let me know a proposed time when you are available.

If you have an additional questions or concerns, don't hesitate to contact me.

N: B. the Interviews may be followed up with a request to undertake a focus group

Thank you again

Kind Regards,

Anita

## Appendix 2.

### CONSENT FORM

#### Interview Consent Form

Topic: How does the youth perceive democracy given the history of general elections in post-colonial Nairobi, Kenya?

The purpose of this research is to gain insight into:

- Your understanding of democracy
- Your views on the general elections as a democratic process
- Concerns, attitudes and experiences of democracy, transparency and freedom of opinion as a young Kenyan living in Nairobi

The interview will be held .....2018, from  
\_\_\_\_\_ hrs. to \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_

I may wish to quote verbatim comments in my thesis.

Please read the following and record your agreement.

I understand that my participation is voluntary.

For the interview:

- I have the right to not answer any question I don't like or to withdraw from the interview and/or withdraw my answers, at any stage, without having to explain why.
- I understand that if I have any further questions I can contact the researcher.
- I understand that I have the choice to not be recorded or use an anonymous name.

Declaration:

I, (name): \_\_\_\_\_ agree to participate.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

### Appendix 3.

TEMPLATE: Semi structured Interview	
<p><b><u>First reads out the Letter of introduction: (From the email script)</u></b></p> <p><i>Then read out the Consent form and ask if they understand what will occur during the interview. Inform them that they can ask questions to elaborate as well as skip a question. Ensure that the interviewees know that their information will be treated with the utmost privacy.</i></p>	
<b>Theme 1: WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?</b>	
1.	<p>What is your understanding of Democracy?</p> <p><i>(If person does not understand the concepts explain the oxford/basic definition of the three terms)</i></p>
2.	When did you first learn/hear about it?
3.	<p>On a scale of 1-10, how democratic do you perceive Kenya to be?</p> <p>Interesting...why did you rate it *?</p>
<b>Theme 2: YOUTH AND DEMOCRACY</b>	
4.	As a young person in Kenya, what do you think is the most important thing when it comes to democracy in Kenya?
5.	How important do you think the youth is in terms of democracy in Kenya?
<b>Theme 3: PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRACY</b>	
6.	<p>What is your understanding of the general elections?</p> <p>As a democratic process?</p>

7.	Are you a registered voter?
8.	Did you vote in the last general election?  If yes/ why, If no/why?
9.	How many general elections have you participated in since you turned 18?
10.	Do you think many young people vote and participate in general elections?
<b>Theme 4: ELECTIONS AND TRANSPARENCY</b>	
11.	On a scale of 1-10 how democratic do you think the elections are?  On a scale of 1-10 how transparent do you think the elections are?
12.	Do you feel you were given enough information before/ during the previous elections?
13.	Do you feel free to give your opinion on elections or politics openly?
14.	How do you feel the atmosphere is during the general elections?
<b>Section 4: CONCLUSION</b>	
15.	What do you think the local government (Nairobi county) can do to improve or what can they do in terms of youth and democracy and participation?
16.	What do you think is the biggest lesson Kenyans have learnt from the past general elections?

17.	Any other comments about youth and democracy?
<b>DETAILS</b>	
	Name of interviewer:
	Organization:
	Contact information:
	Date: Name of participant Interviewed: Current occupation of interviewee: Ethnic tribe of the interviewee: Age of the interviewee: Level of education of the interviewee:

## **Appendix 4.**

### **Index of Respondent Names**

\*Respondent have been recorded under pseudonyms, the names were randomly selected from Kenyan pen pal statistics of the top 100 girl and boy names (Students of the World, 2018).

1 – Harriet\*, Female, 20 years, University student, Taita

2- Yvonne\*, Female, 21, University student, Luo

3- Valentine\*, Female, 26, Project Manager, Luo

4- Anne\*, Female, 19, Unemployed, Luo

5- David\*, Male, 25, Journalist, Luo

6 – Alex\*, Male, 26, IT consultant, Kalenjin and Maasai

7- Hannah\*, Female, 27, University student, Kikuyu

8- Simon\*, Male, 21, College student, Meru

9- Evans\*, Male, 20, University student, Kikuyu

10- Pauline\*, Female, 20, College student, Meru

11- Lewis\*, Male, 32, Self-Employed, Kamba