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VALERIE MØLLER

Peaceful co-existence in South Africa in the millennium
A review of social indicators in the 2002 democracy study

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Introduction

In the new world order, South Africa has emerged as a beacon of hope that it may be possible for people from different ethnic, language and religious backgrounds to live together in harmony. South Africa has successfully achieved a negotiated settlement between black and white. It may be the first example worldwide of a government voluntarily giving up power to accommodate the oppressed minority in a power-sharing agreement. The first open elections were held in April 1994. In 2003 the country is preparing to go to the polls for its third national elections.

How successful has South Africa's mode of conflict regulation been? How have the groups once engaged in a low-level war come to terms with living and working side by side? More importantly, how happy are South Africans in their new situation? How do they rate their situation and their prospects for their own and their children's future in the new democracy?

In the South African case, unlike in South East Asia, political freedom was achieved in advance of economic emancipation. The new government would need to convince a patient electorate that the material rewards of democracy would be forthcoming.

To shed light on the South African experience this paper examines select indicators from a survey conducted in 2002 under the auspices of the Centre International des Sciences de l'Homme in Byblos, Lebanon. The study follows on the seminal study by Hanf and colleagues (1981) on South Africa's Prospects for Peaceful Change in the late 1970s and a study of first-time voters' experience in the first democratic elections of 1994 (Møller & Hanf, 1995).

Background

In the early nineties South Africa reached a negotiated settlement between the ruling National Party and the African National Congress which had been banned until Nelson Mandela was released from prison in February 1990. The man who was to become the country's first democratically elected president had spent 27 years in prison. In April 1994 South Africans black and white voted in the country's first open elections for a government of national unity. After some 350 years of colonial rule and forty years of apartheid, all South Africans became citizens in the country of their birth.

The euphoria following on the first open elections of 1994 was tangible. For the first time since happiness had been measured in South Africa, all South Africans, black and white, declared they were satisfied with life and happy (Møller & Hanf, 1995), a unique phenomenon which had never been observed - not even in reunited Germany.

However, as the euphoria bubble burst, it became abundantly clear that democracy could not thrive without a solid material underpinning. In the newly democratic states of Southern Africa, citizens are more likely to associate democracy with better living conditions - with basic services such as clean water and housing, rather than with regular elections, competing political parties and freedom to criticise government (Afrobarometer, 2002).

How was the new government to address the aspirations of the people? The Government of National Unity was a power-sharing arrangement between the African National Congress (ANC) and its alliance partners in the trade unions (Cosatu) and the Communist Party with the National Party and the Inkatha Freedom Party. Inkatha had chosen to fight apartheid from within the country in contrast to the ANC whose members were forced to operate underground or went into exile. The different factions held different views on how to construct South Africa's development agenda.

In the run-up to the 1994 elections the African National Congress had made bold promises that democracy would bring material rewards as well as freedom. The new electorate expected to gain houses, jobs, land, education and a higher standard of living. A reconstruction and development blue print, which met the approval of the populists in the ANC alliance, had been drawn up.

Once in the seats of power, the ANC discovered that it had taken on a more difficult task than anticipated. It had inherited an economy less well endowed than expected. Before meeting its election promises, the ANC-led government needed to put its economic house in order. Indeed, one of the most remarkable achievements of the first years of democracy has been the introduction of a stable macro-economic

policy and fiscal discipline. The negative growth of the eighties was replaced by positive growth of about 2 to 2.5 per cent of GNP in the nineties.

The challenge of meeting the aspirations of the newly enfranchised has not been an easy one. Nevertheless, remarkable progress has been made in raising levels of living in the first ten years of democracy in South Africa.

The Mandela presidency from 1994 to 1999 stressed reconciliation in society epitomised by the ideal of the rainbow nation. The Mbeki presidency from 1999 to date has placed the emphasis on delivery of the material rewards of democracy. In the run-up to the third national open elections and to review 10 years of democracy, the ANC government is taking stock of its achievements and the challenges ahead. Official estimates in 2003 cite the ANC's record of success, among other, in terms of 8.4 million in a population of close on 45 million gaining access to clean water, 3.8 million new electricity connections, 1.46 million subsidised houses built or under construction, and land redistributed to some 137 000 households (South Africa, 2003).

A blemish in its record of achievements since democracy has been South Africa's jobless growth. South Africa's globalising economy has been forced to shed jobs although it weathered the emerging markets crisis in the late nineties better than many other developing countries. Government spokespersons point out that although two million jobs have been created between 1997 and 2003, bringing the total employed to 11,6 million, the number of people joining the labour force has risen at a faster rate (Dawes, 2003).

Moreover, as a sure sign of the greater freedom of choice and movement allowed under democracy, household sizes among blacks, which make up more than three quarters of the total population, have become smaller. This has resulted in a larger number of households to be serviced. Migration to the cities, restricted under apartheid rule, has placed greater strains on urban infrastructure. Similarly, the greater participation of women in the labour force, also restricted formerly, has effectively increased the unemployment rate which stands at some 31 per cent and up to 41 per cent if discouraged workseekers are included (SAIRR, 2003: 13).

The government is taking steps to provide a better safety net for the unemployed and their families. In 2003, there are plans to roll out a nationwide publics works programme to cater, in particular, for the youth out of work. Meanwhile, the government is paying out monthly grants in the form of old-age pensions, disability and child grants to more than 7 million people, up from 3 million people six years ago. Although transfers are made to individuals they are shared and effectively become household income. Government spending on fighting the HIV/AIDS epidemic, including the launch of an antiretroviral treatment programme, will increase dramatically over the next few years. (Joffe, 2003).

Affirmative action and equal opportunity measures put in place since 1994 have increased black participation in the economy. Perhaps the single greatest economic

opportunity opened up to aspiring blacks has been in national and local government, and in the civil service where blacks are now in the majority. Business has also recruited more blacks into leadership positions to demonstrate solidarity with the new government. While the new Constitution and Bill of Rights adopted in 1996 guarantees equal rights to all, affirmative action quotas have effectively retarded the advancement of coloureds and Indians who were also previously discriminated against in the old order but to a lesser degree. Owing to an education policy under apartheid designed to prevent black job advancement, there is still an acute shortage of skills to fill top positions in all sectors of the economy. Nevertheless, many aspiring young white graduates who perceive a ceiling on their upward mobility have left the country to seek better job opportunities elsewhere thus adding to the country's brain drain. Immigrants from African countries have reduced the skills shortage to a certain degree but there are signs that a distinction will soon be made between local and immigrant blacks in equal opportunities quotas in order to protect the job opportunities of the local black workforce.

Research questions

It is against this background that this paper addresses two broad questions:

❑   To what extent have material living conditions assisted in deepening democracy and promoting well being among the newly enfranchised?

❑   Secondly, to what extent are South Africans thinking alike as far as the future of their country is concerned?

The rationale underlying this line of questioning is as follows. For democracy to succeed it will have to be regarded as both a positive personal experience and a positive development for the country as a whole. Therefore we first look into the manner in which citizens view progress in their lives and what the future holds for them under democracy.

Since South Africans proudly adopted the epithet of the 'rainbow nation' - first introduced by emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu and made popular under Nelson Mandela's presidency (Dickow and Møller, 2002) - the assumption lies close at hand, that expectations, aspirations and values would converge towards democratic ideals and forge a common identity. The second section of the paper examines survey evidence to explore the extent to which South Africans share common identities, reference standards, ideals and economic and political viewpoints.

The study

To provide some answers to the above questions, we review the findings of a study on democracy in South Africa conducted in March 2002. The study was undertaken by Theodor Hanf and the author with Unesco funding under the auspices of the Centre International des Sciences de l'Homme in Byblos, Lebanon, headed by Hanf. As reported earlier, the 2002 study updates the seminal research conducted by Hanf and his colleagues on the prospects for peaceful change in South Africa of the 1970s (Hanf et al., 1981).

The study was commissioned to MarkData and included in their March 2002 syndicated survey. MarkData survey uses a nationally representative sample of South Africans over 16 years weighted to population size which covers both urban and rural areas.

The analysis

For the analysis in this paper and in line with official social accounting, the sample is divided into four groups along ethnic lines: African/black, coloured (mixed race), Asian/Indian, and whites. Official statistics in South Africa are still collected for racial groups ostensibly to 'monitor progress in moving away from the apartheid-based discrimination of the past. However membership of a population group is now based on self-perception and self-classification, not on a legal definition.' (Statistics South Africa, 2003: vii). For purposes of our analysis here, two of the ethnic groups are divided once again in terms of living standards and language.

The emergent black elite

The largest group of blacks is further divided into two groups with a lower and higher standard of living using a living standards measure based on household amenities such as television, household appliances, motor cars and urban residence. The rationale for the distinction between elite and rank and file is that equal opportunities measures adopted under democracy have produced an emergent black middle class. It is assumed that this group will produce the new leaders in society. The black elite group identifed in the 2002 study includes a slightly higher proportion of men than the rank and file (55% versus 46%) and is on average somewhat younger (62% under 34 years versus 55%).

The question is whether the emergent black middle class is satisfied that their material aspirations have been fulfilled under the new regime and, if so, does this satisfied middle class uphold the democratic values of an open society? In 1999, for the first time in the South African survey record undertaken for the South African Quality of Life Trends Study, there was a sufficiently large number of black respon-

dents included in the highest levels of living category to allow for comparisons be-
tween black elites and their white counterparts. The result was striking: black and
white were equally happy (Møller, 1999a).

Afrikaans and English-speaking whites

A further distinction is made between whites whose home language is Afrikaans or
English. It is assumed that Afrikaans speakers represent the group that has been on
the losing side under the new political dispensation. Afrikaners were the backbone of
the former ruling National Party and the government service. Afrikaans, formerly one
of two official languages, has now been demoted to one of eleven. English is now
used as the major language of communication although it is the home language of
only some 8 per cent of the population. Earlier studies in the 1990s found that Afri-
kaans speakers were least likely to accept the symbols of the new South Africa and
to be optimistic about the future (Møller, Dickow & Harris, 1999; Dickow & Møller,
2002).

Results

Rising living standards and quality of life in South Africa's new democracy

How happy are South Africans under democracy? The hallmark of a successful de-
mocracy is said to be the contentment of its citizens as is the case for Switzerland's
democracy (Frey & Stutzer, 2002). In western and democratic societies, the majority
of the population are happy. When asked to rate their happiness overall on a scale
from one to ten, citizens in countries of the West typically score around 7 out of 10.

It is difficult to disentangle the effects of wealth and happiness in the democracies
of the West (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002). Ronald Inglehart (Inglehart & Klinge-
mann, 2000) observes that historically Protestant societies have had a head start in
reaping the material rewards of capitalism that appears to have translated into life
satisfaction. According to Claus Kernig (1999:41), transition from traditional to mod-
ern society in western capitalist states took place over a longer rather than a shorter
period of time and a large part of the social conflicts in the period of transition were
externalised. In contrast, capitalism in the transition countries came as a shock and
has yet to meet the material aspirations of citizens as is evident from quality-of-life
studies in Eastern Europe and Russia (Schyns, 2001 among others).

South Africa, like the former communist societies and in contrast to western de-
mocratic societies, still has a happiness deficit. Only whites meet the international
standard. The other population groups express happiness in line with the pecking
order of the apartheid era. The largest proportion of whites are happy and satisfied

with life, followed by Indians and coloureds (mixed race), followed at a great distance by Africans/blacks. Although post-election euphoria saw all South Africans, black and white, happy for a fleeting moment in time, the racially graded happiness ratings are still manifest to this day (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 shows that with the exception of post-election euphoria in 1994 (Møller & Hanf, 1995), South Africans rate their life situation in line with the racial hierarchy of privilege established under the former political dispensation. Under apartheid, whites were best off, followed by Indians and coloureds, with blacks lagging far behind. In May 1994, one month after the first open elections all South Africans black and white, scored far above the mid-point as is the case in Western and democratic societies around the world (Møller & Hanf, 1995). Before and after this time, blacks are still significantly less satisfied with life than whites. The hierarchical order of life satisfaction and happiness continues to manifest itself in quality of life studies.

Figure 1: South African Quality of Life Trends: Percentages satisfied with life-as-a-whole
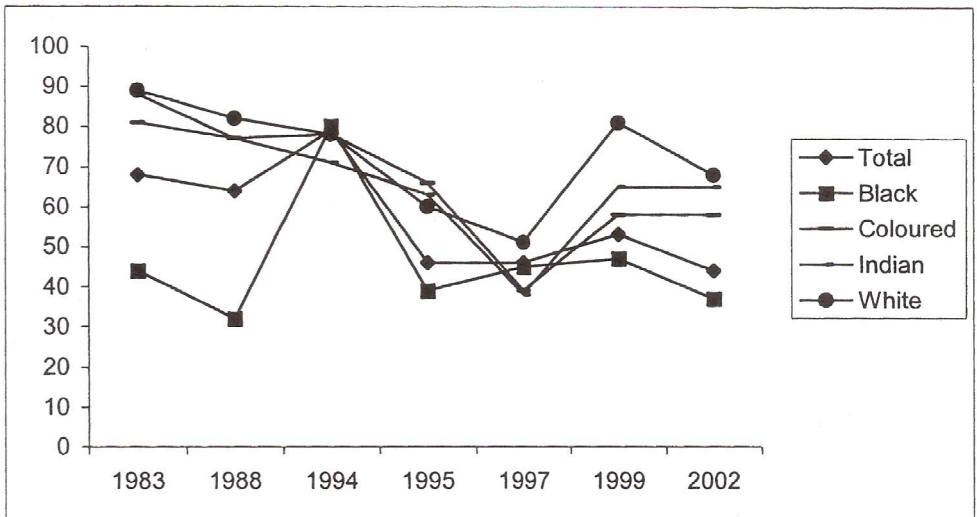
A superficial interpretation of South African happiness levels in the democratic era is that freedom is not sufficient to sustain a successful democracy. As outlined in the introduction, the new electorate expects material rewards to be forthcoming.

The 2002 study allows us to explore whether the emergent black elite that have gained access to a better living standard in the new era break away from the racially defined happiness pattern.

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Table 1 shows the degree to which the black elite in the survey is materially better off than the black rank and file. The black elite is significantly more likely to have all the trappings of modernity that people worldwide covet. Not only basic services such as electricity and water but also television, a refrigerator, a telephone and a car. The difference in the percentages with access to these commodities is highly statistically significant in each case.

Table 1: Select indicators of living standards

	Black elite [1]	Black r & f [2]	Coloured	Indian	White Afrikaans	White English	Total
Median household living standard LSM (10 = highest)	8	4	6	8	9	9	5-6
Percentages of households with:							
Electricity	100	73	92	100	100	100	80
Piped water [3]	100	61	95	100	100	100	72
Television	99	57	85	94	97	96	67
Refrigerator	100	45	82	98	99	98	59
Cellular telephone	88	21	32	63	78	81	33
Landline telephone	64	16	37	66	73	75	28
One or more cars	87	10	31	68	94	93	27
n	68	1548	197	62	187	103	2165

[1] Blacks with scores 8 through 10 on the Living Standards Measure (LSM)
[2] Rank-and-file blacks with scores 1 through 7 on the Living Standards Measure (LSM)
[3] Piped water to stand or dwelling

The columns to the right of the one describing the material situation of black elites show that some nine years into democracy South Africans still have access to the material benefits according to the apartheid pecking order. Whites are best off, followed by Indians, then by coloureds with rank and file blacks coming last. The black elite has jumped the queue to position itself somewhere between Indians and whites.

The next question is whether the higher levels of living translate into better quality of life for the black elite.

The 2002 democracy study includes the original items on quality of life used by Hanf and his colleagues (1981). It also includes two of the items first applied by Lawrence Schlemmer and the author in their original work on quality of life in South Africa in the late seventies (Møller and Schlemmer, 1983). The latter items form the core of the South African Quality of Life Trends Study. They are classical one-item self-report measures used in international studies. Although deceptively simple in their application, the literature cites self-report indicators to be valid and robust (see

Diener, 1994, for an overview). Happiness is thought to capture the more emotional dimension of subjective well being, satisfaction the more cognitive one.

The set of quality of life indicators used in the 2002 study addresses current life satisfaction and happiness, perceptions of progress in achieving the good life - whether respondents see themselves as better off or happier now than in an earlier period of their lives, and happiness projections in the future. Table 2 gives the wording of the individual items. Life satisfaction and happiness were measured on five-point scales from 'very happy' or 'satisfied' to 'very happy' or 'dissatisfied' with a neutral mid-point ('neither happy/satisfied nor unhappy/dissatisfied'). Comparisons over time asked respondents to report whether their situation was or would be 'better', 'the same', or 'worse'.

Results in Table 2 again show up the happiness gradient that reflects actual living standards shown in Table 1. However, the small group of black elites have succeeded in breaking away from the racially defined happiness pattern. In reflection of their improved living standards, they rate themselves happier and more satisfied than the rank and file and on par with better-off South Africans. Relative to their past experience in life, elite blacks rate their quality of life highest of all groups in the analysis (items in section 2).

The wording of two satisfaction items taken from the original study by Hanf and colleagues introduces a political dimension: the 'very dissatisfied' response category is labelled 'angry and impatient'. In the late 1970s Hanf and colleagues found substantial proportions of unhappy South Africans including the angry and impatient (1981:420ff.). In 2002 only one in ten rank-and-file blacks and 8 per cent of coloureds are angry and impatient (section 4 in Table 2). These results suggest that the explosive undercurrents of discontent in the apartheid years have been by and large dispelled.

Nevertheless, there are signs that some groups feel they have made little progress under democracy. Section 5 in Table 2 calculates nett progress by subtracting negative ('worse') from positive ('better') responses. More coloured than other South Africans feel they are worse than better off. The split is about even for rank and file blacks. As expected, Afrikaners who have given up most of their advantages in the new South Africa are significantly less likely to score nett progress than English speaking whites.

Table 2: Perceived quality of life indicators

Percentages	Black elite	Black r & f	Coloured	Indian	White Afrikaans	White English	Total
1) Present quality of life:							
a) Satisfied with my life[1]	58	36	57	65	67	70	44
b) Happy[1]	56	37	57	53	67	71	44
c) Satisfied with life for people like me[1]	59	35	43	48	54	55	39
2) Perceived progress in quality of life:							
d) My life better compared to one year ago	41	25	24	37	27	28	26
e) My life better than 10 years ago	64	32	28	48	29	48	34
3) Projected future quality of life:							
f) Better situation for people like me in 5 years' time	54	41	41	34	32	47	41
g) Satisfied with my life in 10 years' time[1]	58	44	51	40	50	57	46
4) Responses: 'Angry and impatient' (on items c, g above):							
c) Angry, impatient now	2	10	8	5	7	7	9
g) Angry, impatient in 10 years' time	2	10	6	3	6	6	9
5) Nett progress (Better less worse on items d, e, f above):							
d) Nett better than 1 year ago	28	-3	-12	13	-3	10	-2
e) Nett better than 10 years ago	55	1	-15	20	-6	21	2,5
f) Nett better in 5 years' time	30	16	15	-10	-6	20	14
n	68	1548	197	62	187	103	2165

[1] Percentages 'very satisfied/happy' and 'satisfied/happy'.
continued

Table 2 continued

Items read:
a) Taking all things together, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days: Generally speaking are you very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied? [Middle category recorded: neither satisfied nor dissatisfied]
b) Taking all things together in your life, how would you say things are these days? Would you say you are very happy, fairly happy, fairly unhappy or very unhappy? [Middle category recorded: neither happy nor unhappy]
c) Thinking about life in South Africa for people like yourself, how do you feel? Are very satisfied with life as it is, just satisfied but not very satisfied..., not satisfied but also not dissatisfied - in the middle, dissatisfied..., or angry and impatient with life as it is?
d) Comparing your present situation to your conditions of life one year ago, how well off are you today? Better, about the same, or worse?
e) As regards your conditions of life, are you better or worse off today than ten years ago? Better, about the same, or worse?
f) How do you think things will be for people like yourself in five years' time? Taking all things together, will things be better, worse or about the same as today?
g) How do you think you will feel in ten years' time? Very satisfied with life as it is, just satisfied but not very satisfied ..., not satisfied but also not dissatisfied - in the middle, dissatisfied...., or angry and impatient with life as it is?

Although the racial hierarchy pattern is still apparent in subjective quality of life indicators some nine years into democracy in 2002, there are indications that all South Africans are more positively disposed towards life. A distinctive feature of South African quality-of-life trends has been that the currently satisfied - mainly whites who have everything to lose - tend to be pessimistic about the future while the currently dissatisfied - mainly blacks who have everything to gain - tend to be optimistic. This crossover effect was already observed by Hanf and his colleagues in their studies of South Africa in the late 1970s and confirmed in the mid-nineties at the beginning of the democratic era (Møller, 1999b).

In 2002, the crossover effect has by and large disappeared. Three quality-of-life indexes were calculated by combining responses for the items on perceived quality of life now, relative to the past and to the future. Table 3 compares the composite scores for the three temporal facets of quality of life indicators. With few exceptions, the scores are significantly positively correlated for all groups under analysis. The correlation matrix indicates that persons currently satisfied feel they have achieved more of the good life under democracy and expect the momentum to continue into the future.

In contrast to earlier studies, it appears that currently satisfied whites no longer expect their lives to be less satisfying in future. However, there are tentative signs of the old crossover effect in the small Indian subsample. Indians have made great material progress in the past decade. According to some estimates, they have been the single South African population group to achieve higher income in real terms. Although the absolute numbers of Indian respondents in the survey are small, the quality-of-life indicators and other survey evidence suggest Indians are more uncertain of the future than others.

To sum up, the objective and subjective quality of life indicators used in the survey show that the emergent black elite is materially better off than the majority of blacks under democracy. Black elites, who have made material gains under democracy, also rate their quality of life more positively. Thus, the new political dispensation has benefited a small number of blacks and created contented citizens in the process.

Table 3: Association between quality of life indices: Present quality of life, perceived progress in quality of life and projected future quality of life

Pearson correlation coefficients	Present and future quality of life	Present quality of life and perceived progress	Perceived progress and future quality of life
Black elite	.511	.591	.511
Black rank and file	.518	.417	.462
Coloured	.541	.596	.521
Indian	.291 [ns]	.456	.362 [b]
White Afrikaans speakers	.445	.407	.535
White English speakers	.382	.241 [a]	.428

Present quality of life: items a, b, c in Table 2; perceived progress: items d, e in Table 2; future quality of life: items f, g in Table 2.
All correlations significant at the .000 level except [a] significant at the .05 level, [b] significant at the .01 level, and [ns] not significant.

The situation of the emergent black elite may well suggest future South African happiness trends if material circumstances improve for the rank and file. Black elites score on par with coloureds on present quality of life. However, they also have a striking sense of achievement - not only over the past ten years which coincides with the democratic era - but also over the past year. The black elites are the winners in the new era: significantly higher percentages of black elites than any other group state they have made progress and are optimistic for the future (Table 2, sections 2 and 3). Noteworthy is that the black elite appears to have shed feelings of deprivation as indicated by the items with the interpersonal reference comparison 'people like yourself'. Majorities feel they are as well off as others in society and expect people from their own group to have a better quality of life in future (see Table 2: items c and f). Relative to the rank and file, virtually none of the elite are now 'angry or impatient' with their lot in life nor do they expect to be so in future (Table 2: section 4).

Class identity and quality of life

The next question we address is whether members of the emergent black elite have adopted a new identity to match their changed circumstances in life. Do the elite see themselves differently from the rank and file?

Table 4: Class identity

Percentages	Black elite	Black r & f	Coloured	Indian	White Afrikaans	White English	Total
a) Middle class or higher identity	75	30	53	84	88	96	45
b) 'People of my group live in less favourable conditions than others.' - agree	77	70	79	52	48	40	68
c) In the last ten years, the difference between rich and poor in this country has							
- increased	62	59	63	71	62	65	60
- decreased	17	18	15	18	20	20	18
d) 'A majority of people are at a middle level, with fewer people who are rich or poor.' (vs a rich minority has most of the wealth) - agree	51	46	51	71	62	57	49
e) '… I consider my income to be reasonable.' - agree	59	45	44	52	73	68	50
f) 'Whatever my personal efforts, I will never get the education and jobs I am entitled to.' - agree	46	59	54	52	39	22	54
g) 'Young men and women from a family like mine have a reasonably good chance of reaching their goals in life.' - agree	81	63	68	92	76	85	68
h) 'When I see what rich people have, I feel that I should have the same.' - agree	35	64	45	20	21	21	53
i) I compare myself most with:							
❑ People like myself ten years ago	22	13	12	10	17	10	14
❑ My neighbours	3	14	13	2	5	2	12
❑ Other population groups	15	7	8	8	4	10	7
❑ People in other African countries	8	7	2	2	1	5	6
❑ Rich people	1	4	2	0	1	1	3
❑ Westerners	1	1	4	0	6	6	2
❑ Schoolmates	12	12	7	5	10	17	11
❑ Nobody	38	42	52	74	56	50	45

Items correspond to survey questions a: q17, b: q17_12, c: q25, d: q24, e: q10_5, f: 10_4, g: q10_6, h: q10_7, i: q21. Some items paraphrased.

Table 4 confirms that black elites regard themselves as solidly middle class. Three quarters of elites compared to less than a third of rank-and-file blacks say they are at the middle level of society or higher. Interestingly, rank-and-file blacks who feel they are better off than 10 years ago are more likely to rank themselves at the middle level of society (36% versus 30% average).

How do blacks see the development of economic opportunities in the democratic era? Majorities among both the rank and file and the elite still feel that 'people of my group live in less favourable conditions than others' (some 70% among rank and file and 77% among elites). There is consensus that the gap between rich and poor has increased rather than decreased. At all levels of living, those who see themselves as worse off now than in earlier times, say the gap between rich and poor has widened.

Almost half among blacks are prepared to endorse the statement that there are currently 'fewer people who are rich and poor'. Interestingly, perhaps as a reflection of distancing, the elites who feel better off than a year ago and are optimistic about the future are more likely than other blacks to agree that a small minority has got wealthy at the expense of the poor in society.

Survey results hint at a strong sense of social mobility among elites. While the rank and file tend to make upward social comparisons, the elite seem to feel they have arrived and belong to the club of the rich. For example, elites are more likely than the rank and file to say they are earning a reasonable income and can access opportunities to get ahead. It is perhaps telling that the few pessimists and discouraged among the elites, who say they are worse off now than 10 years or one year ago, feel a sense of defeated entitlement similar to that of the rank and file when they despair that 'whatever my personal efforts, I will never get the education and jobs I am entitled to'.

Not only do elites believe they have or will achieve their material aspirations, they are also inclined to feel that the next generation will benefit as well. Some 81 per cent of elites but only 63 per cent of rank and file endorse the statement that 'young men and women from a family like mine have a reasonably good chance of reaching their goals in life'. Across all living standards blacks who believe they are better off than 10 years ago are significantly more likely to endorse this statement.

Almost two thirds of the rank and file feel they are entitled to a larger share of the wealth in society compared to only a third of the elite. The elite is twice as likely as the rank and file to compare its situation to 'people like myself ten years ago' and to 'other population groups in society'. Rank and file blacks tend to use reference standards closer to home such as 'neighbours'. The fact that the single largest proportion of all South Africans - including blacks from all levels of living - refuse to make any type of social comparisons and say they compare themselves with 'nobody', is difficult to interpret but might suggest a strong sense of newfound self-confidence and national pride.

Middle class identity seems to go hand in hand with happiness. Black elites scored higher than their counterparts on all three quality of life indexes shown in Table 3 above. Noteworthy is that blacks who scored higher on each of the three indexes, that is were satisfied with life, felt they had achieved a better life, and were optimistic about life in the future, were significantly more likely to identify themselves as belonging to the middle class. High scorers were more likely than others to believe there was a better life in store for the next generation to achieve their goals in life.

Comparisons so far have been for the black elite and rank and file. Results in Table 4 show that the emerging black elite position themselves somewhere between coloured and Indian South Africans regarding class perceptions (item a) and between Indian and white viewpoints as far as access to educational and job opportunities are concerned (see items e and f). The new black elites' optimism for future opportunities (item g) is on par or even surpasses that of Indian and white South Africans.

To sum up, survey evidence suggests that the emergent black elite has gained a newfound sense of confidence and achievement under democracy as suggested by the reference comparison of the past ten years which coincides with democratic rule. Elites identify themselves as middle class. They report higher levels of well being now, relative to the past, and project a happy future. Compared to the rank and file, elites are less likely to suffer from feelings of relative deprivation, make fewer invidious social comparisons, and are less fearful of the future.

Racial and ethnic identity

The new black elite positions itself at the middle level in society. Does this mean that class identity overrides other sources of identity in the new South Africa? Theodor Hanf (1999) argues that economic criteria such as income and material standards of living are not the only markers of identity in society. No matter what criteria are chosen as the markers of power and privilege, the fault lines in society always run between the 'haves' and 'have-nots', between those who want to maintain the existing distribution of resources and power and those who want to change it. And divisions in society tend to run deeper when they follow differences of origin, language, and religion, all of which embrace and express socio-cultural values.

In South Africa, preoccupation with race has dominated other social differences such as religious ones. And power and privilege have been awarded according to the racial marker. The 2002 democracy study breaks new ground in that it explores race as one of many categories of difference when soliciting views on identity. A number of survey items shed light on the importance of competing racial and religious identities in the new South Africa.

Personal identity

An initial probe requested respondents to state how they would describe themselves if somebody asked them who they were. The preamble to the question gave respondents to understand that people in a heterogeneous society could have multiple ties and roles in terms of a job, religion, language, nationality, sense of place and political affiliation. Respondents were asked to give three descriptors in order of importance. The identity descriptions received in response to the probe have been divided into three broad groups in Table 5 as follows:

Socio-political identity descriptors include race, ethnicity, language, and religion. In South Africa ethnicity is characterised by home language and different languages are spoken in different regions. Thus geographical descriptors have been added to this response category for good measure although it might also be argued that place is politically neutral. As the racial marker has been politicised in South Africa, the few references to political affiliations are grouped under the first heading.

Socio-economic identity includes references to economic activity in or out of the job market as well as gender and other life cycle references including age.

Personal characteristics include both positive and personal physical and personality traits and personal preferences which are unique to each individual.

Results in Table 5 show that ethnic identity is not as strong as might be expected in a country in which colour-coded identities have been officially sanctioned for some forty years. Only some 6 per cent of all respondents described themselves according to population group or race, a quarter according to ethnicity and/or race. Religion competes with race/ethnicity as the most important marker of identity. It is only when ethnic identity is extended to include language as well as race descriptors that ethnicity overshadows religion as the leading identity marker. A third of respondents identify themselves in broader ethno-language terms compared to a quarter who identify themselves by religion.

South Africans overwhelmingly opt to present themselves as individuals rather than social categories. Most respondents itemised personal characteristics to describe themselves. In order of frequency of mention, South Africans present themselves by personal descriptors, followed at a distance by socio-political markers including race, ethnicity and religion, and then by socio-economic markers. Most respondents identified themselves using at least one personal characteristic and mainly positive ones. Noteworthy is that few persons described themselves in terms of class suggesting that other clues relating to education or employment or social exclusion might be used to denote class in South African society.

Table 5: Competing racial and other identities

Percentages giving identities (up to three spontaneous mentions)	Black elite	Black r & f	Coloured	Indian	White Afrikaans	White English	Total
Socio-political identities:							
Race	3	7	7	2	3	1	6
Ethnicity	13	22	12	8	20	7	19
Language	1	10	2	5	6	0	8
Region, district of origin	4	6	10	6	7	4	6
Religion	22	24	32	19	33	13	24
Political	2	2	1	1	2	0	2
	45	*71*	*64*	*41*	*71*	*25*	*65*
Socio-economic identity:							
Gender	17	18	16	18	18	20	18
Age	1	2	3	3	0	2	2
Education:							
Educated, uneducated	0	1	-	0	-	-	1
Employment status:							
Employed, unemployed; economically active or not: e.g., student, pensioner, disabled etc.	3	8	9	1	3	4	7
Social exclusion	8	5	1	0	0	0	4
Class	1	3	3	2	2	0	3
	30	*37*	*32*	*24*	*23*	*26*	*35*
Personal characteristics:							
Personality traits	47	31	34	43	47	59	35
Physical appearance, perceptions of self image	7	8	21	7	7	4	9
Positive characteristics	58	56	69	84	60	69	59
Negative characteristics	3	4	3	6	4	2	4
Personal tastes, preferences	8	10	2	4	6	5	8
First name	-	5	-	-	-	1	4
	123	*114*	*129*	*144*	*124*	*140*	*119*

See text for wording of question 4 in the survey. Percentages based on respondents. Percentages given as totals are guidelines and may exceed true totals in the case of respondents making two or more responses under the same heading.

Interestingly, identities do by and large follow the pattern found in most indicator studies and attitude surveys conducted among South Africans. Socio-political identity is most evident among rank-and-file blacks (71%), and to a progressively lesser

degree among coloureds (64%), Indians (41%) and then English-speaking whites (25%). However, there are some major differences in emphasis. Afrikaner and coloured respondents, both of whom share a common language and religious background in the Dutch Reformed Church, stress their religious identity. Rank-and-file blacks and Afrikaners are more likely than others to identify themselves in ethnic terms. Where does the black elite fit in? The black elite use fewer ethnic identifiers than the rank and file and position themselves alongside Indians and English-speaking whites in terms of the socio-political identity gradient.

Competing racial and ethnic identities

Results in Table 5 above suggest that religion competes with race in claiming South African identities. Further items shown in Table 6 explore the overlap between racial and religious identities and social distancing from other groups. Under the heading of religious identity majorities in all groups indicate that they feel 'close to and trust' people who share their religious beliefs. However, South Africans are not bigoted about religion. Overall, only just under half are convinced that their persuasion is the only true one. Nevertheless, close on 70 per cent feel religious values should permeate society. However, this sentiment should not be confused with a call for a religious state but might simply mean that South Africans want to live in a moral society. Some 70 per cent of respondents would allow intermarriage between faiths if their child were in love with a non-believer.

A similar line of questioning was put to respondents on ethnic identity. In some cases identical items were used. Again, majorities in all groups - over 70 per cent in most cases – state that they feel close to and trust people of their own ethnic group. Similarly high majorities feel solidarity with people from their own ethnic group regardless of their position in society. Slightly lower majorities also prefer to mix with people who share their mother tongue. South Africans generally believe ethnic differences should not be politicised. Over 80 per cent in all ethnic groups believe that friendship should know no colour distinctions: a good friend can be black or white. However, South Africans tend to be more cautious when it comes to interracial and interethnic marriages. The racial hierarchy applies here with blacks being more tolerant than whites with the other groups falling in between.

Across all groups under study, respondents are more likely to trust co-believers than people from their own tribe. Religious tolerance is greater than ethnic tolerance as indicated most poignantly by the question on intermarriage, considered to be the ultimate test of social distance between groups in society. At this stage of democracy, most South Africans are willing to extend the hand of friendship but many still shy away from welcoming people from other ethnic groups into the intimate family circle.

Table 6: Indicators of religious and ethnic identity, social distance and social divides

Percentages endorsing statements	Black elite	Black r & f	Coloured	Indian	White Afrikaans	White English	Total
Religious identity:							
a) I am convinced that my own religion is the only true one. - agree	55	47	63	60	55	38	49
b) People trust and feel close to some people and not others. Tell us whether or not you feel close to and trust... people of my religion. - yes	66	64	71	87	68	62	66
c) I feel very close to people of my own religion, whatever their education, wealth or political views. - agree	73	71	86	87	80	65	73
d) Faith and religious values must determine all aspects of society and state. - agree	65	69	79	74	73	44	69
e) I would not mind if a child of mine married someone from a different religion provided they love each other. - agree	67	76	71	62	48	59	71
Racial / ethnic identity:							
f) People trust and feel close to some people and not others. Tell us whether or not you feel close to and trust... people of my ethnic group. - yes	55	50	51	74	45	54	51
g) I feel very close to people of my own group, whatever their education, wealth or political views. - agree	62	73	84	82	75	69	73

continued

Table 6 continued

Percentages endorsing statements	Black elite	Black r & f	Coloured	Indian	White Afrikaans	White English	Total
h) I prefer to be with people who speak my own language. - agree	46	62	70	60	68	66	62
i) Obviously there are differences between groups in this country, but they should be kept out of politics. - agree	71	67	88	65	85	74	71
j) A good friend is a good friend whether he/she is black or white. - agree	90	84	94	93	86	97	86
k) I would be quite happy if a child of mine married someone from a different ethnic group if they loved each other. - agree	76	73	68	59	28	49	68
Social divides:							
l) The biggest difference in South Africa is between:							
❑ Rich and poor	43	54	64	55	34	48	52
❑ Black and white	26	31	19	32	45	40	31
❑ Christians and Muslims	11	8	13	10	15	9	9
❑ Big cities and the rest of the country	20	8	5	3	7	4	8
m) The most important precondition for African renewal/ renaissance to become reality is for South Africa to:							
Reform its economy	25	22	28	29	36	46	25
Reduce social inequality, the gap between rich and poor	*13*	*25*	*30*	*25*	*7*	*9*	*22*
Develop skills to complete globally	28	15	5	8	16	17	15
Take pride in and revitalise its culture	21	15	11	10	9	13	14
Improve relations with the rest of Africa	6	8	3	3	4	4	7
Not heard of African renewal, vague concept, don't know	8	15	24	25	27	12	16

Items correspond to survey items a: q11_2, b: q6_5, c: q11_5, d: q11_9, e: q7_9, f: q6_4, g: q10_10, h: q10_12, i: q11_6, j: q11_12, k: q11_8, l: q20 (paraphrased), m: q33 (paraphrased).

Religious and ethnic social distance varies considerably across the groups under study. English-speaking whites appear to be least concerned about religious difference and tend to have a more secular identity than others. In contrast, Afrikaners are more insistent on promoting religious values in society and rule out mixed marriages across both religious and race divides, interracial marriage in particular. Indians are generally more trusting than other groups while Afrikaners are least trusting of others.

The black elite share majority views on religious identity. However, their views on racial identity and racial mixing appear to be more relaxed than those of rank and file blacks. It is possible that social mobility has brought black elites into contact with a broader spectrum of South African society and promoted greater openness towards difference. In particular, 'buppies', the black upwardly mobile appear to be comfortable mixing with people from different language groups. The black elite is the group most likely to approve of interracial marriage. Noteworthy is that black and coloured South Africans are less averse than others to marriage across colour lines. In terms of the old social order, racial intermarriage might still be regarded as a vehicle for upward social mobility for black and coloured South Africans.

The last two items in Table 6 clearly indicate that difference in the new South Africa is increasingly defined in terms of social exclusion, that is, the gap between rich and poor in society, rather than race or religion. Of course, race is still the defining factor of poverty and low levels of living as is evident in Table 1. Some 95 per cent of the very poor, that is the 20 per cent poorest households in South Africa, are headed by blacks (Devey and Møller, 2002:116). However, by 2002 South Africans appear to have shifted their focus of attention from race discrimination to poverty discrimination (Table 6, item l).

Item m in Table 6 similarly identifies the need to reduce the gap between rich and poor as high on the South African development agenda, especially among rank and file blacks and coloureds who represent the lower levels of living in South African society.

To sum up, South Africans use both their racial/ethnic and religious identities in the new South Africa. However, most South Africans wish to preserve their own personal identity rather than presenting themselves in terms of social categories. It appears that social distances between the divides of race and religion are softening. The black elite is among the groups that feel more comfortable in mixing. Their language skills may be an advantage here. Friendships across the colour line are seen as desirable. Interracial marriage, unthinkable under the old order is no longer seen as a threat to the new social order.

Political attitudes

Reporting so far on quality of life and social identity suggests that the emergent black elite has undergone a shift in identity away from the rank and file in line with their upward social mobility and also exhibits greater tolerance of difference in society. Has the new black elite also adopted political views divergent from the black majority?

Challenges for the new South Africa

A number of items in the 2002 democracy survey probed the political challenges still facing the new democracy. Respondents were asked to identify the single most serious problem for the new government. The response pattern in Table 7 clearly reflects the huge wealth gap in the country. Rank-and-file blacks and coloureds cite poverty and unemployment as South Africa's greatest problem. Better-off Indians and whites identified crime as the number one problem.

Noteworthy is that racial and other discrimination issues pale in significance when compared to poverty and unemployment although social inequalities are a legacy of apartheid. The major issue of the eighties and early nineties, racial discrimination, has virtually disappeared off the list of South African concerns, in confirmation of Schlemmer's (2001) more focussed study of race relations.

Several nuances in the response pattern reflect divergent group interests. Some nine years into democracy rank-and-file blacks are most concerned about basic material needs such as housing, infrastructure and services. A few Afrikaners cite political violence as an issue although regular crime has replaced political violence as a major threat to life since the early nineties. It is possible that Afrikaners classify crimes that are seen to be politically motivated, such as attacks on isolated farms, as acts of political violence. HIV/AIDS receives more specific mention as an urgent problem among blacks while other groups refer more generally to health issues.

Where does the emergent black elite position itself on the question of challenges facing South Africa in the millennium? In spite of identifying themselves as members of the middle class, black elites appear to side with their poorer black cousins in that they pinpoint poverty and unemployment, followed by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, as major challenges facing the country, well ahead of crime. Nevertheless the black elite expresses sentiments similar to whites regarding discrimination. Mentions of racism, racial discrimination and unspecified discrimination have been grouped together in Table 7. Understandably reverse discrimination under the affirmative action label is of concern only to groups that are negatively affected by the new equal opportunities legislation. Mention of 'foreigners' as a problem by the black elite suggests that they might see better-educated and skilled immigrants as competition in the job market. In responding to item m in Table 6 above, the black elite was more likely than other groups to cite skills development as an important precondition for African renewal.

Table 7: Views on political challenges and country role models

Percentages	Black elite	Black r & f	Coloured	Indian	White Afrikaans	White English	Total
a) The most serious problem that government should urgently address (spontaneous mention)							
Unemployment and poverty	35	44	38	26	11	17	38
Crime (including special mention of rape and murder)	16	13	30	43	27	31	18
Political violence	1	0	1	2	9	3	1
Housing, infrastructure and services	8	13	4	0	3	1	10
HIV/AIDS and health	18	11	4	7	4	6	10
Education	0	2	1	2	1	5	2
Corruption and greed	3	1	2	0	5	6	2
Discrimination, racism, racial discrimination	7	1	4	3	7	11	2
Affirmative action	0	0	1	2	2	6	1
Economic issues	1	1	3	3	6	2	2
Government	4	1	2	2	3	1	2
Judicial system	0	0	1	0	2	0	1
Foreigners	4	0	0	0	1	0	0
Concentrate on our country's problems	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Environmental, land, and small business issues among other: less than 1% of total							
b) The country that comes closest to being the ideal country							
West	46	36	41	35	54	67	40
Middle East, Asia, Russia	5	4	4	21	2	1	4
Africa	8	14	1	4	2	1	10
South Africa	35	41	52	33	39	24	40
None	6	6	2	7	4	7	6

Items correspond to survey questions a: q9, b: q5.

Ideal country reference comparisons

South Africa's newfound confidence is reflected in the response pattern elicited by a probe into the ideal country (Table 7, item b). South Africa receives the single highest number of votes. Juxtaposed to South Africa as ideal reference standard are the various countries identified by Huntington (1998) as those of the 'West' including the United States, Britain and Australia. A higher proportion of English-speaking whites, many of whom are descendants of British immigrants, cite the West as reference standard. For the same reason, Indians are more likely than others to choose countries of the East such as India or other Asian countries as their reference standard. The new black elite position themselves closer to whites than the rank and file in their choice of ideal country reference standard ahead of the rank and file. While perceived ethnic affinities might colour the response patterns in the case of some white and Indian South Africans, it is more likely that the higher living standards of the West are particularly attractive to black respondents.

Conflict resolution

In response to items in Table 8, almost all respondents endorsed items advocating mutual respect and compromise to avoid conflict in society. They strongly support the principle of mutual respect among different groups. Ethnic diversity is considered a source of strength and cultural enrichment to be valued in line with the ideals of a rainbow nation. However, majorities in all groups concede that in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society one group is likely to dominate.

Above-average percentages of the black elite support the principles of peaceful co-existence outlined in the items in Table 8. However, given their small number, which magnifies percentage shifts up or down, and the fact that substantial majorities among all groups advocate peaceful co-existence in South Africa, black elites form part of the mainstream that wants to live in peace rather than a vanguard of pacifists.

Political influence

In spite of the national pride and self-confidence detected in results reviewed so far, there are signs of political alienation. Less than half of all respondents believe that their elected leaders can influence social development and only a minority believe that they themselves have the power to effect improvements (Table 9). This result seems in strong contrast to the enthusiasm with which South Africans went to the polls in 1994 to transform the country under the motto of 'every vote counts'. Interestingly, the black elite appears to be more confident of its own power to affect social change than that of its political leaders. The black elite positions itself ahead of the rank and file alongside whites in terms of confidence that it can affect positive social change in society.

Table 8: Views on co-existence

Percentages agreeing with statements	Black elite	Black r & f	Coloured	Indian	White Afrikaans	White English	Total
a) In the present conflicts of our country all sides concerned should seek compromises and try to find agreement. - agree	97	90	97	100	97	98	93
b) Ethnic diversity makes a country culturally richer and more interesting. - agree	74	68	69	82	79	89	71
c) Even very different groups living in one country can easily accept each other as they are and respect each other's mutual rights. - agree	90	80	90	92	76	78	81
d) Violence and killing can never be justified, no matter how important the struggle. - agree	79	63	71	86	79	75	68
e) Whether one likes it or not, when groups with different languages, religions, colours... live in one country, one group will either control others or be controlled. - agree	71	67	64	84	75	78	68

Items correspond to survey questions a: q10_1, b: q7_4, c: q7_3, d: q7_5, e: 7_2.

Table 9: Views on political influence

Percentages disagreeing with statements	Black elite	Black r & f	Coloured	Indian	White Afrikaans	White English	Total
a) Given the situation in the country political leaders I support cannot do very much to improve our lives. - disagree	42	51	45	37	49	52	49
b) There is very little a person like me can do to improve the life of people in my country. - disagree	47	37	33	58	45	58	39

Items correspond to survey questions a: q22_2, q10_13.

Economic reforms

An item discussed earlier on suggested substantial proportions of South Africans regarded economic reform as essential to drive Nepad, The New Partnership for African Development, and the African renaissance. Table 10 presents viewpoints on how South Africans think the country should manage its economy.

Results in Table 10 show that South Africans are less likely to agree on economic than other issues. The usual racial gradient re-emerges in the response pattern to items discussing appointment on merit and free enterprise issues. Only half or even less than half of rank-and-file blacks compared to three quarters and up to over 80 percent of whites believe appointments to top positions in government, cabinet and the private sector should be made strictly on merit. Indian and coloured percentages endorsing appointment on merit fall somewhere in between. Substantial proportions among blacks, coloured and Indians – between a quarter up to a third – are in favour of quotas from all groups in society to ensure fair representation (Table 10, item a).

The gradient is also evident but less so in the case of an item in favour of private versus state ownership of business. Some 61 per cent of rank-and-file blacks compared to 92 per cent of English speakers vote for private ownership with other groups falling in between (Table 10, item b).

The gradient runs in the opposite direction when it comes to solutions to economic growth and social equality (Table 10, item c). With almost three quarters in favour, blacks are significantly more likely than whites to insist that government should if necessary introduce a wealth tax to achieve greater social equality. Less than half of whites who are more likely to have taxable income than others, are willing to support the social equaliser option.

Black elites split their votes on economic issues as follows. Their thinking on appointments in government service, privatisation, and social equality is more conservative than that of whites and Indians and falls somewhere between that of the black and coloured majority viewpoint. The black elite vote falls between that of coloureds and Indians when it comes to appointment on merit in the private sector and cabinet.

Democratic values

The preceding sections have established that the emergent black elite identifies itself as middle class, feels comfortable in mixing with other groups in a multicultural society and has more open attitudes on social issues than the black rank and file. An important question is whether reaping the material rewards of democracy also goes hand in hand with the conviction that democratic ideals serve their society best. Do the elite believe strongly in principles of democracy such as a transparent and accountable government, an independent judiciary, and freedom of association and expression?

Table 10: Views on managing the economy in a democratic state

Percentages endorsing options	Black elite	Black r & f	Coloured	Indian	White Afrikaans	White English	Total
Promotion on merit:							
a) 'Appointment to senior positions [should be] on merit' ('best, most capable people' vs persons 'trusted', 'from own group' or 'fair group representation') in the:							
❑ government service	52	45	58	61	79	79	51
❑ private sector	63	50	57	68	81	85	56
❑ cabinet	61	52	58	67	76	78	57
Free enterprise and social equality:							
b) 'Shops and factories [should be] owned by private business people who will work hard to make the businesses grow' (vs 'Shops and factories owned by a government elected by the people')	63	61	76	82	89	92	67
c) Prefers: 'A government which tries to make all people as equal as possible in wages, housing and education, even if incomes are heavily taxed' (vs 'a government which allows people who are clever and work hard to become wealthier than others, even if some remain permanently poor')	72	74	69	67	48	40	69

Items correspond to survey questions a: q34_1, b: q14_8, c: q14_9.

A number of items probed views on democracy as shown in Table 11. Items have been ordered in terms of frequency of total percentages endorsing statements. Many of the statements express ideals that have been thoroughly aired in public awareness and democracy education campaigns since 1994. Rank and file South Afri-

cans, whose human rights have been violated for long, are constantly reminded of their democratic rights as enshrined in the new Constitution and Bill of Rights.

At the top of the list of ideals under democracy, the vast majority of South Africans wish to preserve their language heritage. They disapprove of cheating at the polls even as a means to achieve an end in which they believe. They wish for political leaders to be accountable to parliament and to their constituencies. They believe in elected rather than appointed local leaders at a time when the role of the traditional authorities is still under discussion. And they wish to exercise individual choice.

There is less consensus regarding the importance of a free press and an independent judiciary that might undermine social harmony and disunity in society. It is possible that the gap in sentiments is a reflection of the contrast in collectivist black and individualistic white worldviews. The wording of item h might also have been misunderstood by some respondents to indicate civil disobedience rather than independence on the part of the judiciary. Lastly, all South Africans are unsure whether a multiparty system according to the Western model would work well in their society.

In terms of differences between groups of respondents, it appears that the proportions endorsing the guiding principles of multiparty democracy follow the usual gradient with the newly enfranchised blacks indicating lesser support at one end compared to the greatest support among seasoned white voters at the other end. Although their small numbers tend to magnify percentage shifts up or down, Indians seem to be less supportive of democratic ideals. English-speaking whites are significantly more concerned than Afrikaners that individual interests are allowed free rein.

To answer the question posed at the outset, the black elites position themselves with the more seasoned voters on questions of accountability of government, the balance of power, and the need for elected local leaders. Otherwise they side with rank and file blacks on the issues of an independent media and judiciary. Interestingly, possibly because they are proud of their language skills as suggested in other responses, the black elite appears to be somewhat less concerned about the promotion of several official languages although four in five vote in favour of preserving language rights.

Table 11: Profile of the ideal democratic state

Percentages endorsing options / statements	Black elite	Black r & f	Coloured	Indian	White Afrikaans	White English	Total
a) A government which gives everybody the right to use their own language in public, in offices, courts and parliament (vs a government which allows one state language only)	79	81	92	88	89	89	83
b) It is permissible to falsify election results in order to allow the better candidate for the country to win. - disagree	70	68	71	69	85	80	70
c) A president whose power is balanced by the parliament (vs a president who can act without interference by members of parliament)	79	69	64	80	78	82	71
d) A government which is influenced by all sorts of organisations, movements and associations of ordinary people (vs a government which listens only to organisations that support it)	80	68	65	87	80	83	70
e) Local authorities that are elected by the people of the respective regions, towns or villages (vs local authorities that are appointed by the central government)	79	66	74	68	86	82	70
f) Freedom for people to pursue different interests provided they respect the rules (vs a state authority which controls particular interests and preserves social harmony)	67	69	73	84	79	91	72

continued

Table 11 continued

Percentages endorsing options / statements	Black elite	Black r & f	Coloured	Indian	White Afrikaans	White English	Total
g) Newspapers free to criticise government and enjoy freedom of expression (vs control of newspapers by government in order to prevent disunity)	65	62	65	81	86	85	66
h) Judges who apply the law whatever the government says (vs judges who follow instructions given by government)	56	50	52	47	77	70	53
i) More than one political party, each with its own plan for the country's future (vs one political party only, with a single plan for the country's future)	49	54	63	48	66	71	56

Items correspond to survey questions a: q14_7, b: q11_11 c: q14_2, d: q14_10 e: q14_6, f: q14_5, g: q14_4, h: q14_3, i: q14_1

Discussion and conclusions

At the outset the paper asked whether South African society had become a less divided society after close on nine years of democratic rule. The paper asked firstly if levels of living and quality of life had improved under democracy. If this were the case, it was reasoned that a convergence of living levels might contribute towards shaping common identities and ideals that cut across the old racial order.

Quality of life and levels of living in democracy

The evidence from a representative sample study of South Africans in 2002 confirmed that levels of living and perceived quality of life had improved for a small group of black elite who regarded themselves as well off on three separate counts. Black elites were satisfied with life at present, felt they were better off than in their earlier lives under apartheid, and expected to be better off in future. The analysis then traced the identity of this group and the attitudes it expressed according to a large number of indicators produced by the study. Reference standards were found to be important factors in shaping perceptions of quality of life and identities. Those who perceived themselves to be better off than ten years ago were generally more satisfied, more likely to identify themselves as members of a middle class, and were also more optimistic for their own and their children's future.

What is the significance of this constellation of perceived quality of life among black elites for South Africa's new democracy?

According to Easterlin (2001;2003), one of the few economists to study the relationship between happiness and income, the happiness levels of the economically more mobile sectors of the population typically do not increase over the course of a lifetime although their real incomes tend to increase several times over. Easterlin observes that people tend to apply current reference standards to evaluate both past and future happiness. Thus, people regularly state they were less happy in the past, and that they expect to be happier and better off in future when they assume they will have more income to meet current material aspirations. What people fail to take into consideration, Easterlin points out, is that they will be relatively no better off with improved income in, say five years time, because their aspirations will increase as well.

Easterlin's explanation goes a long way towards solving the seemingly contradictory findings of happiness studies. In all cross-national and national studies the rich at any point in time are happier than the poor (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002). This is also the case in South Africa where the income gap coincides with a happiness differential. However, life cycle studies show that happiness levels of individuals do not increase over time even in periods when levels of living are rising (Easterlin,

2001; 2003). If Easterlin's thesis were to hold in the non-western South African case, the mismatch between rising standards of living and happiness might become the downfall of a government that seeks to improve material standards of living to make voters happy under democracy.

Easterlin (2003) points out that economists think that well being depends only on attainment whereas aspirations and adaptation may be equally important factors in shaping perceived quality of life. However, some strands of theory in economics also recognise the importance of aspirations, as do quality of life researchers. Habit formation theory emphasises that the benefit one derives from material goods is affected by comparison with one's past experience. Interdependent preferences theory states that benefits of material goods depend partly on what others have. Counterparts to these concepts in quality of life studies are adaptation/habituation and social comparisons with others in society.

Quality-of-life scholars have made special studies of which reference standards are typically used by individuals in assessing quality of life (Diener, 1994; Michalos, 1985). In this study it appears that comparisons with the self tend to produce the greatest feelings of overall well being. It is observed that all blacks, who consider themselves relatively better off than ten years ago, feel more confident that society has opened up opportunities for themselves and their children. Thus, it appears that well being is partially mediated by reference standards. The finding that black South Africans who have achieved a higher standard of living use reference standards such as the 'past self' rather than 'same point-in-time interpersonal comparisons' with, say, the rich, enhances their sense of achievement and well-being. This choice of reference standards on the part of emergent black elites bodes well for contentment under democracy.

Identity and democracy

The collection of opinions shared by respondents in the 2002 democracy study reviewed in this paper presents a broad-brush picture of the South African mindset some nine years into democracy. Obviously only tentative conclusions can be drawn as the mix of indicators allow ample scope for interpretations from different angles.

In terms of the deepening of democracy, it is apparent that South Africans subscribe to a codex of peaceful co-existence embodied in the rainbow nation ideal that celebrates unity in diversity and social harmony through compromise. The subtitle to the book produced from the original study of South Africa's prospects for peaceful change in the late 1970s by Hanf and colleagues refers to 'an empirical inquiry into the *possibility* of democratic conflict regulation' (emphasis added). The updated study conducted in 2002 study intimates that peaceful conflict resolution in South Africa has become a way of life for most South Africans. All groups that make up South Africa's ethnic mosaic generally believe in the ideals of the rainbow people. It is pos-

sible that an intensive education campaign has contributed to this aspect of the deepening of democracy. In the 1990s conflict-resolution training became a growth industry judging by the seminars and workshops organised by civil society to meet popular needs. Conflict resolution is now a permanent feature in the curricula of life-skills training programmes for schools and community projects.

According to the 2002 study, there is consensus among South Africans that language diversity is worth preserving. The black elite agee with veteran voters that a balance of power is important for a democratic society. However the black elite side with the collectivist rank and file in instances where they fear that an independent press or judiciary might negatively affect social harmony. Only English speaking whites, who are most likely to support the political opposition, are clearly in favour of a multiparty democracy Western style. Thus it seems that South Africans are intent on growing their own brand of democracy to suit their special needs and mix of worldviews.

Rank-and-file South Africans as well as the black elite are slower to embrace the principles of an open economy and free enterprise. This response pattern may be a reflection of the fact that globalisation has yet to yield tangible benefits for developing countries including South Africa. The millennium goals of poverty reduction and The New Partnership for African Development (Nepad), have still to be translated into reality. Nevertheless, South Africans generally acknowledge that countries of the more developed West are important reference standards presumably because the West is seen to enjoy higher standards of living which most peoples in the developing world covet.

When exploring individual identities, the study finds ample evidence of newfound pride and self-confidence among South Africans. Members of the group of emergent black elite ooze self-confidence, they clearly identify themselves as good income earners and state they feel comfortable conversing in a language other than their own. Importantly, South Africans are willing to extend the hand of friendship across the former ethnic divides. They can even contemplate mixed marriages, once outlawed under the old political order and socially unacceptable in most family circles. However, South Africans have not become colour blind. It is not in the interests of rank-and-file blacks to forget that they are still the poor and underprivileged in contemporary society, and that they form the new excluded category. The emergent elite tend to side with the rank and file regarding the importance of transforming the economy to create a more equal society. Opinions such as the one on equality in society still conform to the stepped hierarchical pattern which shows up the racial divides in society. However, differences of opinions and viewpoints are softening and the emergent black elite is often seen to break ranks by siding with the one or other group.

Conclusion

Returning to the theme of quality of life, the 2002 study finds that black elites have achieved not only a better quality of life in their own evaluation – they regard themselves as solidly middle class, they are also more likely than the rank and file to openly support the major principles of a stable democracy such as freedom of association, freedom of choice, a balance of power, good governance and transparency. It may be the hallmark of good governance when citizens reap the rewards of democracy that make a difference in their everyday life. This bodes well for the time when poorer South Africans follow in the footsteps of the emergent black elite and gain opportunities to advance materially and achieve happiness. It is hoped that greater contentment under democracy will prove to be a powerful motivator to adopt democratic ideals as one's own.

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