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INTRODUCTION

The significance of the 2009 elections

Mcebisi Ndletyana

South Africa held its fourth national election on 22 April 2009, a date preceded by a series of unprecedented events. The hitherto dominant ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), had split in the latter part of 2008, spawning a new political party, the Congress of the People (Cope). Earlier, at the party's 2007 National Conference, ANC members had elected Jacob Zuma, which meant he was virtually certain to become the party's presidential candidate in 2009. In September 2008 the party had forced Thabo Mbeki to resign as the country's president. Although Mbeki had lost the race for ANC president to Zuma, he had received a decent 40 per cent or so of the votes cast at the conference and gained public sympathy because of the manner in which he handled his resignation as president of the Republic.

For the ANC president to become the party's presidential candidate was not in and of itself unusual, but the fact that it was Zuma was intriguing. Zuma was still subject to a criminal investigation on fraud charges and had earlier been acquitted of raping a friend's daughter. He had admitted that he had had intercourse with the HIV-positive woman and that, though knowing her HIV status, he had not used protection.

Thus, the 2009 elections promised to yield atypical results, while also generating a level of popular excitement unseen since the 1994 elections that brought democracy to the country. The ANC fielded a morally compromised presidential candidate in Zuma and among the contesting parties was Cope, a splinter group from the ANC formed by Thabo Mbeki sympathisers. Cope seemed poised to benefit from its association with Mbeki as well as to woo voters who were possibly repulsed by Zuma's candidature.

The new party would, however, face a stiff challenge from the Democratic Alliance (DA) for the status of official opposition. Most of the DA's support came from the Western Cape, where it controlled the Cape Town Metro, while the ANC controlled the provincial government. Voters in that province were almost equally divided between the ANC and the DA, and vacillated between the two parties. Any event, however minor, could tilt the vote either way. The split and consequent ructions within the provincial ANC thus seemed to favour the DA.

The ANC premier, Ebrahim Rasool, was fired from his position for allegedly having supported Mbeki's failed bid for the ANC presidency. The populous Muslim community in Cape Town, where Rasool is held in high standing, could not have received the news favourably. ANC provincial leaders were at loggerheads. The party's provincial secretary, Mcebisi Skwatsha, was stabbed, allegedly by a member of a rival faction whose region the party had disbanded. Though it remained unclear whether the DA would remain the official opposition in Parliament, it certainly seemed set to wrest control of the Western Province from the ANC.

Thus, for the first time since South Africa's democratic breakthrough, the electoral outcome was not clear cut, a fact that generated considerable interest in the elections. New voters, especially young people, were registered in numbers unknown since 2000. The majority of these were concentrated in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), Jacob Zuma's home province, where the ANC was locked in a titanic struggle with the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), which faced a stiff challenge from the ANC, especially among voters who might have been attracted to the IFP because of its traditional Zulu appeal. Zuma is a traditionalist who, as ANC provincial chairperson, had served in the provincial administration. Unlike the party in the Western Cape, the KZN ANC was overwhelmingly behind Zuma's candidature.

Intense competition raised the spectre of high levels of violence. Previous electoral rounds had been marred by violence, especially in KZN. But, that was not the only concern for the Electoral Commission (IEC), the body with the task of administering the elections. The Constitutional Court had just handed down a landmark judgement allowing South African citizens based overseas to cast their votes in the capitals of their host countries. It was left to the IEC to ensure that the judicial ruling was put into practice.

The results of the elections were as confounding as they were confirmatory of expectations. This issue of the *Journal of African Elections* analyses the manner in which the IEC managed the election and draws out the key implications of the results. The way an election is run is critical in determining the credibility of the outcome. Drawing on his inside knowledge of the IEC Kealeboga Maphunye takes us through the process of preparing for an election, especially informing us how the institution was able to meet the challenges posed by South African citizens voting abroad. Most importantly, Maphunye shows how the IEC has improved progressively, introducing innovations that enabled the largest possible number of citizens not only to register but to cast their votes with relative ease on election day. However, as Maphunye points out, measures introduced to make voting convenient may also have unintended consequences that conflict with the initial objective.

Part of the success of the 2009 elections was the relatively low levels of violence. This was partly due to the efforts of the IEC, which has prioritised this problem since 1994. Vanessa Barolsky, however, cautions that the declining levels of violence do not, as the dominant argument holds, necessarily presuppose the maturity of our democracy. Violent protests erupted soon after the elections in many communities throughout the country. Whether or not violence erupts, Barolsky asserts, has little to do with the maturity or otherwise of the democratic system. Rather violence stems from the contested nature of democracy itself, especially in a society defined by inequality and uneven power relations. Thus, Barolsky advises, we should not take the presence or absence of violence as a statement of the failure or success of our electoral democracy, but rather strive to deepen our understanding of the nature of democratic society, especially the way power functions and its impact on the various classes.

The health of South Africa's democracy, however, argue Ebrahim Fakir, Zandile Bhengu and Josefine K Larsen, received a boost from the relatively high levels of registration among the youth compared to those in previous elections. Fakir et al probe the reasons behind this phenomenon.

Mcebisi Ndletyana and Brown Maaba posit the resurgence of Zulu ethno-nationalism, sparked by Jacob Zuma's presidential candidature, as one explanation for the unusually high voter registration rates, particularly in KZN. Ndletyana and Maaba contend that the manner in which Zuma campaigned for the ANC presidency especially, partly as a defence strategy in his legal trials, revived Zulu ethno-nationalism, which not only benefited Zuma's presidential prospects in the party but also minimised the ANC's electoral slide.

Outside of KZN, however, the ANC experienced a significant dip. Ndletyana ascribes this to the split within the party and the subsequent formation of Cope, which registered notable gains in provinces where the ANC was hit by leadership schisms. Contrary to expectations, however, Cope did not attract trans-racial support, nor did the party have a strong appeal amongst the black middle class. Rather, Ndletyana shows, it found support in black working-class communities throughout the country.

According to Thabisi Hoeane Cope's trans-ethnic appeal affirms the relative marginality of ethnicity as a factor in swaying voters' political choice. Rivals had cast Cope as a Xhosa-inspired and dominated party, but the spread of its electoral support proved otherwise. While Hoeane concedes that Zulu ethno-nationalism may have played a role in the ANC's sudden rise in the KZN, on the whole ethnicity may have little influence on how voters cast their ballots.

Cherrel Africa reiterates a similar view, with specific reference to the Western Cape, where ethnicity had been accorded a dominant influence on voting behaviour. There, the historically liberal and English DA won an outright

majority, buoyed largely by coloured voters. The same voters, Africa explains, had previously made the ANC the largest party in the province. Africa homes in on the specific non-identity factors that swayed political support in favour of the DA.

Ultimately, however, the election results, as Joseph Kivilu and Ronnie Mmotlane show, did not correspond to poll predictions. Cope performed worse and the ANC better than pollsters had predicted. Kivilu and Mmotlane explain the inconsistency, showing how recent predictions differ from previous ones, and make a determination on whether polls have become better or worse. Their analysis will hopefully enable scholars and election observers to develop a realistic appreciation of polls in the future.

PARTY SUPPORT AND VOTER BEHAVIOUR IN THE WESTERN CAPE

Trends and patterns since 1994

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ABSTRACT

Since 1994 election outcomes in the Western Cape have been examined through analyses of the 'coloured vote'. These explanations, which are premised on the racially based motivations of voters, feed into the choices, rhetoric and behaviour of political parties. Besides inadvertently providing justification for racially inflammatory campaign strategies they allow parties to neglect their duty to give voters adequate information. In this article I provide an overview of voting trends and the political developments which have underpinned these patterns. I argue that it is not the nature of the electorate but national political developments and political parties, through their behaviour and campaigns, that are responsible for gains and losses and for the dramatic political changes in the province. I further argue that it is precisely because racial identity is so salient in the Western Cape that parties need to move towards more inclusive campaign strategies.

INTRODUCTION

The Western Cape is a politically unique province where electoral trends stand in sharp contrast to those in the rest of South Africa. While national outcomes have been predictable, returning the African National Congress (ANC) to power with large majorities, outcomes in the Western Cape have been far less predictable, with all democratic elections being highly contested. This has resulted in three different political parties (namely the National Party – NP, which later became the New National Party – NNP; the ANC and the Democratic Alliance – DA) assuming power in the province. There is no certainty about the election outcome prior to the election, as is the case at national level.

The reason for this alternation in power is said to lie with the coloured majority in the province. Breytenbach (1999, p 117), for example, argued that the coloured vote was of special significance 'because the outcome of the Western Cape hinged very much on this factor'. Perceptions of the importance of the 'coloured vote' have resulted in campaigning that often encompasses unintentional or deliberate racial mobilisation and inflammatory political rhetoric.

Explanations of election outcomes and voting patterns in the Western Cape (as elsewhere) tend to revolve around racial fault lines and the racially based motivations of voters. These explanations in turn feed into the choices and actions of political parties. For example, Reynolds (1999, p 190) noted that in the 1999 election both the ANC and the NNP fielded coloured candidates for the premiership 'because it reflected the political reality that coloured voters are in the majority in the Western Cape'. Nijzink & Jacobs (2000, p 39) note that the ANC in the Western Cape engineered a number of high profile defections of NNP politicians 'in a careful strategy to make inroads among coloured voters'. In 2009 this remained the case.

Daniel & Southall (2009, p 268) note that the ANC made a series of decisions relating to Ebrahim Rasool 'to make up lost ground among coloureds' and that the selection by the Congress of the People (Cope) of Allan Boesak as the party's premier candidate was a significant blow to the ANC because he 'retained a major following especially from the coloured community'. Such explanations allow the contesting political parties to justify racialised campaigning and raise the question of whether election outcomes in the Western Cape are the result primarily of the actions of voters or of political parties.

Thus, a critical component of any analysis of elections and voting in South Africa and, specifically, in the Western Cape, is the role of identity in determining voting patterns. Analysts such as Schlemmer (1999, p 288) see South African voter motivations as 'determined by symbolic or identity concerns', resulting in election outcomes being described as assuming the quality of a 'racial or ethnic census'. Friedman (2005, p 5) argues that while South African elections are not simplistic ethnic censuses elections are not determined by policy issues. According to Friedman (2005, p 3) 'voter preferences are shaped by considerations other than competing technical solutions to economic and social problems' because South Africans vote on the basis of race, language and religion. Others have challenged this view, arguing that values, perceived interests and judgements as well as many other factors have important effects on partisan support (Eldridge & Seekings 1995; Mattes & Gouws 1998; Mattes 1995; Mattes & Piombo 2001; Mattes, Taylor & Africa 1999; Habib & Naidu 1999; Hoeane 2004).

A significant problem is that the starting point of all these analyses is the behavioural motivations and/or demographic characteristics of the electorate.

This preoccupation with individual decisions is flawed because, as Sniderman (2000, pp 68-69) argues, political institutions – rather than voters – fix and organise the confusion of politics. While individual decision-making processes are critically important, voters are only one part of the electoral equation; political parties and the choices they offer constitute the other part. This raises concerns about the adequacy of accounts which view election outcomes as primarily determined by the characteristics of the electorate.

Another more serious problem created by this debate is that it opens up the space for political parties to abscond from their duty to provide voters with adequate information. If Friedman is correct that considerations other than competing solutions to economic and social problems shape voter preferences parties need not defend their records or provide information about how they will deal with the problems facing the electorate.

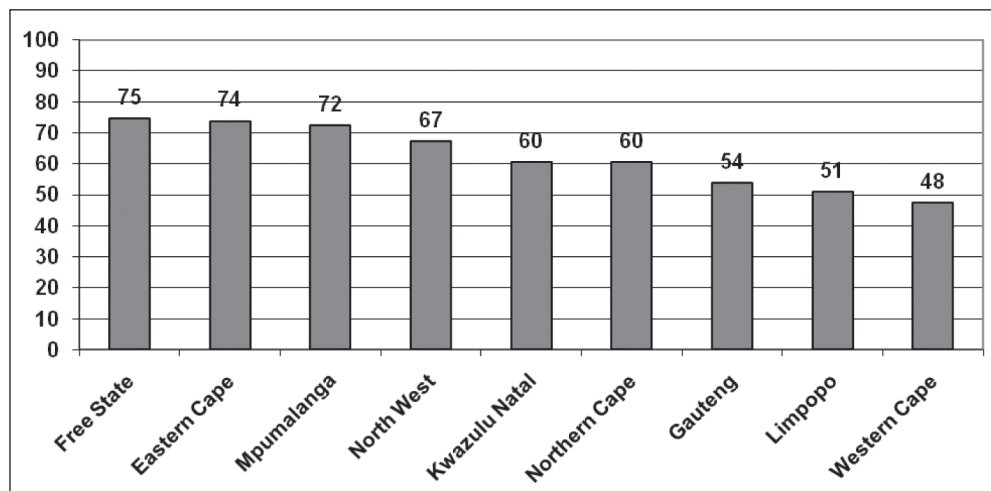
In this article I will examine voting trends and political developments in the Western Cape to offer some insight into whether the outcomes are primarily dependent on voters or parties.

THE CONTEXT

The Western Cape is a demographically unique province, with coloured voters forming the majority. According to the South African Institute of Race Relations's *South African Survey* of 2007/2008 the total population of the Western Cape was 4 540 286, with more than half (2 437 741) coloured, just under a quarter (1 076 194) African, 978 094 white and 48 257 Indian. The 2007/2008 survey also estimated that 55.3 per cent of people in the Western Cape speak Afrikaans, 23.7 per cent speak isiXhosa and 19.3 per cent speak English. However, it should be noted that the Afrikaans spoken on the Cape Flats is quite different from the Afrikaans spoken in the suburbs – in other words, there is a clear distinction between 'white Afrikaans' and 'coloured Afrikaans'.

Data from round four of the Afrobarometer survey in South Africa reveal a lower level of party identification in the Western Cape than in other regions in South Africa. By the end of 2008, 60 per cent of the South African electorate indicated that they felt close to a political party. As Figure 1 shows, the Western Cape was the only province where less than half (48%) of the respondents said they felt close to a political party compared to more than 70 per cent in the Free State, Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga and 60 per cent or more in the North West, KwaZulu-Natal and the Northern Cape. Gauteng and Limpopo also had 'lukewarm' levels of identification, with just over half of the respondents saying they identified with a political party. These 'non-partisan' voters in the Western Cape are more likely to be open to persuasion during election campaigns.

Figure 1
Party identification by province (2008)



Source: Afrobarometer 2008. Sample size 2 400.

At the same time, the turnout in the Western Cape has been higher than that in other provinces. Voter registration and turnout there has been continuously high compared to national patterns. At the national level turnout has declined sharply since the first democratic election, in 1994. Participation as a proportion of the voting age population (VAP) declined from 86 per cent in 1994 to 72 per cent in 1999. It then declined more dramatically, to 58 per cent, in 2004, increasing slightly, to 60 per cent, in 2009 (Schulz-Herzenberg 2009, p 26). Thus, participation in national elections, counted as a percentage of VAP, decreased substantially between 1994 and 2004 while turnout, as a proportion of VAP, has been consistently high in the Western Cape, where it declined from 89 per cent in 1994 to 70 per cent in 1999, increasing to 73 per cent in 2004 and 75 per cent in 2009.

Table 1
Voting age population, registration and turnout in the Western Cape

	Registered	Votes cast	Estimated turnout
1994	NA	2 137 742	88.90%
1999	1 864 019	1 616 179	69.70%
2004	2 220 283	1 621 835	73.40%
2009	2 634 439	1 987 777	75.45%

Source: Reynolds 1994, 1999; Piombo 2005; Daniel & Southall 2009

These unique features combine to create extremely competitive elections, notably in an attempt to capture the coloured vote. A high turnout combined with an uncertain outcome typically results in competitive elections and greater accountability. Whether these competitive elections resulting in the alternation of power have produced greater responsiveness or accountability or increased instability is an open question which merits a separate investigation. Unfortunately, the perceived salience of race and the importance of the coloured vote have negative implications for the behaviour and campaign strategies of political parties, which, in their attempts to capture the coloured vote, make decisions in terms of what they perceive will appeal to coloured voters. The race issue also results in campaigning that includes appeals by the contesting political parties to racial prejudice.

COMPARING NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL OUTCOMES

At the national level concerns have been raised about the negative implications of declining levels of voter participation in the context of continuous electoral dominance by the ANC. The ANC's proportion of the vote, taken as a proportion of total votes cast, increased from 62 per cent in 1994 to 66 per cent in 1999, to 70 per cent in 2004, dropping back to 66 per cent in 2009. Votes cast for opposition parties decreased from 32 per cent in 1994 to 24 per cent in 1999 and 17 per cent in 2004, increasing to 20 per cent in 2009 (Schulz-Herzenberg 2009, p 26). As Mattes (2005, p 106) indicates, turnout trends and voting patterns are not unrelated. Votes cast for the ANC (viewed as a proportion of votes cast by all eligible voters) decreased dramatically between 1994 and 2009. Piombo (2005, p 279) also argues that 'the decreased share of the vote earned by the opposition as a whole would suggest that it is mainly opposition voters who stayed at home'. By 2009 more people stayed at home than voted for the ANC at the national level.

Table 2
Election results in the Western Cape

	1994	1999	2004	2009
NP/NNP	1 138 242	609 612	170 469	NA
ANC	705 576	668 106	709 052	620 918
DP/DA	141 970	189 183	424 832	1 012 568
ID	NA	NA	122 867	92 116
Cope	NA	NA	NA	152 356

The Western Cape, on the other hand, has experienced alternation of power, with three different parties – the NP, the ANC and the DA – having been in power. This alternation of power has occurred in the context of fairly high turnout levels. As seen in Table 2, by 2009 the DA had won an outright majority, steadily increasing its proportion of the vote across the four elections.

THE FIRST DEMOCRATIC ELECTION (1994)

In the first democratic election, held in 1994, the NP won an outright majority in the Western Cape – 53.3 per cent of the votes for the Western Cape provincial legislature against the ANC's 33 per cent. The DP only secured 1.7 per cent of the national vote and 6.6 per cent at provincial level. The African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) won 1.2 per cent in the Western Cape while other parties mustered a combined 5.9 per cent.

The provincial result in the Western Cape, which put the NP into power under the leadership of Hernus Kriel, shocked many activists and, indeed, many analysts, who had presumed that coloured voters, scarred by the effects of apartheid, would secure an ANC government in the province. Language and culture were cited as reasons for the turn of events. With regard to the Democratic Party (DP, later the Democratic Alliance – DA) Welsh (1994, p 107) labelled its results 'an unmitigated disaster', ascribing this to the fact that the election had assumed the character of a presidential race between Nelson Mandela of the ANC and F W de Klerk of the NP. Welsh (1994, p 115) estimated that the fact that the DP had only won about 3 per cent of the coloured vote was a result of its inability to 'break out of the urban, English-speaking, white, middle-class confines of liberalism'.

The result was labelled a racial / ethnic census with the coloured community feeling happier with Afrikaner than rather than African nationalism (see, eg, Johnson (1996, p 310)). This claim was questioned by authors such as Mattes, Giliomee & James (1996) and Eldridge & Seekings (1995), who raised questions about the difficulties of making *a priori* predictions about so-called 'middle groups' like coloured and Indian voters. Eldridge & Seekings (1995, p 2) believe the Western Cape posed several specific challenges to the ethnic / racial census argument, arguing that, at the outset of the election campaign only one-third or one-half of the provincial electorate expressed the intention to vote for their 'natural' racial parties (depending on how one decides which parties were the voters' 'natural' choices) and that pre-election polling data suggested that voters' attitudes on a range of issues, not simply their ethnic identity, underlay their voting intentions. Furthermore, Mattes, Giliomee & James (1996, p 146) argue that: (i) if the importance of race emanated from the role given to it by apartheid one would expect the election to pit both coloured and black victims of apartheid

against their former white oppressors; (ii) coloured people did not cast their vote monolithically for one party; and (iii) the three largest parties did not derive an overwhelming proportion of their support from any single racial group.

Another explanation related to an 'affinity' or 'closeness' between coloured and white voters who share Afrikaans as a language (Reynolds 1994). This explanation was empirically refuted by Mattes, Giliomee & James (1996, p 146) based on survey data which showed that party preferences among coloured people differed little by language.

Putting aside language and cultural affinity, the 1994 election results in the Western Cape make sense if one considers the underlying fears of voters revealed by opinion polls conducted in the province in December 1993. The NP took advantage of these fears through an extremely effective election campaign. A provincially representative opinion poll of respondents conducted for the Institute for Multi-party Democracy in December 1993 revealed a significant concern about violence. Overall, 53 per cent of respondents cited violence as their primary concern.

Importantly, as shown in Figure 2, 27 per cent considered that the ANC was likely to initiate violence. As indicated by Africa (1996, p 49) this was almost on a par with the 29 per cent who felt that the right-wing Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) would initiate violence. Furthermore, 34 per cent saw the ANC as being responsible for encouraging political violence compared to 7 per cent who thought the NP was doing so. At the same time, almost half (49%) felt that the NP was discouraging political violence, while 23 per cent felt the ANC was doing so.

To be sure, these fears were highly racialised and the NP did a sterling job of capitalising on them, using inflammatory campaign rhetoric throughout a predominantly negative campaign against the ANC which depicted the ANC as a violent and dangerous party that would plunge South Africa into a state of chaos. According to Mattes, Giliomee & James (1996, p 133) the main aim of the NP was to force voters to determine which party would be most trustworthy to run the government and therefore painted a stark choice between a new, competent and trustworthy NP and an old, dangerous ANC that could not govern.

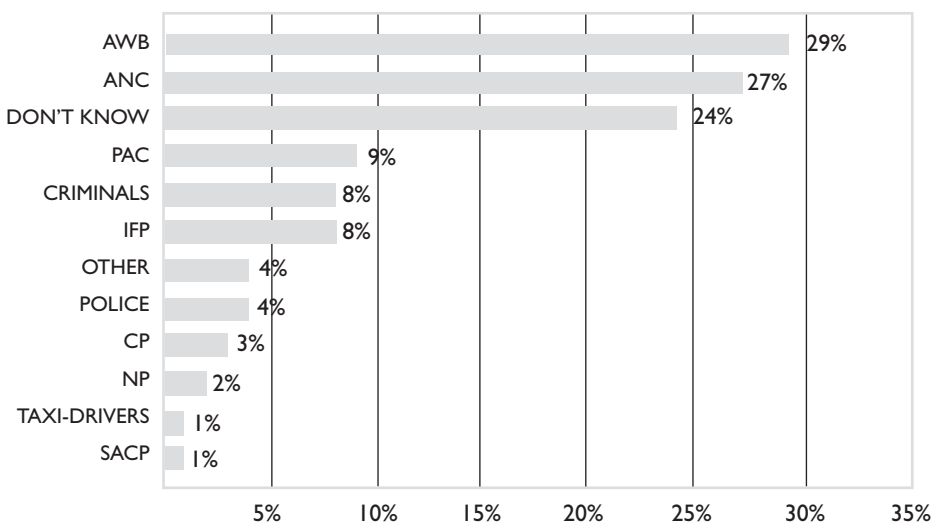
The vast series of endorsement-type advertisements for the NP utilised images of terrorism, intimidation, burning of collaborators, boycotts and strike action, referring to 'the comrades' as being responsible for violence in the country. The negative depiction of the ANC as being linked to 'the comrades' was strengthened by scores of street posters with the slogan 'Stop the comrades'. The NP's campaign was bolstered by events surrounding the squatter occupation of houses built for coloured people (Giliomee 1994, pp 66-67). Another of the NP's key campaign messages was that the economic policy of the ANC and the South

African Communist Party (SACP) would bring the country to its knees, and that the NP had the experience and ability to create order and economic prosperity out of chaos (Giliomee 1994, p 62). The NP emphasised the link between the ANC and the SACP by focusing on the dangers of communism, the number of SACP candidates on the ANC's list of candidates, and their influence on the ANC.

At the same time, a reservoir of positive emotions was directed towards F W de Klerk for ushering in a new era in South African politics. According to Breytenbach (1999, p 117), as early as 1991 an opinion poll revealed that 55 per cent of coloured voters would prefer to have De Klerk as leader, compared to 3 per cent who preferred Nelson Mandela. As Nijzink & Jacobs (2000, p 37) indicate, 'for coloureds, De Klerk seemed to be the embodiment of the transformed National Party'.

The ANC's campaign revolved primarily around the party's proposed Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which, among other things spelled out a succession of measures to create jobs through public works (Lodge 1994, p 30). According to Silke & Schire (1994, p 133) the ANC's detailed policy 'open plan' advertisements, based on the tenets of the RDP, which emphasised jobs, workers' rights, land reforms, housing policies and welfare, portrayed the party as ready to govern and as well prepared on a broad range of policy issues.

Figure 2
Perceptions of who might start violence (December 1993)



The second phase of the ANC's campaign, described as 'attack, contrast and endorsement', comprised attacks on the NP, contrasting the ANC's RDP with the NP's alleged lack of a plan, and endorsement of the ANC by community leaders at rallies and in the press. The 'contrast' component was part of a national shift in strategy, but the Western Cape put a particularly aggressive spin on it, emphasising attack (Eldridge & Seekings 1995, p 15). A series of advertisements focused on the fact that 'unemployment has struck at the heart of coloured, African and Indian communities in the Western Cape. The National Party's disastrous economic policy is responsible for this.'

Attention was paid to the NP's record of forced removals, corruption, involvement in 'third force' activities, covert operations it undertook, its backing from 'Witdoek' vigilante leaders and the support of Hernus Kriel, the NP's candidate for premier of the province, for the notorious Section 29 law, which related to detention conditions. As Eldridge & Seekings (1995, pp 15-16) point out the final phase of the ANC's campaign 'was marked by intensified attacks on the NP, further endorsements by community leaders, and upbeat messages about the future under an ANC government'.

The NP's campaign convinced voters in the Western Cape that the ANC would allow the country to descend into anarchy. On the other hand, the ANC's focus on issues such as 'third force' activities in the Western Cape probably counted against it. It is likely that the issue of 'third force' activities had meaning for activists and black citizens but little relevance for white and coloured people – none of the respondents in the abovementioned study by the Institute for Multi-party Democracy named a third force as being responsible for starting violence.

Thus, in the Western Cape the National Party was more successful than the ANC in mobilising people to vote for it. Given the concerns about violence and the pre-existing belief that the ANC would be most likely to start it, the NP's campaign messages about the ANC's involvement in boycotts, strikes, arson and other acts of violence fell on fertile ground.

THE 1999 ELECTION: REALIGNMENT IN THE WESTERN CAPE

By the second democratic election the DP had made modest advances in the province, doubling its share of the vote to 12 per cent. However, the contest remained primarily one between the ANC and the NP, now renamed the *New National Party* (NNP). Following the 1999 election the distribution of power shifted dramatically, with the NNP losing its majority status. Its share of the vote dropped by 15 per cent to 38 per cent – 4 per cent less than that of the ANC. The ANC increased its share of the vote by 9.1 per cent to 42 per cent. These massive shifts took place in the context of fairly high turnout levels.

Yet the campaign period was far less remarkable than that in 1994. As Habib & Naidu (1999, p 190) note, 'South Africa's second democratic election was very much a placid affair'. During the 1999 election campaign there was an increased focus on 'the issues'. Taylor & Hoeane (1999, p 133) note that all the political parties addressed the key social issues of job creation, crime, housing, education, service delivery, and corruption. This political realignment pointed to the idea that explanations of voting patterns in the Western Cape are deficient. The notion that coloured votes were based primarily on the cultural and / or linguistic affinity between coloured and whites was challenged by the fact that the pendulum had swung in the ANC's favour.

On the campaign front, the ANC in the Western Cape, learning from its campaign-trail mistakes of 1994, took a softer approach, with appeals for voters in the province simply to give it a chance. As Lodge (1999, p 66) indicates, particular emphasis was placed on 'listening' – party leaders concentrated on meetings with select groups of community and religious leaders, while branch members focused on household visits.

In addition to a new name, the NNP adopted a new multiracial focus. A poster with its leader Marthinus van Schalkwyk at the centre was at pains to show that the party was fielding candidates of other races (coloured and black). The NNP manifesto for 1999 professed that it was the most multiracial party in South Africa, representing 'a broad and inclusive South African patriotism that transcends race, language and religion' (New National Party 1999, p 213). While the intentions behind this contention were noble, they communicated a substantial break with the party's previous uncompromising commitment to 'separate development'. The new focus also sat uncomfortably with the NNP's emphasis on protecting minority rights. The National Party's decision to change its name was not necessarily a good strategic choice. It signalled an admission that it had erred and needed to improve.

In 1999 the spotlight was turned on the dangers of one-party dominance and a concentration of power if the ANC were to gain a two-thirds majority. These arguments were primarily highlighted by the Democratic Party (DP) and echoed by the NNP and the United Democratic Movement. Under the leadership of Tony Leon the DP built its strategy around 'robust opposition' with a focus on government failings, incompetence, corruption and a lack of urgency (Schrire 2001, p 142). According to Welsh (1999, p 91) the DP, in 1996, began to fashion a new approach to election campaigns, which involved the presentation of two clear competing visions: the ANC's collectivism and the DP's democratic liberalism. This formed the basis of its aggressive 'fight back' campaign in the 1999 elections. Posters with a serious-looking Leon cited an article printed in *Die Burger* in which Marthinus van Schalkwyk was quoted as saying that '... a situation can develop

where the NNP ... can serve in an ANC-led government on invitation'. It urged voters not to let the NNP disappoint them again and stated that 'only Tony Leon and the DP have ruled out a coalition with the ANC'.

What then accounts for the dramatic shifts in the Western Cape? In the 1999 election organisational and political changes probably mattered more to voters than campaign messages. It is likely that several other factors underpinned the political changes that occurred in the province.

Firstly, voters in the province could observe the fact that the dire predictions of the National Party for South Africa under ANC rule had failed to materialise. In its 1994 campaign the NP had painted a bleak future for South Africa under an ANC-led government. Voters in the Western Cape could watch the ANC as incumbents at national level. Instead of descent into chaos, post-1994 South Africa became a beacon of political hope around the world. As Magubane (2000, p 28) aptly notes, 'the "new" South Africa was born amidst profound relief, a palpable desire for reconciliation, overwhelming optimism and genuinely high hopes for the future'.

The Mandela era ushered in a new constitutional framework which included the protection of a broad range of rights, the development of mechanisms for public participation in government processes and the establishment of various protective institutions such as the Human Rights Commission, the Auditor-General, the Public Service Commission and the Public Protector. By 1999 the government had undergone a fundamental and radical overhaul (Calland 1999, p 1).

This positive image was further cemented by Nelson Mandela's heroic international status. Indeed, the primary thrust of Mandela's administration was national reconciliation. Mandela personally undertook a series of imaginative reconciliatory gestures such as visiting the man who had prosecuted him during the Rivonia Trial and rallying South Africans around the 1995 Rugby World Cup Final (Lodge 2002, p 14). Lodge indicates that Mandela's stature among South Africans remained undiminished and public satisfaction with his performance as president stood at 80 per cent just prior to the 1999 election.

At the same time, a second set of national-level events had undermined the credibility of the NNP. In May 1996 F W de Klerk had informed a packed press conference that he was taking the NP out of the Government of National Unity (Calland 1999, p 6). Calland notes that this was not a unanimous decision – many NP leaders wished to stay in power. In September 1997 De Klerk resigned and was replaced by Van Schalkwyk (Southall 1998, p 462). According to Breytenbach (1999, p 119) De Klerk's absence as the party leader weakened the NNP among coloured voters and threatened its retention of its Afrikaner support base, while attracting support from other quarters.

The question of who to target as its support base aggravated divisions within the party and ultimately resulted in the resignation of Roelf Meyer, who had played a central role in the negotiation process and in developing the interim constitution. Meyer had advocated the dissolution of the NP and the formation of a coalition movement made up of all opposition parties (Ndletyana 1999, p 183). Furthermore, according to Welsh (1999, p 91), the NNP was now reduced to a relatively small opposition party 'which could no longer offer the patronage, protection and privilege it could when it was the ruling party'. These events damaged the party's image.

Thirdly, the woes inflicted on the NNP by organisational problems and defections were exacerbated by the steady outpouring of horrific revelations to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) about atrocities committed by the apartheid government (Welsh 1999, p 91). Following an extensive process of statement-taking, public meetings and visits by fieldworkers to various communities, most of the 76 public hearings were televised (Lodge 2002, p 180). As Breytenbach (1999, p 119) indicates, some NNP supporters were 'shamed by the revelations of the TRC'.

All these elements eroded the NNP's support base in the 1999 elections while the DP made marginal inroads with more focused campaign efforts. The ANC, by means of its softer provincial campaign approach, began to gain the confidence of voters as they watched ANC incumbents at national level. Nonetheless a NNP / DA alliance kept the ANC out of power in the Western Cape and Marthinus van Schalkwyk became the new premier.

THE 2004 ELECTION: A SHIFT IN PERCEPTIONS

By 2004 the Democratic Party, now the Democratic Alliance, had made sizeable inroads in the Western Cape, increasing its support base to 27 per cent. The ANC also increased its support base marginally, from 42 per cent to 45 per cent, just short of an outright majority. The NNP's share of the vote crumbled to 11 per cent. The newly formed Independent Democrats (ID) under the leadership of Patricia de Lille, formerly of the Pan Africanist Congress, won 7.8 per cent of the vote in the Western Cape.

In 2004, as in 1994 and 1999, national events had a significant impact on the political landscape of the Western Cape. The Democratic Party and New National Party announced in June 2000 that they would join up as the Democratic Alliance, with the aim of building a political movement that would effectively challenge the ANC for political power. The DP's Tony Leon became the national leader and NNP's Marthinus van Schalkwyk the deputy leader. The objectives of the DA were to present a challenge to the ANC's electoral dominance and to strengthen

opposition politics. The merger was never institutionalised and by November 2001 the alliance had sprung apart, primarily due to dissatisfaction among former NNP officeholders with Leon's leadership (Lodge 2002, p 157). Kotze (2001, p 123) indicates that the DP and NNP had no shared historical roots and very little ideological common ground. The merger and subsequent split had stretched the NNP's resources and the DA had effectively absorbed the NNP's grassroots structures (Schulz-Herzenberg 2005, p 166). The NNP's next move was to enter into an alliance with the ANC.

There was also a new dynamic. Given the fact that these were the third democratic elections parties were beginning to develop 'track records'. Voters could start to assess the consistency of party rhetoric and the outlandish inconsistencies in NNP rhetoric appear to have finalised the demise of the party. By 2004 the NNP, in coalition with its former arch-enemy the ANC, preached a campaign message that completely contradicted its messages of 1994 and 1999. The party's primary campaign theme in 2004 was that it provided a voice for voters via the coalition arrangement with the ANC, which, it maintained, had enabled it to strengthen its position and thus provide minority voters with a voice in government, though it was still distinct from the ANC.

The main thrust of the NNP's election campaign in 2004 was that the party would provide access to government decision-making processes and resources. It argued that the DA's aggressive style of politics was unsuitable and damaging to democracy and located itself as the mediator between voters and the ANC. Thus, the NNP's campaign message of co-operation with the ANC was completely inconsistent with preceding NP campaigns, which had been predominantly negative, depicting the ANC as a dangerous, violent, authoritarian, politically intolerant party with an economic policy that would bring the country to its knees, therefore making it not fit to govern (Giliomee 1994; Eldridge & Seekings 1995).

The collaborative arrangement with the ANC, as well as the assertion that this would benefit voters, essentially communicated that the NNP's previous assessment of the ANC had been completely inaccurate. This is particularly important given Iyengar & Valentino's (2000, p 110) argument that campaign communication is most persuasive when it interacts with voters' prevailing expectations and evokes what voters already 'know'. It is likely that these messages were regarded as farcical and therefore ineffective. Not only had the incumbent ANC government at national level proved the NNP's claims to be inaccurate, the NNP now expected voters to believe that it would provide 'a voice' for them in government through the co-operative arrangement with the ANC.

Literature on the subject also informs us that campaign themes should be congruent with previous campaigns and messages *within* a campaign period should be well blended and internally consistent (Schnur 1999; Weaver 1996). Not

only was the 2004 campaign incongruent with its predecessors, there was also a lack of internal consistency among the messages the NNP presented to voters during the 2004 campaign. The core messages, that the party had strengthened its position through its alliance with the ANC but that it was distinct from and would hold the ANC to account on issues such as the death penalty, abortion and affirmative action, were contradictory. As Southall & Daniel (2005, p 48) state, the messages that the NNP was committed to constructive opposition, reconciliation and political consensus; that it differed from the ANC on key aspects such as being tougher on crime and the handling of Zimbabwe and that its presence in government gave important leverage to minority groups was as confusing as it was unconvincing. Schulz-Herzenberg (2005) also correctly points out that the NNP's stated ideological shift to the centre of the political spectrum was undermined by its overall policy stance.

On the other hand, the ANC ran a largely positive campaign on the theme of the celebration of ten years of democracy. It emphasised its achievements, acknowledged its shortcomings, and drew attention to its strength, experience and commitment. The main thrust of the ANC's 2004 campaign was that it was the only party able to improve the lives of ordinary people in South Africa. A key message related to its partnership with 'the people' in pursuing this goal. The campaign was significantly consistent with those of the elections of 1994 and 1999 with its theme of 'a better life for all' and the presentation of the role of the ANC in ending apartheid as well as the importance of contracts and partnerships with various social actors. As Lodge (2005, p117) indicates, the language used also revived the 'people centred' rhetoric of the Reconstruction and Development Programme. However, slight changes were also evident. In the founding elections of 1994 a large focus was on the end of apartheid, as embodied in the slogan 'Now is the time', whereas in 2004 a more practical and hands-on approach was used to present the ANC as competent in its role as the government of the day. The message that 'the tide has turned' became institutionalised, indicating to voters that the ANC-led government was successful in ushering in change in South Africa (Booyesen 2005, p 131).

In 2004 the DA contended that a vote for the NNP was as good as a vote for the ANC. It further contrasted itself with the ANC and other opposition parties, communicating the message to voters that other parties lacked sound policies, competence and integrity or that they simply served to fracture the opposition. The primary theme of the DA's 2004 campaign was 'South Africa deserves better'. The party's message strategy was three-pronged, ranging from the projection of its strengths and its policy alternatives to highlighting ANC weaknesses with reference to integrity and policy as well as the weaknesses of other opposition parties (Booyesen 2005, p 136).

The DA's primary assertion in 2004 was that it had the capacity and the appropriate policies to deal with South Africa's key problems. It stated that it was ready to take office because it had the means to deliver. It presented itself as an alternative government rather than merely an opposition party (Booyesen 2005, p 137). In its manifesto, entitled *A Better South Africa*, the party gave a detailed outline of its policy positions (Democratic Alliance 2004). The manifesto presented the DA as South Africa's only serious alternative to the ANC, stating that the party was the only political organisation other than the ANC with political reach in every province and was therefore capable of forming the central pillar of a democratic alternative.

The manifesto acknowledged the progress and achievements of the past ten years but argued that 'for millions of South Africans, these successes have been overshadowed by the ANC government's broken contract with the people of South Africa: its failure to deliver the better life it promised in 1994'. The manifesto was also particularly critical of the ANC government's response to HIV and AIDS and argued that the ANC had accumulated power for itself while leaving the people of South Africa behind.

Overall, the DA's campaign was consistent with its previous campaigns, particularly in key areas such as the focus on the electoral dominance of the ANC, criticisms of ANC performance and the presentation of the DA as the only viable alternative to the ANC. The goal of a basic income grant represented a key shift. Analysts also point out that the emphasis on policy alternatives was a new area for the party (Davis 2005; Southall & Daniel 2005). Furthermore, the party's campaign style was marginally softer than it had been during the 1999 'Fight Back' campaign. However, the ambiguous subtext of the DA's slogans and its messages are likely to have offended some voters. While it probably intended to refer to changes in the material living conditions of voters, the slogan 'Vote DA for real change' raised questions such as what type of change there had been prior to this and was the change from apartheid to democracy artificial. Furthermore, inherent in its theme (that South Africa deserved better) was criticism of the ANC. This slogan automatically raised the question: better than what? As Booyesen (2005) argues the slogans were interpreted 'as being polarizing'. Edighji (2004) went as far as saying that the DA predicated its election campaign on 'fear-mongering' and 'alarmism'.

While the DA gave out a series of messages presenting itself as a policy-oriented alternative ready to sort out the ANC's failed policies, there was a lack of internal consistency among the messages. As Booyesen (2005, p 132) indicates, the party's policy solutions were 'overwhelmingly free market, which constituted a policy environment that was essentially incompatible with the party's proposal for a basic income grant'. Southall & Daniel (2005, p 50) also argue, correctly, that

adopting 'an unconvincing, somewhat populist platform to attract blacks' while simultaneously campaigning 'against black economic empowerment, affirmative action and minimum wages in favour of a largely unrestricted free market and more flexible labour laws' was contradictory.

Voters in the Western Cape heard the message that a vote for the NNP was, in effect, a vote for the ANC and opted to vote for the ANC. Opposition voters in 2004 did not feel pressure to vote against the ANC. Votes cast for the ANC climbed to 709 052 and the party took control of the provincial government in the Western Cape under the premiership of Ebrahim Rasool.

2009: A BREAKTHROUGH FOR THE DA

2009 was the DA's year in the Western Cape. With the NNP absorbed into the ANC the contest was now between the DA and the ANC. However, a DA victory was not a given – the gains it made in 2004 were seen as tentative and its successes ambiguous given the ANC's gains at the cost of the DA in areas such as Mitchells Plain (Booyesen 2005, p143). There was no direct transfer of power from the NP to the DA.

In 1999 and 2004 the ANC had made significant inroads in the Western Cape, gradually gaining the trust of voters. Opposition voters did not feel a sense of urgency about keeping the ANC out of power. And as Daniel & Southall (2009, p 237) state the ANC in the Western Cape had a significant block of loyal coloured voters. Again arguments emerged about racial polarisation in the province. Daniel & Southall (2009, p 268) assert that 'the DA's victory came from markedly increasing its vote among the coloured community leaving the province as racially fractured as ever'.

The ANC's share of the vote dropped from 709 052 to 620 918 (31.5%). Whether ANC voters had opted out and abstained or switched allegiance and voted for the DA was immaterial, the DA received an outright majority, securing 51.4 per cent. Newcomer Cope secured 7.7 per cent of the vote in the Western Cape after it became bogged down in a series of controversies regarding its policy directions and presented a 'low-key design-as-you-go' defensive election campaign (Booyesen 2009, p 95-99). Nevertheless, Cope managed to surpass the ID in the Western Cape – the ID only obtained 4.7 per cent of the 2009 provincial vote.

Putting aside racial acrimony, which clearly exists, the 2009 election results in the Western Cape make sense if one considers the underlying sentiments of voters revealed by opinion polls conducted in the province in December 2008 as well as the dramatic series of events which occurred at national level. The DA's campaign of 2009, consistent with its previous hard-hitting messages, now took

place in a completely different political context. These public sentiments were harnessed by the DA through an extremely effective election campaign.

National events between 2004 and 2009 created a situation where the DA's messages were much more salient to voters in the Western Cape. South Africans watched enthralled as Jacob Zuma, then deputy president of the country, faced a lengthy and extensively covered rape trial. While he was eventually acquitted of the rape charges some of his statements under oath about HIV made him the object of scorn and ridicule. This response, in turn, was met with virulent anger by his supporters, who thronged outside the court. The trial also resulted in hostile clashes between gender activists and supporters of Zuma.

This matter was followed by the protracted and well publicised corruption trial of Schabir Shaik, a close associate of Zuma, who was found guilty – the basis of the conviction hinging on payments he had made to Zuma. Following this conviction then president Thabo Mbeki relieved Zuma of his role as deputy president, installing Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka as the new deputy president. This, as Southall (2009, p 3) indicates, left Zuma with only his party platform from which to campaign for the presidency of the ANC, to be decided at the ANC's 52nd national conference. In the meantime, the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) decided to press ahead with fraud and corruption charges against Zuma. Despite this decision Zuma was elected as the ANC's new president, defeating Thabo Mbeki in his bid to remain party president. As Butler (2009, p 69) points out, this unprecedented defeat of an incumbent ANC president was followed by a wave of instability during which officeholders were 'recalled' and perceived Mbeki-loyalists purged. The ANC was polarised into antagonistic Mbeki and Zuma blocs (Booyesen 2009, p 91). As Booyesen (2009, p 90) writes, the ANC 'entered a spiral of contestation between Jacob Zuma and Thabo Mbeki centring on issues of succession and incumbency'. The culmination of this contest was the removal of Thabo Mbeki from his role as president of the country.

In September 2008, just more than six months before the 2009 general elections, Judge Chris Nicholson delivered a high court judgement which inferred that Mbeki and senior members of his Cabinet had interfered with the work of the NPA in regard to the decision to prosecute Zuma (Jolobe 2009, p 139). The judgement provided the basis for a vote of no confidence in Mbeki. Following Mbeki's televised resignation ANC deputy president Kgalema Motlanthe became South Africa's acting president. These events precipitated the resignation of several ANC members and the long-anticipated split in the ANC became a reality. The Congress of the People was formed under the leadership of Mosiuoa Lekota and Mbhazima Shilowa.

Following the formation of Cope, the competitiveness of the 2009 campaign took on a new edge, with the country witnessing acrimonious and often hostile

exchanges between Cope and the ANC. The formation of Cope publicly revealed a side of the ANC that voters were unaccustomed to – key ANC leaders lambasted Cope in a series of verbal attacks. The conflict between the two parties raised fears that the campaign would be disrupted by violence and intimidation and local election monitoring groups reconvened. The Election Monitoring Network (EMN) appointed a team of 500 politically independent community members nationwide to monitor election-related abuse or violence, empowering them to take rapid action to resolve conflict where necessary. The South African Civil Society Election Coalition (SACSEC), a national initiative of more than 40 non-governmental and faith-based organisations committed to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections, had approximately 2 000 observers observing all facets of the elections.

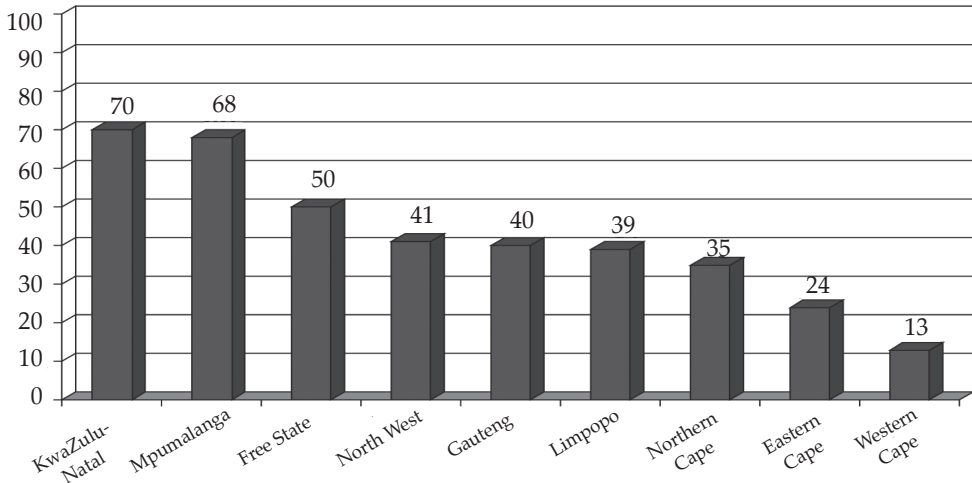
Reports of disrupted meetings and allegations of voter intimidation became commonplace. For example, a press statement released by the EMN reported five murders linked to political rivalry in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. Monitors in KwaZulu-Natal also recorded instances of traditional leaders denying political parties the right to hold meetings and forcing their subjects to join certain political parties or face eviction.

There was also heightened tension more generally, with other political parties perceiving that they could profit from the division within the ANC. Meanwhile, as Butler (2009, p 69) notes, the NPA's prosecution of Zuma on corruption and fraud charges (dropped only in March 2009) perpetuated the divisions of the succession struggle and initiated a period of 'extravagant and sometimes violence-inciting rhetoric directed at the NPA, the judiciary and purported plotters against Zuma'.

In the Western Cape these national events had a very damaging effect on perceptions of Zuma. An Afrobarometer survey conducted in late 2008 revealed that respondents in the Western Cape had very little trust in him. As figure 3 shows, only 13 per cent of respondents in the province, compared to 70 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal and 68 per cent in Mpumalanga, said they trusted Zuma 'always' or 'most of the time'.

Perceptions of the trustworthiness of a political leader are critically important because they help voters to make judgements about the authenticity and persuasiveness of the messages put out by the leader. Campaign messages delivered by political parties and leaders perceived as trustworthy will be received more positively, allowing voters to engage more positively with the content of the message. According to Newman & Perloff (2004, p 27) 'persuasion experts unquestionably agree that the source of a message can significantly influence political attitudes'. Indeed, the literature reveals that in most situations people accept or reject persuasive messages based on their evaluation of the credibility

Figure 3
Trust in Jacob Zuma (by province), 2008



Source: Afrobarometer 2008. Sample size 2400.

of the source of the message (Milburn 1991; Lupia & McCubbins 2000; Iyengar & Valentino 2000; Popkin & Dimock 2000; Newman & Perloff 2004).

In addition to the national events outlined above ANC structures in the Western Cape were beset by their own problems. They were 'in a complete shambles and the NEC [National Executive Council] had to rescue the province after an orgy of defections, expulsions and proliferations of parallel structures' (Butler 2009, p 70). As a result, Ebrahim Rasool was removed as premier and replaced by Lynne Brown just months prior to the election. The ANC's carefully-planned low-key campaigns of 1999 and 2004, which had successfully allayed the fears of voters in the province, were now undermined by a barrage of media images which contradicted the party's messages.

It was in this context that the DA ran a well organised and focused campaign under the banner 'One Nation One Future'. Its message could be summarised by the slogans of two campaign posters: 'Vote to win' and 'Stop Zuma' (Daniel & Southall 2009, p 237). The party's previous election campaigns had lacked salience when there were no problems. The 1999 'fight back' campaign and the key message of 2004 that 'South Africa deserves better' could be countered as being unnecessarily dramatic or even unpatriotic, but messages about the supremacy of the Constitution and the challenges to democracy posed by ANC dominance now resonated with voters. In the Western Cape these messages clearly fell on fertile ground.

The impact of the DA's election of Helen Zille as its new leader cannot be underestimated. Her election put to rest criticisms that the party was being pulled in different directions. Booysen (2005, p 143) had noted the perception that the DA of 2004 was divided by the divergent styles and orientations of Tony Leon and Helen Zille. Certainly Zille presented a more likeable persona, which endeared her to voters. Indeed, Jolobe (2009, p 31) attributes the rebranding of the DA under the leadership of Zille (who, during her term as Cape Town's mayor won the 2008 World Mayor of the Year Award) as one of the key reasons for the DA's success in the Western Cape.

Furthermore, ANC members who left to join Cope lent credibility to the DA's messages. As Booysen (2009, p 92) argues, Cope's criticisms of the ANC with regard to constitutionalism, the rule of law, and electoral reform resonated with many voters who questioned aspects of the ANC's 15-year rule. These were the very issues around which the DA had run its 1999 and 2004 campaigns.

Daniel & Southall (2009, p 243) indicate that the ANC's monumental loss in the Western Cape could be seen as a self-inflicted disaster, 'a result of vicious factionalism which took on a racial form'. And Butler (2009, p 84) argues that the ANC 'lost the province in the worst way possible in that its action and inaction had precipitated a major and probably irreversible shift in sentiment among coloured voters'.

VOTING TRENDS AND PATTERNS IN THE WESTERN CAPE, 1994-2009

This overview of electoral trends and concomitant political developments in the Western Cape provides several useful insights. It reveals that parties in the province were primarily responsible for their own gains and losses. The results also suggest that national political developments are a crucial influence on voter perceptions. Furthermore, it appears that party behaviour, campaign messages and events between elections are important to voters. The NNP's support base was decimated by its incongruent and internally inconsistent campaign messages, organisational difficulties and national political developments between 1994 and 2004. The confidence the ANC had gradually begun to gain among voters was undermined by organisational conflict as well as by national political developments between 2004 and 2009. Although there were policy contradictions and divergent leadership styles in 2004, the DA's campaign themes have been consistent over time. In addition, the party galvanised under a new leader and vision and its campaign messages took on a new salience in 2009.

This overview also highlights a critical gap in our understanding of the interactions between political developments and the decisions made by voters. In the Western Cape it appears that voters reviewed evolving political

developments and then rewarded and/or punished contesting parties by granting or withholding their votes. It is very hard to say which outcome would *not* elicit comments about racial or identity-related determinants of voting. These trends would hardly have been shocking if the region consisted of an entirely homogenous electorate. The results in the province since 1994 suggest that voters in the Western Cape are active agents who actually interpret and evaluate campaigns as well as other politically relevant stimuli. This conforms to the accountability-enhancing context described by renowned theorists Diamond & Morlino (2005, p xix), who state that democracy requires genuinely competitive elections in which the performance of the incumbent is reviewed, policy alternatives are debated and voters reward or punish incumbents. People in the Western Cape also appear to fit Achen's (1992, p 198) description of voters who 'do not ignore information they have, do not fabricate information they do not have, and do not choose what they do not want'.

What, then, is the problem? It is that election campaigns can be used as a platform from which to evoke prejudices and fears (Kuklinski & Quirk 2000). Election campaigns and the messages politicians send out to the electorate play a critical role in reducing or exacerbating racial or ethnic tensions. Given their preconceived notions about voting blocs, parties and political leaders can and often do engage in racially inflammatory rhetoric in attempts to win votes. This, in turn, fuels racial tension between those groups.

Clearly race and other forms of identity are a salient factor in the Western Cape. As Mattes, Giliomee and James (1996, p 149) indicate, Western Cape citizens of different race groups are confronted with very different forms of persuasion and information networks as well as different economic positions. Furthermore, in a context of scarce resources and given the fact that as Schrire (1999, p 138) points out, 'politics in all contexts involves a struggle for power between competing groups and interests over the issue of control over the instruments of power', such identities are likely to remain salient. It is precisely because of the salience of identity that political parties need to move away from racial campaign strategies.

CONCLUSION

There is a destructive cycle wherein political commentators and analysts as well as campaign strategists attach special significance to the vote of a particular demographic bloc, in this case, 'coloured voters'. These expectations feed, in turn, into the choices and actions of political parties. Perceptions of the importance of these voters also result in campaigning that encompasses unintentional or deliberate racial mobilisation and inflammatory political rhetoric. In the Western

Cape racialised mudslinging has characterised election campaigns. While there is an Electoral Code of Conduct which commits all parties to a range of provisions related to electioneering (Lodge & Scheidegger 2005, pp 7-8), parties still exercise a choice over the ways in which they conduct their campaigns. Thus, parties may operate within the framework of the code of conduct but continue to engage in negative practices which exacerbate the strains between groups.

After the election, results are almost invariably analysed through references to racial fault lines and the racially based motivations of voters. These explanations rest primarily on the characteristics of the electorate. Instead of reverting to the default explanation that voters vote on the basis of identity, parties need to start taking responsibility for their behaviour rather than blaming voters for their misfortunes.

Given that racial and other cleavages are important, it is incumbent upon parties to take cognisance of the negative implications of their racially inflammatory rhetoric. The incentive of electoral victory simply does not justify appeals to prejudice and fear. Not only are such appeals damaging, in many instances they plainly do not work. Parties fail when they predicate their campaign strategies on mistaken assumptions about what the 'coloured voter' wants. Parties can and should move toward more inclusive campaign strategies. Questions such as 'how do we make inroads into the coloured vote?' or 'how do we retain coloured support?' should be replaced with 'how do we promote/retain our credibility as a political party?', 'what are the most salient issues facing this region?', 'how will we deal with these issues?', 'what central message should we communicate?', 'how best can that message be communicated to voters?' and so on.

It is not voters in the Western Cape who are the problem – they are willing and able to gather and process political information. And as several authors have argued, coloured voters do not vote as a monolithic voting bloc. It is political parties that should stop blaming voters for their woes and move away from racial mobilisation, instead focusing on improving their credibility, developing defensible records and proposing policies. Finally, it is time that our analyses move to a more nuanced level which does not legitimate racialised campaign strategies and does not allow parties to neglect their duty to provide voters with adequate information.

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CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE

A promise betrayed

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the performance of the recently formed Congress of the People (Cope) in the 2009 elections. It traces the origins of the organisation, probes its electoral strategies and provides insight into the internal challenges Cope encountered. The paper contends that Cope sought not only to envelop itself with the symbolism of liberation politics but also to transcend that by appealing to other constituencies that had not historically supported the liberation movement. This meant adopting policies that were not only targeted at the middle class but were also trans-racial. Ultimately, though, Cope's appeal was undercut by, among other factors, the persistent salience of racial inequality and excessive reliance on political activity as a source of income rather than a pursuit of principles. The article further argues that incidents related to the party also shone a light on the indifference of the business sector to competitive electoral politics and on the way the ruling party has blurred the distinction between itself and public institutions.

INTRODUCTION

The results of the 22 April 2009 elections were awaited with an unusual level of anticipation. Unlike in the three previous elections, this time round the hitherto dominant incumbent political party, the African National Congress (ANC), entered the elections reeling from a split. Four months earlier, long-serving and senior leaders had left the organisation to form a new political party, the Congress of the People (Cope). In light of the similarity of their leadership credentials and public standing Cope promised to vie for support from the same constituency as the ANC, thus potentially making South Africa's electoral process a lot more competitive than it had ever been since 1994.

This chapter analyses Cope's electoral performance. Some scholarly attention has been given to this subject, notably by Susan Booysen and Janet Cherry (in Southall & Daniel 2009). While treating some similar issues to those of the two scholars, this article provides new details and goes further, profiling the constituencies in which Cope received the most and the least support with a view to understanding the voters' rationale. In particular, the chapter contends that the tone of Cope's electoral campaign and its electoral returns shed light on the feasibility of trans-racial politics and on the relationship between business and electoral democracy, and that between the ruling liberation movement and public institutions. The article thus contends that the support Cope received is more than just a verdict on its electoral strategies or the extent of its popular appeal, it is also a reflection on the broader society, especially the elements that constitute South Africa's body politic.

THE RISE OF COPE: 'REINCARNATION OF THE REAL ANC'

Cope sprang into existence on 16 December 2007, claiming descent from the pre-2007 ANC. Cope founders – Mosioua Lekota, Mbhazima Shilowa and Mluleki George – not only made this claim buoyed by a sense of ownership of an organisation they had served for many years but also as a statement of intent to continue ANC traditions, as would be expected of any offspring. Explicit in that claim was the assertion that what had become of the ANC after the 2007 National Conference at Polokwane was a deviation from the 'real ANC'. Founding Cope president, former ANC chairperson and Cabinet minister in Thabo Mbeki's successive cabinets, Lekota explained the charge as he elaborated on his reasons for leaving the organisation he had served for his entire adult life, in an open letter dated 2 October 2008:

... the leadership has taken a direct and unadulterated departure from the Freedom Charter by calling for a political solution in the matter of the National Directorate of Public Prosecutions vs. President of the ANC. What happened to 'There shall be equality before law'? Or are we now to have political solutions to every citizen's criminal case?

www.politicsweb.co.za

Thabo Mbeki, in a letter addressed to Jacob Zuma and dated 31 October 2008, about a month after Mbeki had effectively been dismissed as president of the Republic by the ruling party, to which he had dedicated 52 years of his then 66 years of life, echoed Lekota's charge:

... I find it strange in the extreme that today cadres of our movement ... publicly declare a determination 'to kill' to defend your own cause, the personal interests of 'the personality', Jacob Zuma!

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Mbeki went on to remind Zuma that they had both:

... grown up in a political atmosphere that we fully respected and honoured our leaders, heroes and heroines without reservation ... However, for me personally, at no point did this translate into hero-worship and therefore the progression to the phenomenon of the 'cult of personality'.

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All the leaders he had served with in the ANC, Mbeki elaborated, 'would have opposed the emergence of such a cult with every fibre in their revolutionary bones!'. The fact that Zuma had not opposed it but had allowed himself to be the subject of such a phenomenon, Mbeki implied, was a deviation from the established tradition of leadership. In other words, and according to Mbeki, Zuma was, effectively, not worthy of the mantle of leadership of the ANC (or of the Republic for that matter).

Inevitably, having claimed to be the reincarnation of the 'true' ANC, it thus followed that the defectors would envelop the new party with the symbolism of liberatory politics. This was evident in the activities leading to Cope's formation, the choice of both the site of the party's birth and the date, and the very name it chose.

The founding conference was preceded by a public gathering on 1 November 2008 in the Sandton Convention Centre north of Johannesburg. Dubbed the 'South African National Convention' the convention was reportedly attended by more than 5 000 people from across the country and various stations in life at their own cost – the crowd exceeded the 4 500 capacity of the venue and some who attended gathered outside clamouring for entry (www.news24.com).

It was there that a formal resolution to form a new political party was taken, as Shilowa, a convener of the gathering, declared: 'I stand here today on behalf of this preparatory committee to say not only do we intend to tackle it [the ANC], we intend to win the next election' (*Mail & Guardianonline* 1 November 2008). The new party formation, the convention declared, would be anchored primarily in the supremacy of the Constitution and judicial equality.

The enthusiastic turnout for the convention effectively cast Cope's eventual formation as a grassroots-inspired formation rather than an elite-driven initiative.

The very idea of organising a convention prior to forming a political party was to define Cope in the public imagination as the embodiment of the aspirations of ordinary folk. The irony of a supposedly 'people's movement' formed in one of South Africa's wealthiest areas did not seem bothersome, as evidenced by the overwhelming attendance. At its founding, on 16 December 2008, the party's organisational report, distributed at the conference, claimed 428 000 paid-up members.

The symbolism of a people's movement stretched to the location and date of the party's formation. Though it is convenient because of its central location, the choice of Bloemfontein for the founding conference, and the date – 16 December – seemed to be geared to exploiting the town's historical association with the founding and the historiography, of the national liberation movement. It was there that the ANC was founded in 1912, while its military wing, UmKhonto We Sizwe (MK) was officially formed on 16 December 1960. The date 16 December is thus mythologised in black historiography as it marked the beginning of military resistance to apartheid. To be sure, in choosing that date for its founding, MK founders, too, were exploiting its historical association with resistance against colonial conquest.

While 16 December had been celebrated by pre-1994 officialdom as the Day of the Covenant, 'Africans', as Nelson Mandela put it, 'mourned this day of the massacre of their people'.¹ MK had selected that date as Mandela, the initial commander-in-chief of MK, explained: 'to show that the African had only begun to fight and that we had righteousness – and dynamite – on our side' (Mandela 1994, p 275). Invoking the memory of King Dingane, and other warrior kings, served both as inspiration for military resistance and to create a link between the post-1960 guerilla warfare and the 19th-century anti-colonial wars of resistance. The intention was to confer popular legitimacy upon the latter-day freedom fighters as heirs of that long, heroic tradition of resistance, whose narratives have always been a source of pride and inspiration to the African community.

The choice of the name for the new party, Congress of the People, was even more obvious in its claim to the legacy of the anti-apartheid struggle. The name derived from a historic mass multiracial gathering in 1955 which adopted the much-revered and popular document, the Freedom Charter. The charter, based

1 The 'covenant' refers to a vow that was taken by Voortrekkers following the killing of some of their own, including Piet Retief, by the Zulu King Dingane in February 1838, that if God ever gave them strength to avenge those killings they would build a church in commemoration of that victory. That day of vengeance came months later, on 16 December 1838, as Voortrekkers defeated Zulus in what later came to be known as the Battle of Blood River, in reference to the site of the war – a tributary of the Buffalo River which was renamed Blood River after the battle had been won. Thenceforth Voortrekkers and their descendants (Afrikaners) celebrated 16 December as the 'Day of the Covenant' (See De Klerk 1999).

on popular input, which outlined the people's vision of what a post-apartheid South Africa should look like (Karis & Carter 1977), was eventually adopted by the ANC as its policy blueprint for a future South Africa. In adopting the historic name Congress of the People the new party was implying that its formation was analogous to that historic multiracial gathering called to imagine a different future for South Africa.

Cope thus located itself within the memory of liberation politics. Although it was a new entity it presented itself as a continuation of the emancipatory project while also seeking to transcend that tradition. It emphasised socioeconomic transformation, but downplayed race as a criterion in favour of a trans-racial orientation.

ELECTORAL PLATFORM AND STRATEGIES

Under the slogan 'A New Agenda for Change and Hope for All' Cope made morality, constitutionalism, and meritocracy the centrepiece of its election strategy. The party not only intended to illuminate a contrast between itself and the ANC but also considered these issues the underbelly of the ruling party.

Foregrounding its moralist orientation Cope's manifesto claimed to offer an honest, clean leadership with integrity, based on constitutional values, with a particular emphasis on an independent judiciary. In making this claim Cope sought to capitalise on the moral revulsion felt by some at the thought of a possible Jacob Zuma presidency. Zuma, who had earlier been cleared of a charge of the rape of an HIV-positive woman, had been elected ANC president in December 2007 while still facing charges of corruption (Gordin 2008). Cope pointed to Zuma as the embodiment of moral depravity.

Professor Barney Pityana, an ordained priest and then vice-chancellor and principal of the University of South Africa (Unisa),² in his speech to the national convention, was even more direct, charging Zuma with lacking 'moral consciousness', thereby placing the moral fibre of the South African society and the efficiency of the government in peril. The much revered Archbishop Emeritus of the Anglican Church, Mpilo Desmond Tutu, reiterated the embarrassment felt by his ilk at the thought of having Zuma as the presidential face of the country in the international community: 'In the year of Obama, can you imagine what it is like when you are walking in New York and they ask you who will be the next president ... at the present time, I can't pretend to be looking forward to having him as president' (www.mg.co.za 2 April 2009).

2 Pityana was to become chairperson of Cope's selection committee, which was responsible for compiling the party's list of parliamentary candidates.

The appointment of a clergyman, Bishop Mvume Dandala, former head of the Methodist Church in Southern Africa, as Cope's presidential candidate underscored the party's moralist orientation. Indeed, the bishop drew attention to this point on accepting his nomination:

Our vision for the future is of a government founded on the values of honesty, integrity and justice. That happens to be my personal philosophy and also our collective vision as Cope...I joined Cope because I have spent my life working for peace, fighting for justice and seeking a society where integrity is the most important guiding philosophy. I found in Cope people who share these values

blogs.timeslive.co.za

But Dandala was more than just a member of the clergy. He came from the tradition of black theology, having been chairperson of the South African Students' Organisation (Saso) while a student at the Federal Theological Seminary in Alice in the Eastern Cape (<http://en.wikipedia.org>). Black theology combined proselytising with demands for both justice and involvement in community struggles in pursuance of those demands. Addressing a conference of black priests in Edendale, Natal, in 1972, Steve Bantu Biko defined black theology as:

... a situational interpretation of Christianity. It seeks to relate present-day black man to God within the given context of black man's suffering and his attempts to get out of it ... it shifts the emphasis from petty sins to major sins in a society, thereby ceasing to teach the people to 'suffer peacefully'.

Biko 1978, p 54

Biko reminded the black clergy that: '... God is not in the habit of coming down from heaven to solve people's problem on earth'. So their role, he said, was not just to 'stand on pulpits every Sunday to heap loads of blame on black people in townships for their thieving, housebreaking, stabbing ...' Rather, it was to become actively involved in the struggle for national liberation (Biko 1978, p 54).

Dandala was the kind of activist-priest Biko envisaged. His fiery sermons in Port Elizabeth in the heyday of apartheid were often tinged with a political message and were, at times, delivered during congregational walkabouts (*invouselelo*) on the dusty streets of Port Elizabeth's townships, in defiance of the prohibitions imposed by the state of emergency. This made Dandala, alongside peers such as Andile Mbethe, Mcebisi Xundu, and De Villiers Soga, targets

of frequent harassment and detention by the apartheid police.³ From being a household name in Port Elizabeth Dandala rose to national prominence by brokering peace between hostel and township dwellers of the then Katorus during the violence of the early 1990s in the then Witwatersrand region.

In selecting a person with Dandala's history Cope not only illuminated its moralist orientation it also underscored its message of continuity and change. Dandala was part of the anti-apartheid movement, but also offered the moral leadership that Cope alleged was lacking in the ANC. A similar mix of qualities, albeit with a slight twist, had been achieved in the composition of Cope's leadership, appointed at the party's founding conference. The national leadership comprised prominent political activists and veterans of the liberation struggle, members of notable political families, and novices.⁴

The message was that although the party originated from the liberation tradition it would transcend the politics of its mother-body, offering an alternative to the ruling party. Part of Lekota's trans-racial appeal was his critical stance on affirmative action, further discussed below. He denounced the policy as racist and as an obstacle to building a non-racial society. Affirming blacks over whites, Lekota said, denied South Africa much-needed expertise that lay in the hands of white folk and the general citizenry.

An emphasis on meritocracy completed the two-pronged election strategy. The party homed in on the slow rate and poor quality of service delivery, attributing this phenomenon to incompetence and a scarcity of technical skills within the public service.

The problems, Cope maintained, lay in the ANC's policy of cadre deployment – a practice that involved the appointment of party members to official positions, for which some lacked the requisite professional and/or technical competence. By contrast, Cope punted merit rather than political appointments. Consequently, and inevitably, as noted below, Cope underplayed the importance of race as one of the employment criteria to rectify under-representation of blacks within the country's professional life.

Essentially, Cope adopted an electoral posture intended to appeal to constituencies that found morally abhorrent both the personality, that is, Zuma,

3 Here the author draws on his personal knowledge and experience as a native of Port Elizabeth and a former congregant of the Ebenezer Methodist Church in Zwile Township.

4 Prominent political activists and veterans were: Lekota, president; Mbhazima Shilowa, first deputy president; Smuts Ngonyama, head of policy; Mluleki George, national organiser; Mlungisi Hlongwane, head of elections; Charlotte Lobe, secretary-general; Hilda Ndunde, treasurer; Phillip Dexter, head of media liaison and Lyndall Shope-Mafole, head of international relations. The novices were: Lynda Odendaal, second deputy president; Deidre Carter, deputy secretary-general; Zahira Ebrahim, head of sectors. See Cope (2008), *Organisational Report*, distributed at the founding conference.

and the life lived in poorly developed communities. These were two distinct, but not entirely exclusive constituencies. They included the traditional black ANC constituency, but also apathetic yet eligible voters. 'A third of eligible voters,' explained Pityana (17 September 2009), 'do not vote. And this is the constituency that Lekota sought to appeal to.' In other words, the party was to be a trans-racial organisation appealing especially to the middle class, who also suffered from a touch of cultural prejudice against Zuma. Zuma offends middle-class sensibilities. He is polygamous, lacks formal education and his public appearances are defined by singing and dancing – a far cry from the intellectual rigour and sophistication that has always characterised the leadership of the liberation movement.

Cope thus emerged on South Africa's political landscape both as an heir of liberation politics and transcending such politics. Its platform potentially appealed to myriad constituencies: the working-class and poor black community, the middle class across racial lines, and the younger generation, who were looking for trans-racial politics and had no memory of or sentimental attachment to liberatory politics or its heroic figures.

BUILD-UP TO THE ELECTIONS

As 22 April 2009 drew closer it became increasingly clear that materialism rather than value-based considerations would largely determine how people would vote. Cope's targeted constituencies, though possibly sharing a similar value system, were irreconcilable; separated by racial inequalities. Business was similarly not persuaded by Cope's moralist orientation, choosing profit-making instead. Conviction alone proved insufficient to sustain defections in the face of uncertainty about livelihood.

Cope's instant popularity within cyber space confirmed its attraction to the middle class, which has both access to and the expertise to use that medium of communication. By 10 December 2008, according to Charlotte Lobe, who was to become Cope's secretary-general, the party had 9 000 members registered on its Facebook page. They were even conferred the status of a branch and were given a 50-person delegation to the party's founding conference (www.iol.co.za 12 October 2008).

Instead of using rallies, the traditional form of mobilisation and recruitment, Cope organised parties to attract young members. Andile Nkuhlu, then Cope convener in the Eastern Cape and relatively wealthy, was responsible for such activities, especially in Port Elizabeth. Nkuhlu was already renowned for hosting parties, a reputation he had built as a student at the University of the Western Cape. No slogans were shouted or speeches made at Cope parties. Now and then the disk jockey would shout out names of Cope leaders and the crowd would cheer

back in approval. Occasionally someone would start a song. The popular song, at least in the city of Port Elizabeth, was: *Buya Thabo Mbeki, buya!* (Come back, Thabo Mbeki, come back!). The party's T-shirts, especially for girls, were small and tight, showing off navels and body form. The overall idea was to present Cope as 'sexy and cool'. In the midst of all that partying, literature was distributed and more members were signed up. The idea was to use fun, the one thing that appeals to the youth, especially over the festive season, to draw potential supporters to the party's leaders and views.⁵

Cope seemed poised to reconfigure South African politics, but its founding principles and the credibility of its leaders were soon tested. Though Dandala's appointment as presidential candidate conveyed a moralist orientation that contrasted it with the ANC, the bishop was not a unanimous choice. Lekota was not enthusiastic about Dandala's selection and Shilowa's supporters, who had swung in favour of Dandala's candidature, according to Pityana, seem more than happy to rub Lekota's nose in the defeat. This was apparent in the way in which the news of Dandala's selection was handled. In a blatant violation of confidentiality, Pityana explained, the news reached the media less than an hour after the end of the meeting of the party's national executive, the Congress National Committee (CNC). The selection committee had secured an undertaking from members of the CNC that they would not leak the news or inform any of the contending candidates – Shilowa, Dandala and Lekota, who had been excluded from the briefing – until it had itself conveyed the decision to each of them (Interview 17 September 2009).

The leak seemed calculated to upset Lekota. According to Pityana, during the deliberations Shilowa's supporters, as noted above, had swung in favour of Dandala and before Pityana had had time to phone Shilowa to inform him of the decision Shilowa had called Pityana to congratulate him on it. Lekota did not call Pityana and refused to take calls from him or any other member of the committee during the weekend of 20 February 2009. While Shilowa publicly endorsed Dandala's selection, Lekota, when the media finally located him on 22 February, claimed ignorance of the decision, saying he was awaiting a formal briefing by the CNC the following day. Lekota's reluctance to endorse what was effectively an official decision, though not formally conveyed to him, suggested that he disapproved of the choice and gave an indication of what was to follow.

The dominant view within the CNC, however, was that Lekota was best suited to build the organisational structures of the then incipient party, outside of Parliament. But it soon emerged that Lekota either did not share that view or that the national leadership had not made a final decision. Cope issued conflicting statements and, by early May 2009, Lekota's name was still on the list of candidates

5 The author observed Cope activities while on vacation in Port Elizabeth in December 2008.

for the National Assembly, even though he had supposedly agreed to remain outside (*Mail&Guardianonline*). That was yet another sign of a schism at the helm of the party. Lekota's presence in Parliament would clearly have created tensions between himself and Dandala. As president of the party, it is unimaginable that Lekota would have settled for playing second fiddle to Dandala.

The party's credibility could not have remained unaffected by the leadership squabbles. Cope had claimed moral superiority over the ruling party, professing commitment to the broader goal of promoting democracy and constitutionalism. Now it was mired in petty leadership disputes, a spectacle that could hardly have impressed its potential voters. Nor did it seem that the middle class would be easy pickings for the party. Cope's stance on affirmative action seemed to appeal to white professionals, but did not go down well with their black counterparts.

Cope was particularly encouraged by one, Piet Grobler, 'a retired farmer from Thabazimbi in Limpopo', who attended the party's founding conference. He had been on holiday in Bloemfontein and, on hearing Lekota's views on affirmative action, not only decided to attend the three-day gathering but insisted on joining the party on the spot. He was paraded on stage to the cheers of approving audience, chanting: 'Long Live Grobler' (www.mg.co.za 15 December 2008).

There was no such enthusiasm from black professionals, at least not from their organised bodies. The Black Lawyers Association (BLA) and the Black Management Forum (BMF) were especially scathing about Cope. BLA president Andiswa Ndoni fumed: 'Cope seems determined to reverse the few gains made by black people on account of these policies in order to attract white votes. This is short sighted and out of step with the aspirations of black people and the equality provisions in the Constitution' (www.bla.org.za 18 December 2008). Jimmy Manyi, president of the BMF and chairperson of the Commission for Equity, in his usually direct language, charged:

Implicit in this resolution is a racist undertone that seeks to associate equity with inefficiencies. The BMF would argue very strongly that this resolution stigmatizes Affirmative Action, implying that candidates for AA lack merit. Racism and colonized mentality will always second guess Black professionals.

www.tradeinvestsa.co.za 16 February 2009

Black professional bodies tagged Cope as 'anti-black'. To them the party was essentially, to borrow from the president of the Congress of SA Trade Unions, Sdumo Dlamini, the 'new black DA [Democratic Alliance]' (www.iol.co.za 16 December 2008). Implicit in that criticism was that Cope was doing the bidding of white interests.

If, indeed, the sensibilities of the black middle class were offended by the mere thought of a Zuma presidency, with all that he represented, Cope's lacklustre posture on affirmative action must have put them in a dilemma. They were being asked to choose between registering their moral revulsion by voting for Cope, or advancing their class interests by voting for the ruling party, even though they were possibly repulsed by its leader.

Such was the mixed reaction elicited by Cope's stance on affirmative action. The fact that Piet Grobler joined the party may have offered encouragement that Cope indeed resonated with the white electorate. How widespread that resonance would be was unclear. As for the black middle class, their support for Cope was thrown into doubt by the reaction of the black professional bodies.

Misgivings notwithstanding, Cope was still determined to project an aura of inevitability about its ascension to political power. It actively wooed ANC leaders to defect to the party and the media were consistently fed with reports of eminent people who were going to defect to Cope. Some never did, among them Reverend Frank Chikane, former director-general in Mbeki's presidency, and Thoko Didiza and Sidney Mufamadi, former Cabinet ministers. Whether real or fabricated, the mere mention of possible defections was intended to project a ruling party in disarray and Cope as the party of the future. The rumours reinforced the message that Cope was the re-constitution of the 'true ANC cadres' because the post-2007 ANC had been usurped by non-ANC elements (imposters). Being led by familiar faces also gave Cope instant recognition, promising to make it easier for it to attract supporters.

Defections were thus pivotal to Cope's formation and popular resonance because of the message they sent out to the voting public. Their persistence, especially because they attracted wide media coverage, gave Cope an advantage over the ANC. Gwede Mantashe, the ANC's secretary-general, even reportedly complained to the public broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), that Cope did not deserve such prominent coverage. Mantashe dismissed the idea that Cope was a worthy story, insisting that media coverage be determined by proven public support. According to Mantashe, since Cope's popularity had not been tested it did not qualify for coverage.

Mantashe's logic was specious – media attention is largely attracted by newsworthiness of a (political) subject, not by the popular vote. Prominent media coverage clearly hurt the ANC, while benefiting Cope and the SABC gave in to pressure, opting not to give live coverage to the launch of Cope's election manifesto on 24 January 2009 but, as the SABC's Xolani Xundu conveyed to Cope's Sipho Mgwema, only to do a five-minute television crossover. Only 'political parties represented in parliament ... parties that have at least 1% of the votes' would be covered live (*Mail&Guardianonline* 23 January 2009).

Defections to Cope effectively disorganised the ANC, sowing mistrust among comrades and inhibiting the coherence of and focus on the party's election strategy. The ANC spent the latter part of 2008 'smelling out' out possible defectors. The list selection process, which had been scheduled to start in about September 2008, only took place in January 2009. The idea seems to have been to halt the process until the last possible moment, hoping that by then all the potential defectors would have defected, saving the party the embarrassment or the appearance of being rejected if it included someone on its list only for that person to decline the nomination in favour of the party's rival.

The ploy was, however, not entirely successful. Dennis Bloem, a prominent ANC MP, created some bewilderment in late February 2009 when his name appeared on both the ANC's and Cope's lists. By 5 March Bloem was still denying that he had joined Cope: 'I have no membership of any other party' (*Mail&Guardianonline*). When asked to explain why his name had been included in the Cope list, Bloem could only ascribe it to some confusion: 'I am busy sorting out this whole thing. I will clarify things when I have sorted out things.' A day later, on 6 March, Bloem confessed to having joined Cope.

The ruling party was left fuming. Jessie Duarte, ANC spokesperson at the time, went on the charge: 'For people who speak so much about morals, it is quite immoral. It is politically immoral' (*Mail&Guardianonline* 5 March). Clearly, the ANC leaders were not entirely in control. With just more than a month left before the election they still could not tell who would defect – a situation that could only breed uncertainty and lack of cohesion.

Reliance on defections, however, also proved risky for Cope, whose leaders were also not entirely in control of defections. Where individuals had made promises they had to trust that they would follow them through. But the ruling party could pre-empt or even reverse defections. Some individuals who had been touted as imminent defectors, as noted above, never left the ANC. Others, including the former president of the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) and mayor of Sedibeng, Mlungisi Hlongwane, and former regional secretary of the ANC in the Mandela Metro, Mike Xhego, returned to the ANC shortly before the elections. The ruling party sought maximum publicity, but, in the case of Hlongwane, this did not quite pan out. The regional, but influential Gauteng-based radio station, Talk Radio 702, through which the ruling party had aimed to make a live announcement, withdrew at the last minute, claiming to have been duped by a statement by Jeff Radebe, a senior ANC member and current Minister of Justice, who had billed the announcement 'as one of national importance'. Talk Radio 702 did not agree.

The event turned out somewhat comical. Hlongwane, accompanied by ANC officials, including Radebe himself, were ushered out of the radio station's

building. The announcement, which they had intended to be carried live on the airways, eliciting maximum publicity, was eventually made in a parking lot. Hlongwane, who had been appointed Cope's head of elections, launched a blistering attack on Cope, alleging tribalism:

A group of Xhosa speaking leaders have embarked on a secret strategy to place only the Xhosa speaking leaders at the strategic political structures in Cope ... it does mean that every person in Cope is a tribalist. It is regrettable that there are Xhosa speaking Cope leaders who have taken a conscious decision that Cope must be a predominantly Xhosa-led organization.

www.vaalweekblad.com 4 March 2009

Xhego's return to the ANC was also a public spectacle, but without any of the theatrics. A journalist writing for a local newspaper noted that a 'visibly embarrassed Xhego ... was paraded in front of a crowd like a naughty schoolboy' and 'was forced to fill in an ANC membership form and take an oath to "not again betray the ANC"'. Stone Sizane, ANC provincial chairperson, explained the intention behind the spectacle: 'This is to warn that there is no place more beautiful than home. We say to those out there [in Cope] if you miss coming back before April 21, it will be cold and lonely out there' (*The Herald* 16 April 2009). Xhego ascribed his return to the ANC to 'personal reasons' and declined to divulge anything beyond that.

Unrealised defections and defectors returning to the ANC probably undercut the intended impact of the defections. The dominant storyline of a haemorrhaging ANC and an ascendant Cope was no longer as lucid. The defections back to the ANC were, in fact, writing a new storyline: 'Cope was not what it had been built up to be.' Indeed, new developments within and about the party gave credence to that emerging impression.

Dandala and Lekota were reportedly at loggerheads over whose name and image should appear on both the party's election posters and the ballot paper⁶ and the party was virtually invisible in the early days of the election campaign. Cope had officially launched its campaign on 24 January 2009 at the Wilson stadium in Port Elizabeth, yet its election posters were hardly visible. In the meantime, the visibility of its chief rival, the ANC, was such that it seemed that every lamppost in the country had an ANC poster. Earlier, at the launch of its campaign, on 8 January, ANC supporters had filled two stadiums in East London, which was

6 The party eventually settled on Dandala's face on the posters and Lekota's on the ballot paper.

supposedly Cope's stronghold.⁷ Cope only managed to put its posters up on 13 March, about five weeks before election day. Dandala ascribed the delay to lack of sufficient funds: 'We would have loved to put up posters earlier, but Cope is experiencing what South African people are experiencing – a shortage of resources. We understand the problem of poverty. We are not flush with resources. We are the party of the people (*Mail & Guardianonline* 13 March 2009).

In short, Cope had designed its electoral message and leadership composition to appeal to communities of diverse material interests and income status, reaching beyond the black electorate. As election day drew closer, however, Cope's message, that is, that it was the 'party of hope', to rescue South Africa from the morass that would follow a Zuma presidency, began to lose its allure, as the party was itself mired in all manner of internal wrangling. The organised black middle class denounced the party as anti-transformation and a lackey of white interests. Lack of money cast doubts on the notion that Cope was the 'new show in town'. The fact that the party could not generate sufficient funds for posters suggested that the moneyed class were not convinced that Cope was a worthy investment. But only the electoral outcome would confirm the effectiveness of the party's orientation and electoral posture.

ELECTORAL RETURNS

Cope won the third-highest number of votes of the 26 parties which participated in the election, behind the two established parties, the incumbent ANC and the leading opposition party, the DA. Less than six months old, Cope outperformed some of the older and more experienced post-apartheid parties, the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), the Independent Democrats (ID), the United Democratic Movement (UDM) and the Vryheidsfront Plus (VF+).

Cope won 1 256 133 of the total 17 389 246 votes cast, winning the largest share of its support in the Northern Cape, followed by the Eastern Cape, the Free State, North West, Gauteng, the Western Cape and Limpopo. It fared dismally in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga. As a result, the party became the third-largest in Parliament and the official opposition in five of the nine provinces – Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Free State and North West.

⁷ Mluleki George, Cope's national organiser, had been regional chairperson of the ANC's Amathole region, where the city of East London is located.

Table 1
2009 elections – provincial and national results of the best performing parties by percentage

Party	EC	FS	Gauteng	KZN	LP	MP	NW	NC	WP	Total
ACDP	0.53	0.73	0.87	0.68	0.69	0.51	0.69	0.99	1.47	0.79
ANC	68.72	71.10	64.04	62.95	84.88	85.55	72.89	60.75	31.55	65.06
Azapo	0.20	0.00	0.21	0.00	0.38	0.23	0.25	0.60	0.07	0.17
Cope	13.67	11.61	7.78	1.29	7.53	2.91	8.33	16.67	7.74	7.32
DA	9.99	11.60	21.86	9.15	3.48	7.49	8.25	12.57	51.46	16.74
ID	0.46	0.16	0.61	0.20	0.09	0.12	0.44	4.94	4.68	0.96
IFP	0.10	0.22	1.49	20.40	0.06	0.50	0.15	0.14	0.06	4.99
PAC	0.52	0.29	0.29	0.05	0.48	0.26	0.24	0.15	0.24	0.27
UCDP	0.08	0.33	0.24	0.05	0.09	0.07	5.27	1.21	0.08	0.48
UDM	4.13	0.36	0.40	0.23	0.35	0.26	0.51	0.15	0.71	0.87
VF+	0.20	2.01	1.63	0.17	0.61	0.89	1.81	1.24	0.43	0.89

Source: Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa, www.elections.org.za

ELECTORAL ANALYSIS

The geographic spread of Cope's electoral support reveals a contrasting picture that both vindicates and disproves the party's electoral strategies and orientation. The obvious observation is that Cope has a national base. It won more than 10 per cent of the vote in three provinces – Northern Cape, Eastern Cape and the Free State – and fell just short of that threshold in the Western Cape and North West. The party has a trans-racial and trans-ethnic/linguistic appeal, especially among Africans and coloureds. The Northern Cape is predominantly coloured, while the Eastern Cape is predominantly African. SeSotho is the dominant language in the Free State, whilst IsiXhosa and Afrikaans are most commonly spoken in the Eastern Cape and the Northern Cape respectively. The party's appeal also cut across income status and possibly appeals more to low-income earners and the unemployed.

The distribution of Cope's electoral support showed a party with the strong potential for expansion. Its apparent appeal to low-income earners and the unemployed, especially, augured well for the party, for that segment of the population constitutes the majority. What is most crucial to note, however, is that though Cope seemed relatively popular amongst low-income and indigent communities, that status was not necessarily a determining factor in their voting

for Cope. In its stronghold of the Northern Cape, where the party won the highest number of votes, municipalities of relatively similar socio-economic profile voted discernibly differently. In other words, the socio-economic communities in which Cope achieved both its greatest and its smallest successes were essentially indistinguishable in terms of their socio-economic configuration.

The Northern Cape municipalities of Thembelihle and Phokwane offer an instructive contrast. Cope won its highest support in Thembelihle (28.10%) and its lowest in Phokwane (9.51%), yet the two municipalities have almost indistinguishable profiles. Twenty-two percent of residents in Thembelihle have no education at all, only 38 per cent have primary education, 7 per cent reached secondary school level but did not matriculate, 6 per cent have a matric and only 3 per cent have tertiary qualifications.

Of the 4 331 households, 1 649 are indigents (Statistics SA 2007). Similarly, Phokwane 'represents 20.3 per cent of the poverty gap in Northern Cape', making it the area with one of the highest poverty gaps in the province, according to the Local Development Economic Plan (2004, p 28). Eighty-four per cent of the economically active earn less than R3 200 and a whopping 32 per cent of the population has no schooling at all, while less than 21 per cent have matriculated.

The picture is similar in the Eastern Cape, where Cope received the second-highest proportion of support. Mbashe municipality, where Cope won the highest support (21.11%), is no different from Baviana, where the party's support was at its lowest (4.87%). Mbashe is the poorest municipality in the Amathole District, with poverty levels ranging from 76 per cent to 78 per cent. More than two-thirds of its households depend on social grants, higher than the district average (Urban-Econ 2009). The same profile is found in the two municipalities, with 42 per cent of the population of Baviana living in poverty and one-third of its economically active population unemployed (Integrated Development Plan 2007-2012).

The fact that Cope appealed to poor and indigent communities was inconsistent with its own orientation. The party had not necessarily fashioned itself as an agent of working-class interests. On the contrary, it propagated policies that placed it to the right of centre on the ideological spectrum. The party decried what it considered high wages and regulations that restricted the ability of employers to hire and fire at will. Working-class votes for Cope, therefore, did not stem from ideological conviction. What, then, explains the party's relative popularity within working-class and poor communities?

The answer is to be found in the leadership schism within the ruling party. The party performed best in provinces like the Northern Cape (15.94%), the Eastern Cape (13.31%), the Free State (11.11%) and the Western Cape (9.06%), where the ANC was beset by schisms and, as a result, suffered significant

defections. The Northern Cape and Western Cape had experienced particularly severe disruptions, including violent attacks on provincial leaders. The then premier of the Western Cape, Ebrahim Rasool, and provincial secretary Mcebisi Skwatsha, for instance, were entangled in a bitter power struggle, with the one supporting Mbeki and the other Zuma as the party's national president in the lead-up to the 2007 Polokwane conference. Skwatsha was gruesomely stabbed by an alleged member of the opposing faction at a meeting of the ANC's Boland region in Worcester in June 2008 following the suspension of the region's executive council by Skwatsha's provincial executive.

Provincial and regional conferences in the Northern Cape, held in 2008, were routinely disrupted and marked by violent skirmishes between supporters of Neville Mompoti and John Bloch, who were contesting the position of chairperson in the province. In the Free State provincial leaders were squaring up in the courts. Vax Mayekiso challenged the legality of the proceedings of earlier regional conferences, alleging that they had been manipulated by Ace Magashule, chairperson of the ANC in the province. Mayekiso and Pat Matosa were effectively at odds with Magashule (*Dispatch online* 1 December 2008; www.politicsweb.co.za 25 November 2008; www.sabcnews.org.za 17 January 2009).

The provincial schisms within the ANC bred defections of senior and credible leaders. Senior provincial leaders who left the ANC to lead Cope included the Northern Cape's Neville Mompoti, Fezile Kies and Fred Wyngaard; Siphatho Handi, Sam Kwelita, Andile Nkuhlu and Nosimo Balindlela in the Eastern Cape; the Free State's Vax Mayekiso, Papi Kganare, Chartotte Lobe, Casca Mokitlane, Gertrude Mothupi, Mzwandile Hleko and Mahlomula Ralebese; the Western Cape's Leonard Ramatlakane (www.sabcnews.org.za 17 January 2009). Conversely, in provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Limpopo, where the ANC provincial leadership was relatively stable, Cope performed poorly. In KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, especially, where no provincial leaders defected, Cope received, as noted above, the lowest support (1.29% and 2.91% respectively).

Cope benefited from the local prominence of its provincial leaders, who took some of their supporters with them to the new party. The ANC was also possibly dented by constant reports of instability within the provincial leadership in those provinces. Unseemly scenes and accounts of violence possibly disillusioned some ANC supporters, driving them to Cope. Reliance on ANC defectors paid off in that respect.

The middle-class posture, however, does not appear to have yielded the intended results. Perhaps Cope did, indeed, attract middle-class voters but in the absence of an exit poll it is impossible to determine their numbers with absolute precision. The concentration of its support among working-class and poor

communities, however, strongly suggests that the party attracted more support from the latter than from middle- and upper-class voters. That was not entirely unexpected. Visceral criticism from the organised bodies of the black middle class, arising from the party's stance on affirmative action, did not portend an enthusiastic reception from this section of the black community. The black middle class is the primary beneficiary of affirmative action. Its growth and prominence, especially in the public sector in the past ten years or so, is owed primarily to this policy.

The need for affirmative action still remains, however. A report by the Commission for Employment Equity (CEE) for the year 2007/8 showed grossly skewed racial and gender representation at management level. Whites, the report stated, constituted more than 68.2 per cent of employees at top management level, compared to 28.8 per cent of blacks (with the rest taken up by foreign nationals, as is the case with the categories cited below). White males are dominant (more than 58%) and white females far outnumber their black counterparts, occupying 9.8 per cent of top management positions, compared to 8 per cent of black females – African, Indian and coloured. Under-representation is even more acute vis-à-vis Africans, who make up just about 18 per cent.

There is a similar pattern of under representation at senior and middle management levels. Whites make up more than 62 per cent of senior management compared to blacks (32.4%) and within middle management whites occupy 57.7 per cent of positions, with blacks constituting 41.3 per cent. Similarly, white women outnumber their black counterparts by 15.2 per cent to 9.7 per cent at senior management level and by 18.5 per cent to 14.9 per cent at middle management level. Under representation of blacks, the report concluded, was the result of 'unfair discrimination practices' that still persisted in workplaces, which are predominantly managed by whites.

Cope's ambivalence about affirmative action struck a bitter note within the black middle class, resulting in the party easily being caricatured as a proxy of white interests at the expense of black mobility. Jimmy Manyi spent much of December 2008 on the airwaves reiterating precisely that message and running what effectively amounted to a campaign against Cope.⁸ It is not unimaginable, therefore, that a considerable number of black middle-class voters were turned off Cope by its stance on affirmative action.

Material interests had a similar determining effect on the disposition of business towards Cope. The lack of funds Dandala admitted to was reflected in the party's campaign. Cope only put up posters within five weeks of the 22 April

⁸ Manyi was appointed director-general in the Department of Labour when the new ANC government took office after the elections.

election day, long after it had launched its election manifesto, thus failing to capitalise on the momentum generated by the launch of the manifesto. The result was a lack of visibility during what was a crucial campaign period.

Business could hardly have been inaccessible to Cope, which boasted several business luminaries in its midst. Among them were Saki Macozoma and Mzi Khumalo. Cope member Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka had been Thabo Mbeki's deputy president, a position that certainly exposed her to business associations and influential people. Similarly, as premier of Gauteng, the economic hub of South Africa, Mbhazima Shilowa, Cope's second deputy president, had close dealings with the business sector, a relationship probably strengthened by the fact that his wife, Wendy Luhabe, is one of South Africa's most successful business women.

If Cope did not suffer from want of access to the business sector, or at least a section of it, what then explains its lacklustre fund-raising campaign? Shilowa (15 September 2009) ascribed it to the party's stance on disclosing the identities of donors. This had been a topical issue in public discussions, especially following the revelations in a much publicised book, *After the Party*, by former ANC MP Andrew Feinstein, that the ruling party had received substantial bribes from arms manufacturing companies in return for contracts. Media reports that the ANC had received a cash injection from the Chinese, partly prompted by its impressive campaign, served to re-open the debate about disclosure of donor sources. Anonymous donations sparked concerns that government would prioritise business interests over the citizenry, thus prodding Cope to commit to disclosure.

Disclosure must have sat uncomfortably with business people, especially those doing business with the state, fearing reprisals from the ruling party. These fears were not unjustified. The ANC responded harshly to prominent individuals who sided with the opposition. In addition, at some level, business was probably not keen to oust the ruling party. Successive ANC governments have been good for business 'not so much through any direct assistance to business, though corporate taxation remains constrained, but rather through its evident acceptance of what businessmen perceive to be economic sense' (Lodge 1999, p 9).

Macroeconomic policy and, indeed, government conduct has generally been favourable to private capital, both domestic and international. In 1996 Nelson Mandela's government, in introducing the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (Gear) policy, effectively consented to the dominant logic within the private sector that the state should adopt a less interventionist role in the economy and allow the market to regulate itself. The market, it was reasoned, would engender growth, from which development would flow. This effectively meant that the state, as had been stated in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) policy blueprint adopted by the ANC and its Cosatu and

South African Communist Party allies, would not pursue a redistributive agenda. Private sector's contribution to revenue, for instance, dropped from 18 per cent in 1990 to 11 per cent in 1999, while personal tax increased from 30 per cent to 42 per cent in the same period (Terreblanche 2002).

Business lacked a compelling reason to seek a weakened ANC. Nor has it ever been moved by lofty ideals of promoting competitive democracy. South African business thrived at the height of apartheid brutality. Only the fear that the radicalisation of black politics in the early 1980s would breed popular resentment against capitalism prompted business to support political change. It tolerated the political regime as long as it aided or did not interfere with profit making (O'Meara 1996).

Albeit less of a factor within established business, fear of reprisals must have nonetheless have been real amongst the black elite, especially within institutions susceptible to political influence. The ruling party dealt harshly with those who were either supportive of or active in Cope activities. Incidents related to Barney Pityana, in his role as vice-chancellor of Unisa, and to his university provide an instructive example. ANC-allied trade union and a student body at the university targeted Pityana for removal, alleging incompetence and political bias.

The campaign commenced shortly after Pityana's public rebuke of Jacob Zuma, then contesting the position of president of the ANC, for lacking a 'moral conscience'. Pityana disapproved of Zuma's candidature because he considered Zuma 'a liability' and, in the light of his personal history, believed it was 'not possible for Zuma to fight corruption' (Interview 17 September 2009). The allegation of incompetence was never substantiated and it was clear that the campaign was politically driven. Removal was to be Pityana's punishment for having expressed disapproval of a Zuma presidency and for his subsequent role as chairperson of Cope's selection committee. The instruction to remove him, Pityana asserts, 'came from ANC headquarters at Luthuli House'.

Such reprisals did not necessarily deter others from voting for Cope, the secret ballot protects voters from any such reprisals, but the very existence of threats and actual reprisals reveals the ruling party's conception of the state and its expectations of individuals associated with the liberation movement. Though he is an accomplished academic and professional in his own right, the ruling party seems to have expected Professor Pityana to adopt a less strident posture with respect to the government and the ANC.

Although he had never held office in the ANC Pityana came from a background of liberation politics, having been introduced to politics by Themba Mqota (aka Alfred Kgokong), a stalwart of the movement. He went on to become one of the leading figures in the Black Consciousness Movement and a close confidant of Steve Biko. He kept in close contact with the ANC while he

was in England. The post-1994 government looked favourably upon Pityana. Nelson Mandela's government appointed him chairperson of the newly formed Human Rights Commission of South Africa, a statutory body mandated by the Constitution to enforce and promote adherence to human rights. Upon completing two terms at the commission Pityana was appointed the first African vice-chancellor and principal of Unisa, an appointment that was celebrated as a great milestone towards transformation within the academy.

The ruling party's attempts to oust Pityana suggested a sense of betrayal on their part. Pityana, it would seem, should not have vocalised his thoughts publicly. In doing so, according to the ANC, he became unworthy to retain the leadership of a prominent public institution. Suddenly it mattered less that he merited the position, appointment to such positions was not decided solely on merit, but on political affiliation, the latter being more important than the former. The ANC seems to believe that state institutions should be led by individuals who agree with its views. The requirements of the position alone are insufficient to determine the calibre of the appointee. The ruling party thus seeks to deny public institutions independence and to subject them to its own whims. The distinction between the party and the state is blurred.

CONCLUSION

Cope's electoral returns confirmed its *raison d'être*, while casting doubts on the usefulness of its election strategy. The party trumpeted constitutionalism, moral leadership and trans-racial politics. The profile of its electoral support, however, belies that strategy. It drew most of its votes from working-class black communities and had little appeal among the black middle class or among white voters, to whom the thrust of its electoral strategy was supposedly geared.

But, that did not necessarily make Cope the sole party of choice among the working-class poor. Communities with a similar socio-economic profile put their mark against its chief rival, the ANC. What determined which communities voted for Cope in relatively high numbers was the state of the ruling party within a given province. Where the ANC was beset by ructions and prominent defections Cope had a strong showing, while the contrary held where the ruling party was relatively coherent.

Defectors played a pivotal role in attracting support for the party, with voters attracted by the personal political biographies of Cope's leaders. But by and large the party's strategy was blunted by its inconsistency. Constitutionalism generally appealed to the middle class, but the party's wishy-washy stance on affirmative action probably turned them off. Under-representation of blacks, especially within the private sector, remains acute and it was always unlikely

that the black middle class would support a party that posed a potential threat to its material interests.

Lack of funds derailed the party's campaign, with the effect that the publicity afforded by the many defections to the party was undercut by a lack of visibility at a critical point in the election campaign. Cope's failure to attract substantial donations was partly a reflection on business's disposition towards competitive democracy. Business people avoided jeopardising good relations or even business transactions with the ruling party by funding the opposition and successive ANC governments had been good for business, nullifying any intention to oust the ruling party.

As for the future of the party, it looks bleak. Cope has essentially fallen onto its own sword. It promised morally upright leadership, only to be mired in ugly leadership rivalry that has played itself out in the open. The party experienced a leadership exodus soon after the elections. Lynda Odendaal, the second deputy president, was the first to resign, followed by Simon Grindrod, national organiser and, recently, the party's former presidential candidate and parliamentary leader, Bishop Mvume Dandala. All cited leadership factionalism and squabbles as the reason for their resignation. Personal interests overtook the promised idea of building a competitive democracy. Individuals seemed determined to secure leadership positions at any cost, either for egotistic reasons and/or to secure material benefits.

Political office has long been the dominant source of income for South Africa's black political elite, a situation that is typical of post-colonial developing states. Unlike developed liberal democracies, where the political elite is drawn from the propertied class, political elites in post-colonial states emanate from the impoverished masses. Though a few may be distinguished from the rest by their educational status they, too, lack a material base. Colonial oppression closed off any opportunities for accumulation or even for decent employment for blacks. They came into office without any savings and most did not have the technical or professional skills to secure employment elsewhere. Political office becomes the first and best form of formal employment for most (Markovitz 1977; Sandbrook 1985).

Income may not have been the primary consideration for the chief rivals, Lekota and Shilowa. Lekota has commercial interests, while Shilowa has a business mogul for a spouse. But to most, especially the provincial and regional level leadership, Cope was probably an instrument to safeguard income, especially when it seemed unlikely that they would secure spots on the ANC's lists for Parliament and the various legislatures. They quickly aligned themselves with one leader against another in return for prominent positions should that leader triumph in the presidential stakes. Public exchanges between two prominent Cope

figures, Lynda Odendaal⁹ and Sipho Mgwema¹⁰, told of secret meetings held by competing factions strategising about how to secure the Cope presidency for their favourite candidate (*Sowetan* 15 July 2009). The two candidates were not entirely blameless – they could have refused to become the subject of factionalist politics. But, it seems, the lure of the Cope presidency militated against any considerations of broader goals.¹¹

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EVALUATING ELECTION MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA'S 2009 ELECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines election management and the role of South Africa's election management body (EMB) in the context of the country's 2009 elections. It outlines and analyses the dynamics and challenges faced by South Africa's Electoral Commission in managing the country's fourth democratic election, argues the case for election management and emphasises that election management can help in the promotion of electoral democracy. Specifically, the paper analyses the financial costs and other challenges experienced by the Electoral Commission during the 2009 elections, including those related to overseas voters, the use of technology to enhance election management, and the importance of EMBs in the planning and management of elections internationally. The paper concludes with an assessment of the relevance of election management in the promotion of electoral democracy and proposals on how effective election management may contribute to the success of meaningful and sustainable elections to enhance South Africa's democracy.

INTRODUCTION

For many countries which hold regular free and fair democratic elections, election management presents as many complexities as it does opportunities for understanding the running of elections. This is especially the case in African countries that are deemed to possess '... most of the important ingredients of liberal democracy, including the existence of an Independent Electoral Commission' (Sebudubudu & Botlhomilwe 2010, p 65). On the one hand, the opportunities usually stem from a range of interactions between and among the different

¹ Dr Maphunye writes in his personal capacity and the views expressed in this paper are the author's personal opinions and do not, in any way, represent those of the Electoral Commission of South Africa.

stakeholders, including the voters, candidates, political parties and numerous other actors, as well as the institution charged with managing the elections.

On the other hand, most of the complexities relate to the fact that running an election is an elaborate process that requires various skills, including knowledge and expertise in implementing relevant legal and regulatory frameworks; public sector administration and management skills; effective organisational and events management measures; the ability to respond to the needs of the electorate in various ways such as providing them with the necessary information before, during and after an election and the ability to make the relevant arrangements. Such arrangements include procuring goods and services to ensure that an election takes place not only according to legal requirements but also according to appropriate logistical best practice.

Observers state that 'As a new field of study and practice, election management has emerged from the areas of democracy-building and democratic consolidation' (UNDP 2000, p 15) and usually involves issues related to the establishment of a body or institution that is charged with the responsibility for managing elections in a country.

This article will highlight the significance of election management logistics, especially the administrative and operational processes without which elections cannot be run or succeed. Such processes and systems in an elections management body (EMB) include its strategic and operational functions, which will be examined within the context of South Africa's recent (2009) national and provincial elections.

Election management, it will be argued, is a process whose complexities should not be overlooked or ignored as it plays a crucial role in ensuring fairness, freeness and credibility, which contributes to processes of democracy-building and consolidation.

The financial costs and challenges of South Africa's elections, especially the need to cater for overseas voters, and the importance of EMBs in the planning and management of elections internationally will be discussed. Specifically, the article will attempt to unpack the management challenges, opportunities and dynamics of election management, including administrative tasks, human resources, regulatory framework and legislation and to discuss each item in terms of South Africa's 2009 elections.

Using these elections as a point of reference the article will conclude with an analysis of the extent to which election management systems and logistical arrangements can contribute to the credibility of an EMB, to the legitimacy of the election process, and to impartial international election observers ultimately declaring a country's election free and fair. The conclusion will also assess the relevance of election management to the promotion of electoral democracy,

and propose ways in which it can contribute to sustainable elections, thereby enhancing South Africa's democracy.

THE CONTEXT OF POST-1994 ELECTION MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Despite the fact that much still needs to be done to improve the running of elections in South Africa, the Electoral Commission (IEC) of South Africa (formerly the Independent Electoral Commission)² has been congratulated by political parties '... for facilitating successful elections over the years' (IEC 2007, p 39).

An overview of elections held between 1994 and 2005 suggests that South Africa has been steadily improving in the running of local, provincial and national elections, if the general acceptance of election results and the peaceful resolution of disputes may be used as a yardstick. As observers note, 'The IEC has been effective in ensuring the continuous preparation for and management of free, credible elections – partly through the facilitation of continuous cooperation with political parties' (Booyesen & Masterson 2009, p 396). While this article will not delve into election management issues for all the elections it is necessary to assess briefly the way they were managed.

The 1994 poll presented many challenges, not only for electoral officials but for voters and political parties. There was no comprehensive national voters' roll, other logistical systems or properly trained personnel to run the elections. Thus, although South Africa was widely praised for the elections, which ushered in a new democracy, from an election management point of view many of the activities, decisions and plans were either ad hoc or relied largely on trial and error. Moreover, the fact that virtually all international media organisations focused on South Africa during the elections meant that the pre-election tensions and violence, the many teething problems voters and parties experienced on voting day (27 April 1994) and post-election anxieties and uncertainties clearly indicated that the country still had to improve its election management processes and systems.

Some of the problems stemmed from the fact that the 1994 electoral team had only a few months 'to prepare and conduct the most crucial elections' (IEC 2007, p 4), coupled with the fact that 'When [these] elections were held ..., 22 million people were eligible to vote, 17 million of whom had never voted before' (Deegan 1999, p 3). Election management has continued to improve:

2 This abbreviation of the Independent Electoral Commission that was established under the provisions of the 1993 Constitution sometimes appears confusing as current legislation only refers to an 'Electoral Commission'.

from the 1994 challenge of daunting organisational tasks (eased through the euphoria of the time), and the 1999 challenges to its relatively autonomous status. In the subsequent two elections the performance of electoral management tasks became institutionalised and the IEC adequately resourced and fully accepted its role.

Booyesen & Masterson 2009, pp 396-397

Yet some challenges to effective election management continue to pose problems for the IEC. For instance, as Ajulu (2010, p 4) notes, the 1999 elections 'were held ransom by the voter registration controversy, a contestation over which form of identification would be used for purposes of voter registration and, ultimately, for voting'. Nevertheless, this matter was eventually settled by the judicial system in favour of the use of barcoded identity documents for registration and voting. Thus, the 1999 elections 'took place in an almost festive atmosphere. Missing from the electoral process this time around was the violence that almost derailed the 1994 election' (Ajulu 2010, p 4).

This paved the way for further improvements in election management as well as infrastructural arrangements by the Electoral Commission which, between 2000 and 2006, 'utilised the full technology complement at its disposal to assist participants in the electoral process' (Tlakula 2006, p 4). In many ways the introduction of information technology (IT) in election management steadily improved efficiency and effectiveness as well as the implementation of election schedules and timelines. As the IEC acknowledges, 'Much of the work of information technology professionals takes place behind the scenes. However, this work impacts on a spectrum of activities, from delimitation of voting districts and candidate nominations to the results system' (Tlakula 2006, p 4).

According to Ajulu (2010, p 5), 'The 2004 elections were yet another demonstration that regular democratic elections had become institutionalised in South Africa's political landscape', but clearly this could not have been achieved without effective election management, which paved the way for even more successes in the future. For instance, as Booyesen & Masterson (2009, p 406) state, 'The 2004 and 2009 voter registration processes remained largely similar to that of 1999, although voters who had previously registered were not required to re-register.'

Essentially, the overall picture of the management of elections since 1994 has been positive and is, arguably, even better now than it was before 1994 when elections were run by the apartheid era Department of Home Affairs, whose credentials were questionable, given that issues of impartiality, transparency and free and fair elections would not be guaranteed under a government agency. Moreover, elections prior to 1994 excluded the majority of the country's citizens.

It is in this context that South Africa's post-1994 challenges or teething problems in election management should be understood.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ELECTION MANAGEMENT

The administration or running of an election is very often a matter that is overlooked, misunderstood or merely ignored by political analysts, opinion poll commentators, political parties and the media. The reasons for this are not immediately apparent, but anecdotal evidence in South Africa suggests that this complex administrative and logistical exercise is often erroneously dismissed as unimportant. Yet it involves taking decisions about critical matters such as how many ballot papers to print and what kind of ballot boxes to use, the provision of voting stations and the demarcation of voting district boundaries.

Though apparently mundane, items such as marking ink, security tape and seals for ballot boxes and other containers, secure and adequate warehouses and other security materials are critical to the credibility of an electoral process. Beyond these logistical arrangements, in 2009

... the Commission introduced a few innovations. One of these [was] the scanning of results slips. This means that, in addition to the posting of the results slips at the voting station and the capturing of the results on the results system, a physical image of each result slip [was] ... scanned and recorded.

IEC 2009a, p 7

Judith February (2010, p 48) argues that 'Elections, in order to be truly free and fair, must be competitive, and for the [electoral] system to be seen as legitimate they must reoccur with reasonable regularity.' Such 'reasonable regularity' suggests that the challenge is not only to provide logistics and personnel but also to devise effective and sustainable strategies to ensure that as many prospective voters as possible are able to exercise their right to vote in terms of constitutional or legislative provisions whenever an election or by-election is held.

Similarly, the idea of ensuring a free and fair election process is quite significant, seen from the perspective of the logistical process of election management. In fact, in an African context, especially in view of what happened in Lesotho in 1998, Madagascar in 2001, Kenya in 2007 and Zimbabwe in 2008 (Sebudubudu & Botlhomilwe 2010, p 67), the competitiveness of an electoral process is prone to generate violent or emotion-charged skirmishes. Such incidents may emanate from poor election management or fraudulent behaviour or disputes over results, especially in a situation in which the electorate or members of the

public suspect that logistical arrangements and election management are either disorganised or have been tampered with (pertinent examples being the above case studies). Ultimately it is the responsibility of election managers, organisers and the relevant EMB to put in place effective and efficient mechanisms to prevent or avoid the recurrence of any practices that might affect or undermine a country's electoral system.

To use a sports metaphor, an EMB is analogous to a soccer referee who protects both players and teams against bias, fraud or any illegal activities likely to compromise the game. Perhaps, as Sebudubudu & Botlhomilwe (2010, p 65) maintain, 'It is indeed inconceivable that democracy can exist in the absence of elections. As such, the way elections are conducted has a bearing on democracy.' Similarly, it may be argued that there can never be free, fair and credible elections without effective and efficient election management.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE 2009 ELECTIONS

Management of elections covers numerous issues in multiple phases. Planning for such activities is just as vital as the actual voting process itself, as Kimmie, Greben & Booysen (2010, p 120) note: 'It is also commonplace that planning and preparations by the relevant elections management body – in the case of South Africa, the IEC – are imperative to the credibility of the elections.' There are three phases in the IEC's processes and electoral activities: pre-election, election day and post-election.

The pre-election phase

Generally no hurdles or confusion were experienced in relation to the 2009 elections. This is largely because South Africa now has an established legislative regime that governs every aspect of electoral activities and specifies the responsibilities of each stakeholder and the timeframe within which the activities are undertaken. The legislative regime includes:

- Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996)
- Electoral Commission Act (Act 51 of 1996) and regulations
- Electoral Act (Act 73 of 1998) and regulations
- Public Finance Management Act (Act 1 of 1999)
- Local Government: Municipal Structures Act (Act 117 of 1998)
- Local Government: Municipal Demarcation Act (Act 27 of 1998)
- Local Government: Municipal Electoral Act (Act 27 of 2000)
- Municipal Electoral Regulations (R 848, dated 23 August 2005)

- Public Funding of Represented Political Parties Act (Act 103 of 1997)
- Public Funding of Represented Political Parties Regulations (R117, dated 20 November 1998).

Among the many examples of administrative functions and duties that electoral officials and staff in all provinces had to undertake in the 2009 elections were those encompassing planning and implementing systems and processes, events management and catering, coordinating and monitoring equipment and supplies and making transport and communication arrangements for electoral staff. They also included renting or procuring vehicles to transport materials and supplies, voting station furniture, computer equipment, machines, tools, and so on, as well as financial arrangements for marketing and publicising election campaigns.

Beyond the routine activities securing adequate financial allocations from Parliament for electoral events, including by-elections, remains a serious challenge for the IEC. Sometimes the commission runs into bureaucratic hurdles surrounding the use of such funds, which may both delay the implementation of expenditure and result in the inability to spend the amount required and allocated. More serious, though, is the question of the funding of political parties, which repeatedly stirs up complaints, often from smaller political parties that receive either minimal or no funding, which limits their ability to mount effective campaigns. Indeed, an IEC conference in 2007 noted that “The formula used in the funding of political parties was identified as allegedly “limiting the capacity of smaller parties to mobilise membership and sustain themselves”” (IEC 2007, p 5).

Similarly, the registration process, and voter education campaigns often present challenges for parties, voters and the IEC alike, as each must play its part. The challenge for the parties is to ensure that their supporters are not only registered but will go to the voting stations on election day. The regular meetings, public consultations and feedback and elaborate preparations by the parties for the elections also help to lay the foundation for credible elections, something that might be overlooked or ignored.

Another challenge for the parties that is frequently overlooked is that they must submit themselves to, and ensure that their members observe, the binding code of conduct which all registered political parties must sign in line with the provisions of Schedule 2 (Section 99) of the Electoral Act.

For voters the challenge is usually how to obtain updated information about the impending election, and this is where the IEC as well as the mass media may be helpful. In particular, a significant number of potential voters reported positively about the information they obtained from the print and electronic

media (Human Sciences Research Council – HSRC 2009, pp 50-54). Equally, as Booyesen & Masterson (2009, p 414) report, ‘In 2009 for the first time political parties were afforded a limited amount of free electronic (television and radio) party advertisement broadcasting. It was, however, overwhelmingly only the well-resourced parties that could make use of this opportunity.’

For the IEC, which, in 2009, mounted countrywide registration campaigns, the key challenges included the need to increase voter registration figures, ensure the visibility of its posters and billboards, and generally to guarantee a climate conducive to the holding of free and fair elections. As always, it also faced the logistical task of setting up systems and infrastructure for voting stations. Such tasks included provisions for staff or personnel, including transportation for them and their materials and equipment, food, accommodation, uniforms or identification tags, as well as the relevant time management and precision planning that underpin these processes.

The timing of the announcement of the election date presented the IEC with a logistical challenge. The date (22 April) was announced on 19 March 2009 by then president Kgalema Motlanthe. This gave the IEC barely a month to prepare for the event, which was too constraining in terms of the many arrangements that had to be put in place. The announcement of national election dates in South Africa is often shrouded in secrecy and poses a logistical nightmare for the EMB. South Africa could learn a lesson from a country like Botswana, which announced the date for its 2009 elections months before the actual event, allowing the electoral commission in that country ample time to prepare.

Most challenging, however, was making arrangements for overseas-based South African citizens to cast their votes. The following reasons are set out as requirements for a special vote in terms of chapter 3 s 33 of the Electoral Act:

- a) physical infirmity or disability or pregnancy;
- b) absence from the Republic on government service or membership of the household of the person who is absent;
- c) absence from a voting district while serving as an officer in the election concerned;
- d) being on duty as a member of the security services in connection with the election;
- e) temporary absence from the Republic for purposes of a holiday, a business trip, attendance of a tertiary institution or an educational visit or participation in an international sporting event.

These provisions – especially clauses (b), (d) and (e) – were challenged by opposition parties, which argued that the Act discriminated against South Africans living

abroad. Consequently, the Constitutional Court declared the relevant section of the Act unconstitutional, thus allowing all people living abroad who could prove their South African citizenship the right to vote in the 2009 elections. In addition to producing their proof of registration and their green barcoded identity document (ID), such citizens had to produce valid South African passports before they were allowed to vote at the country's diplomatic missions abroad (IEC 2009c).

The ruling, which, in terms of constitutional democracy, was nationally and internationally applauded, created logistical nightmares and management dilemmas for the IEC. To start with, the commission's plans all focused on the millions of voters who would be casting their ballots in the country; it had not anticipated additional overseas voters who suddenly had to be added to the voters' roll. Subsequently, this meant that the commission had to prepare at short notice and to make contingency plans to accommodate a large number of overseas voters as well as make arrangements for the safe return of ballot boxes once the containers were properly sealed for shipping back to South Africa.

Other challenges were that the numbers of voters involved could not be determined accurately. Moreover, they were not covered by the commission's national communication and voter education campaigns and many apparently only possessed South African passports and not the requisite ID book or a legally recognised temporary identification certificate, as the Electoral Act 1998 stipulates.

In addition, all South African voters in the 2009 elections were categorised according to voting districts (VDs), whereas this was not the case for voters in London, New York or any other overseas capital where South Africans were residing at the time of the elections. With 7 472 registered voters the UK had by far the largest number, followed by Australia (1 235) (IEC 2009c). Furthermore, the Electoral Act clearly stipulated that those voters who were out of their province on election day could only cast a national ballot. For overseas voters this posed a challenge, as the Constitutional Court's ruling did not give a directive on this matter. Moreover, those who lived far from the capital city of their host country faced additional logistical and other challenges as they had to cover the costs of travelling to the capital to cast their votes.

The implications of all the logistical problems in terms of the IEC's own preparations, costing, counting and so on initially posed several challenges, but these were not insurmountable and were eventually resolved. For instance, the commission relied largely on the country's existing diplomatic missions and embassies for most of the logistical arrangements, security and other necessary preparations. The overseas votes were sealed and sent back to South Africa to be counted by experienced officials and were later included in the ballots from domestic voters.

In Africa absentee ballots, that is, 'vote[s] cast by someone who is unable or unwilling to attend the official polling station' (en.wikipedia.org) continue to pose challenges for proponents of extending franchise rights to all citizens, using multi-media platforms and mechanisms such as postal, proxy and Internet voting. Arguably, South Africa may be ahead of many African countries in terms of extending overseas voting to all its citizens abroad. However, unlike countries such as the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Estonia, where the Internet has been used (wikipedia.org), this is not yet the case in South Africa owing to widespread concerns about possible threats to the secrecy of the vote. Moreover, high illiteracy rates as well as the inability of many poor citizens to gain access to computers and the Internet mean that it might be too early to expect South Africa to opt for electronic voting in its next (2011 and 2014) elections. This is despite the South African government's apparent excitement over the possibility of introducing electronic voting for these elections, which was alluded to by then president Kgalema Motlanthe during his acknowledgement of the April 2009 election results in Pretoria (22 April 2009).

If recent local media reports are anything to go by, government may be considering merging the national, provincial and local elections into a single election in 2014. Since this might create even bigger logistical challenges for the IEC it would probably not be worthwhile to complicate matters further by also introducing electronic voting without first examining its advantages and disadvantages in the South African context.

The election phase (election day)

On 22 April 2009, 19 726 voting stations across the country opened to voters (IEC 2009h, p 6). Among the voters were 743 609 people who had applied for special votes on the basis of physical infirmity, absence from the country on government service or absence from the voting district in which they were registered while serving as election officials, being on duty as a member of the security services in connection with the election or being out of the country (IEC 2009h, p 92). The IEC reported (2009h, p 93) that the election largely went smoothly and further that,

Between 7:00 and 21:00 on 22 April 2009 registered voters cast their national and provincial ballots at the voting stations at which they were registered to vote ... A new operational function was introduced in the 2009 elections, namely, scanning the bar-code of the voter's identity documents prior to voting. This allowed voting officials to more efficiently locate the names of voters on the voters' roll. Also,

it allowed the Commission to analyse the demography of the voters
– also a first for the Commission.

The HSRC's exit poll showed that

The IEC officials were rated highly by over 80% [of the respondents] on helpfulness, friendliness, cooperativeness, professionalism [and] extent of knowledge about elections, honesty, and level of interest in their jobs and their considerate nature. The officials were however rated low on the aspect of impartiality (77%), when compared to other aspects.

HSRC 2009, p 55

While this figure is high, it is possible that this observation might be linked to the fact that concerns were previously raised about the employment as election officials of teachers, the majority of whom belong to the SA Democratic Teachers Union, an affiliate of the Congress of SA Trade Unions, which has previously called upon all its affiliates to vote for the governing African National Congress (IEC 2007, p 41).

Observers frequently not only emphasise the need for an EMB to be independent (eg, from the ruling or governing party / parties), impartial, transparent and accountable to the electorate and general public but also that such bodies must display 'professionalism and better service delivery' (Sebudubudu & Botlhomilwe 2010, p 71; see also Dundas 1993 and Rukambe 2006, cited in Sebudubudu & Botlhomilwe, p 70). Emphasis on professionalism inevitably raises the sensitive issue of the extent to which EMBs must avoid political appointees (or individuals with overt or covert links to political parties) or at least ensure that they do not appoint personnel or staff who are aligned to a specific party or organisation, which could undermine such professionalism or compromise the EMB's impartiality. In South Africa the IEC has been rigorous about not appointing staff with a high political profile, despite the controversy surrounding the use of teachers as officials in previous elections.

Other challenges of the 2009 elections may be covered under the subject of human resources, namely wages or salaries of the electoral personnel, the provision of technical equipment and relevant materials and the training and capacity development of administrative and support staff, many of which straddled all the phases of the elections. While human resources and good election administration are critical to the running of elections, it is argued that

Being a successful election administrator is more than effective organisation of staff and resources. The election administrators

must also manage the (for a lack of a better term) *public process* of the election. That is, public relations and the press, political party relations, and relationships with non-governmental organisations (NGO).

Baxter 1994, p 7 (emphasis in the original)

A training manual for the electoral staff who conducted the 2009 elections underscores the crucial role of election officials in particular and human resources in general in election management, outlining their responsibilities as follows:

As an Election Officer at a voting station, you are charged with very important responsibilities. The way in which you carry out your duties will influence the confidence of voters, candidates and political parties in the integrity of the election process. Each Election Officer has a role to play in ensuring a free and fair process within the boundaries of his or her voting station and therefore in protecting the right of every registered South African citizen to participate in the election.

IEC 2009b, p 5

Each of the above logistics offered opportunities in the sense that the plans, projects and programmes made by the Electoral Commission for the 2009 elections were reviewed and assessed with a view to finding out how far they could help in the preparation of these elections. The challenges were to secure the relevant budgets and to reach remote voting stations or those in areas with minimal infrastructure in terms of roads and electricity.

Another challenge frequently experienced by electoral staff related to the use of technology to enhance the electoral events. For instance, the hand-held barcode scanners, popularly known as 'Zip-Zips', which had been used in previous elections, were loaded with the names of 23 million voters and these gadgets significantly improved the commission's state of readiness for the elections (IEC 2009e). The way this equipment was used was that before registration or voting

... the registration official would take the map for the voting district and, using the bar-code on that map, register the Zip-Zip machine to a particular voting district. All registrations of voters [or actual votes] scanned during the day would then be linked to the bar-code of that voting district.

IEC 1999, pp 29-30

The scanners are innovative, user-friendly machines which help to speed up the registration and voting processes. However, one of the challenges experienced at some voting stations emanated from the malfunctioning of the equipment, either because the battery could not be charged the night before or because of some other technical fault which could only be fixed with the intervention of technicians from distant voting districts or the national office of the Electoral Commission.

Another problem faced by electoral officers related to when to rest, to take comfort breaks or to break for meals. In some voting stations officials could not afford such breaks owing to the long queues. In addition, many of the contract or temporary staff, including the 'volunteers' who were hired by the Electoral Commission to assist at voting stations countrywide, had to deal with the challenge of extended time but without an increase in their wages, factors that were frequently reported in the national media.

On the whole, as recorded in the report of the HSRC's exit poll, in local and international media reports and in the IEC's account of voting day, the election was properly run. Most voting stations opened and closed on time, although there were a few where a lack of electricity caused problems, in which case presiding officers followed legal guidelines about closing the stations earlier. Almost all voting stations had sufficient voting materials but in some cases voters chose to vote at stations where there were fewer voters, but at which they were not registered. This was an example of the so-called 'vote anywhere' syndrome provided for under s 24 of the Electoral Act. Political parties probably exploited the situation by 'bussing in' voters from voting stations with many voters or longer queues to those with fewer voters and shorter queues. The end result of this move was the following:

- Officials could not always locate voters on the voters' roll, which undermined efficiency, as relevant forms had to be completed by the voters and authorised by the presiding officers before voters could cast their ballots.
- Some officials suffered from fatigue or burnout as they were inundated with seemingly endless queues. Consequently, breaking for lunch, dinner or rest was out of the question. This resulted in low morale and motivation as the officials faced a barrage of media questions or complaints from impatient voters, many of whom had spent hours in the queue.
- As queues lengthened, tempers and emotions rose as voters were angered by the length of time it took some of them to vote. It might not be possible to determine the number of voters who left, vowing not to vote, but if they were discouraged by the long queues this

might be an example of logistical (mal)functions impeding electoral democracy.

One of the reasons for the lengthy queues was Zip-Zip machines breaking down or becoming inoperable due to, among other factors, batteries going flat because they had not been charged properly. Voters flocking to voting stations other than their own added to the problems. In most cases, voting stations only had sufficient ballots for the number of voters who were originally assigned to them.

In addition to the electronic barcode scanners the Electoral Commission relied on multi-media platforms to manage the elections and urged the voters to log onto its website (www.elections.org.za) and to visit its call centre (0800 11 8000) or send a short text message (SMS) to verify their registration details. The use of billboards, electronic and print media advertisements, and a television drama on elections on one South African Broadcasting Corporation channel also went a long way in sensitising the public about the 2009 elections.

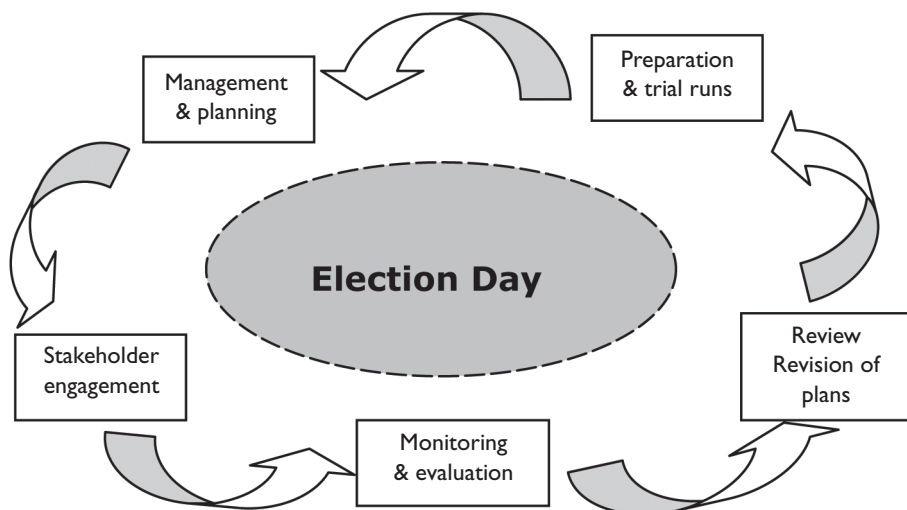
The post-election phase

This important period, which covers the seemingly minute issues such as the removal of IEC and party posters after an election, in terms of legal requirements, is often taken for granted by parties, observers and voters. The post-election phase also deals with any disputes arising from an election and seeks to ensure that these are resolved in terms of legislation, that clear records of the election are kept and sent to the IEC's national office and that all reports from local and international observers are received so that they may be analysed when the commission assesses the election. To the extent that the 2009 elections generally followed this pattern, it may be said that they were a success, especially since very few incidents of election-related violence were reported.

A few other factors must be considered once an election has been held. Firstly, it is usually immediately after an election that the public is given full information about the preparations and by then interest has largely waned. Before then, focus on elections management usually takes a back seat owing to the campaigning, pre-election tensions, scandals, propaganda, and so on that usually make media headlines. Secondly, in most countries, unless controversies arise the public may never know about the elaborate and meticulous planning and management that accompany an electoral event. While some countries regularly compile comprehensive reports on their electoral events, the public rarely sees these reports. Thirdly, based on an elections management body's experience and record of conducting elections it will always be expected to excel, especially once the electorate's confidence in democratic participation grows or matures.

Typically, the management of an election goes through what may be called an election cycle, graphically depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Processes and preparations surrounding election day



Source: author's own analysis

Logistical arrangements for South Africa's 2009 elections involved the production and procurement of:

- 394 400 staff identification stickers
- 55 000 000 ballot papers
- 97 002 ballot boxes
- 92 700 voting compartments
- 46 700 stationery packs (49 tons of stationery)
- 40 000 banners
- 19 726 segments of voters' roll, amounting to 1.55-million pages (some 7.5 tons of paper)(IEC 2009a, p 53).

In addition to the above, by September 2008 the electoral commission had produced '... 20 million voter registration forms, 300 000 street pole posters, 44 000 stationery packs (which amount to 44 tons of stationery) and 40 000 banners...' and

was to procure more electoral material closer to the actual elections (Tlakula 2008). This also involved enhancing the IT infrastructure 'to ensure the smooth running of the registration, voting and results processes' including the buying of 30 000 new Zip-Zip scanner units with state of the art technology that was expected to boost the electoral process significantly (Electoral Commission 2009g).

Despite these massive volumes of electoral materials nothing would have delivered the goods more effectively and efficiently than careful and meticulous planning for each of the 19 726 voting stations (IEC 2009a), but in many instances the costs involved also constituted a crucial part of the equation, as discussed below.

Altogether 'approximately 460 tons of paper was used to print 55 543 000 ballot papers ... in full colour, containing the name, emblem and abbreviated name of the party, as well as a photograph of the party leader' (Electoral Commission 2009h, p 73). According to Booysen & Masterson (2009, p 408):

[the] number of registered political parties in South Africa fluctuates, and the number of registered parties is also far larger than the number of contesting and represented parties ... The following numbers of political parties contested for representation in the nine provincial legislatures in April 2009: 17 in Eastern Cape, 14 in the Free State, 20 in Gauteng, 17 in KwaZulu-Natal, 18 in Mpumalanga, 16 in North West, 13 in Northern cape, and 22 in the Western Cape.

For the electoral staff in particular the challenge is to ensure that an updated list of these parties is maintained, as well as to ensure that they participate in the party liaison committees in which critical issues pertaining to each election are discussed with the IEC.

Not surprisingly, 'The unexpectedly large increase of registered voters during the second registration weekend [7-8 February 2009] presented challenges for procurement of electoral materials, which [was] planned and quantified many months ahead of the elections' (IEC 2009h, p 73). The storage and distribution of bulky election materials might have presented challenges to the IEC during the 2009 elections but the commission relied on its warehouses in each province as well as at the national office for storage and distribution. Thus, storage and distribution were not very serious challenges to the commission during the 2009 elections.

The management of an election essentially rests on the shoulders of the thousands of men and women who must ultimately ensure that strategic decisions are implemented on the ground and that ballot papers are collected and delivered at voting stations on time, ballot boxes are available, ink, stationery and signage

are ready and provided to all voting stations, and so on. This underscores the importance of human resources in election management. Another vital matter is to ensure that the wages or salaries of local staff and volunteers, who are often hired during elections, are paid in good time, that their conditions of service are clearly explained and that transport, office equipment, uniforms, and so on, are supplied and ready for use. This reduces unnecessary tensions or possible labour related grievances and helps to create an environment that is conducive to delivering a successful election.

THE COSTS OF THE 2009 ELECTIONS

The relevant legislation states that '[t]he Electoral Commission's financial statements and accounts are submitted to Parliament by way of a statutory prescribed annual report' (IEC 1999, p 85). Elections are expensive and the role of money is important, not only to political campaigns but also to the running of the elections themselves, as Green (2006, p 58) explains:

Almost everyone believes that money matters in winning elections. After all, money pays for the many ways that citizens are contacted and persuaded to vote for a candidate – including paying salaries of the political professionals who increasingly direct such efforts.

According to Oyugi (2003, p 2), 'an election is a very expensive undertaking because it is necessary to set up polling stations across the country and ensure they are of a standard that facilitates free and fair elections'. For South Africa's 2009 elections these costs, especially those relating to the procurement of resources such as ballot papers, ballot boxes, electronic equipment, stationery and so on, had a tremendous influence on the management of the elections.

In addition, one has to factor into the costs the fact that the country was experiencing an economic recession in line with global trends. Other cost factors that often threatened to undermine the management of the election were the ever-increasing prices charged by unscrupulous service providers who regard the IEC and other public sector institutions as 'cash cows' to be milked dry through the escalation of prices for their goods and services. In some areas the normal rental prices for tents or chairs to be used at voting stations would be doubled simply on the basis that some service providers viewed any election as an opportunity to 'make a killing'. Needless to add, the process of either persuading such service providers to revise their exorbitant prices or to identify alternative providers tends to threaten longstanding deadlines. In this regard, the commission probably shares many experiences with government departments and many public sector entities,

which are increasingly targeted by fraudsters and unscrupulous individuals eager to 'make a quick buck'.

Issues of resources and the costs of running elections are a continental phenomenon. As Oyugi (2003, p 4) explains: 'There is a general agreement among students of electoral politics in Africa, that elections have become very costly not only for the governments that have to manage them, but also to the political parties and individual candidates.' While Oyugi refers to parties, candidates and governments, the missing link in South Africa's case is the EMB, namely the Electoral Commission. For the commission relies on the usual annual budget allocation from Parliament, whose estimates may not always accommodate all the vicissitudes of running elections including, among others, the need for innovation and flexibility to accommodate spiralling inflation and election timeframes and deadlines.

The emphasis on costs is intended to indicate that in preparing for elections an EMB must always consider the perennial increases in the costs of resources or materials, including inflation and other economic dynamics. Notably, observers argue that it cannot be assumed that '...the most straightforward and least expensive [electoral] system is always the best choice', (IDEA 2005, p 153). Even apparently simple matters such as human resources pose challenges for any electoral system. Thus, as IDEA (2005, p 153) further explains, 'In any country, the logistics capacity and the availability of skilled human resources may constrain the available options for electoral system choice, as may the amount of money available.' In South Africa, while it is unusual for the IEC to release actual figures for each election, it is increasingly becoming clear that elections generally have huge financial implications.

CONCLUSION

A case can be made for accurate, efficient and effective election management as an important ingredient in running credible, free and fair elections. South Africa's 2009 national and provincial elections were managed in accordance with relevant electoral legislative and policy frameworks which were implemented by the Electoral Commission as one of the constitutional bodies charged with running elections in the country. Election management constitutes the crux of electoral democracy as it helps to ensure that the elections are run according to international standards or best practices, using reputable administration and management techniques.

It has been argued in this article that effective and efficient management of elections essentially determines the outcomes and outputs of an election and is therefore of strategic importance to the promotion of electoral democracy in

South Africa. This author believes that if anything were to go wrong during an election all eyes would focus on the election management body and its systems, processes, practices or procedures. Such a focus might also include questioning its credibility, impartiality, competence and independence. However, it is argued that proper management systems and logistical arrangements can contribute to the credibility of an EMB, thereby enhancing the legitimacy of the election process and the democratic process generally. The assumption is that such an EMB would have adopted or put in place rigorous measures to ensure that personnel with ethical and non-party-political backgrounds, appropriate skills and competencies are appointed as election officials.

Looking at the challenges of the 2009 elections there are two proposals to be made about how election management can help to contribute to the success of meaningful and sustainable elections and thus enhance South Africa's democracy. Firstly, for the country to ensure the sustainability of successful elections it needs to invest in the continuous and systematic training of elections management officials who are permanently employed to conduct elections. Such training must cover all electoral matters, especially ethical, professional, managerial and logistical or operational aspects of running elections.

The training must be conducted by the Electoral Commission but in collaboration with relevant tertiary and research institutions, experienced, reputable and credible EMBs, and international and local civil society or non-governmental organisations such as the Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa (EISA), the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). Enhancing the EMB's ability to fulfil its mandate to deliver successful, credible and transparent elections based on the rule of law should be the main objective of such training. Secondly, it is proposed that Parliament, while retaining its oversight powers over all Chapter 9 institutions ('state institutions supporting constitutional democracy'), should consider delegating to the Electoral Commission more power over the running of elections, to enable it to infuse professionalism, efficiency and effectiveness into its operations.

From a public administration and management perspective, two dynamics can be said to underpin the management of the 2009 elections. Firstly, the elections were managed at two levels, the strategic and administrative. The strategic level, which is critical to planning, policy, and decision-making, involved strategic interventions to drive the election process forward. The administrative level is also very important as it determines the delivery of programmes and projects pertaining to the elections. Secondly, each of the two strands (strategic and administrative) had its own chain of processes, as outlined above, but the importance of meaningful collaboration with various stakeholders enhanced the success of the 2009 elections.

Steytler, Murphy, De Vos & Rwelamira (1994, p v) argue that '[t]he value of the election will be determined by the extent to which it has been free and fair.' However, the extent to which elections are free and fair actually depends on the effective and efficient management and coordination of logistical and other functions. They further state (p xviii) that '[p]olitical theorists suggest that the purpose of elections is to ensure either the orderly transfer of power from one group to another, or ... to legitimate its continued rule.' Notably, they add that the highest value of an election within the democratic discourse is that it legitimates power. However, it is the view of this author that the extent of freeness and fairness as well as the orderly transfer of such power ultimately rests on the shoulders of electoral officials and international best practice on elections management.

Admittedly, as Steytler, Murphy, De Vos & Rwelamira (1994, p xxxi) argue, 'It may not be possible to have a totally free and fair election, what is necessary is that the election should be tolerably free and tolerably fair.' This might seem a matter of semantics but it does accommodate the possibility of human error, fatigue, erroneous counting, and so on, which have to be expected in the management of any election. The big question, of course, is how big such a margin of error or accommodation may be, but it is probably the electorate, various internal stakeholders and international observers who are best placed to answer this.

Finally, this article has deliberately avoided the political or merely ceremonial issues which often gain massive media coverage and has instead sought to underscore the significance of election management in order to highlight both the strategic and operational issues that relate to it. It has described the complexities of election management and argued that these complexities should neither be overlooked nor ignored as they play a crucial role in ensuring the freeness, fairness and credibility of elections. The article unpacked the management and logistical challenges, opportunities and dynamics of election management and outlined the relevant legislative framework, financial costs and challenges experienced by South Africans during Elections 2009.

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ELECTIONS

Extinguishing antagonism in society?

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ABSTRACT

In April 2009 South Africa held its fourth national democratic elections. With a large voter turnout and little violence, the elections were hailed as an indication of the 'maturity' of South Africa's democracy. However, in the days following the elections, violent community protests swept across the country and have remained ongoing to date. How is it possible to make sense of this apparent paradox between the peacefulness of South Africa's elections and the violence? In particular, why is so much of this violence apparently 'irrational'? Why has the succession of 'peaceful' elections in South Africa not extinguished it? These disparities are difficult to interpret in a dominant discursive paradigm which assumes that elections constitute the triumphal moment of democratic politics, capable of steering the country ineluctably towards a state of permanent peace. It is argued that the apparent 'paradox' posed by 'peaceful' elections and violent community protests is not an empirical problematic but a conceptual one and is born out of a conception of the political domain and elections within this domain in purely legalistic and technocratic terms. In this conception, therefore, elections are merely a managerial exercise, divorced from wider relations of power and conflict. The fundamentally conflictual nature of democratic politics is ignored in favour of an emphasis on 'consensus' in the pursuit of 'national unity', obfuscating the underlying power inequalities on which such consensus is frequently based. This article explores how South Africa's 2009 elections were interpreted in terms of this 'managerial' discourse in order to attempt to relocate elections within a more deeply rooted understanding of democracy, which does not assume a teleological progression towards an ultimate state of peace, but which engages with the material reality of contestation and blood in post-apartheid South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1990 more than 25 sub-Saharan countries have held democratic elections. This is what we mean when we talk of a process on our continent which affirms an indigenous and sustained movement towards the elimination of the failed systems and violent conflicts which have served to define the continent in a particular way in the eyes of many in the world.

Thabo Mbeki 1997

A record proportion of approximately 77 per cent of registered voters voted in South Africa's fourth democratic elections in April 2009, a poll that was unmarred by major violent incidents¹ and was widely hailed as a marker of the 'maturation' of South African democracy. 'Thank-you South Africa', declared newspaper headlines, which reported then President Kgalema Motlanthe congratulating South Africans for, 'turning out in huge numbers' to vote 'peacefully' in 'a free and fair election marked by very few incidents of violence' (Ndawonde 2009). However, less than a week later, newspaper headlines were filled with accounts of violent 'service delivery protests'. A report headed 'Stones Fly' described one such protest.

Angry protesters from Khayelitsha stone and smash the windows of a Golden Arrow bus which tried to drive through a no-go zone in Lansdowne Road on May 4. The residents, who protested over a lack of electricity, water and toilets, barricaded the road with burning clothes and tyres and dug ditches in the road to prevent traffic from coming through.

www.oryxmedia.co.za/events/service-delivery-protest-in-khayalitsha-%E2%80%93-04-may-2009

Thus, within a few days of millions of 'mature' citizens peacefully making their way to the polling booths, these same citizens took to the streets across South Africa in an unprecedented wave of angry protest, which swept across townships

1 While there were few or no incidents of violence associated with election day itself the period prior to the elections was characterised by high levels of contention between the African National Congress and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) in KwaZulu-Natal in particular and between the ANC and the newly established Congress of the People (Cope). For example, the Election Monitoring Network (EMN) reported five murders linked to political rivalry in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. In addition, a survey conducted by Afrobarometer at the end of 2008 found a significant amount of fear, particularly among supporters of smaller political parties, that political violence would accompany the elections.

from, among others, Du Noon and Khayelitsha in Cape Town to Zeerust in the North West Province and Orange Farm and Thokoza in Gauteng. By July 2009 it was reported by agencies monitoring municipal affairs that that there had been more major protests during 2009 than in any previous year since 'service delivery' protests had started in 2004 (Allan & Heese 2009).

Many of these protests were characterised by violence, some of which appeared profoundly 'irrational', for example, the burning of the municipal library in the township of Siyathemba in Mpumalanga province in February 2010 during protests about a range of local issues. The nature of these protests prompted Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Yunus Carrim, who was responsible for local government affairs, to state that, 'it is the rage of sections of the protestors and the extent of violence and destruction they wreak that is striking' (Carrim 2010). These community protests had not abated at the time of writing,

A PARADOX

How can we understand this apparent paradox between the 'peacefulness' of the electoral process and the violence of the protests currently sweeping the country, not to mention the various other forms of violence that characterise South African society, including one of the highest murder rates in the world and a number of other forms of violence, such as rape, sexual assault, xenophobic attacks and violence committed by members of the police service.

This article argues that our surprise at these 'disjunctures' is not the consequence of an empirical problematic, an 'actual' contradiction, but is, instead, the result of a normative conception of the domain of the political and the role of elections within this political domain, which assumes that the 'political' is a sphere completely circumscribed and incorporated within the realm of the law, hence ostensibly free from violence and conflict, which can be managed in merely technical and administrative terms.

The analysis here, therefore, attempts to address the conventional assumption, as articulated by former president Thabo Mbeki, that elections, as the triumphal moment of the democratic system, are able to 'magically' manage and resolve, through an ideology-free mechanical process, the fundamental contradictions and antagonisms in society and create a world, à la Fukuyama, in which, 'history has ended' (Fukuyama 1992); a world freed from ideology and hence free of the stain of violence. This 'post-political' vision, as Chantal Mouffe (2000) and Slavoj Žižek (2008), among others, have pointed out, is a dangerous obfuscation, which conceals beneath this 'non-ideology' a conservatism that seeks to impose a manufactured consensus on society and ignores the unequal power

relations embedded within this 'consensus'. The closing of space for a viable and meaningful opposition to the status quo in this 'post-ideological', consensus-driven world can give rise to dangerous forms of anarchy and violence as people lack meaningful channels through which to express their discontent.

Mouffe and Žižek, in their critique of 'consensus-based' politics, were primarily writing about the impact of 'third way' thinking in Western Europe after the end of the Cold War, which ostensibly ushered in a period where consensus-based politics was possible, primarily as a result of the now uncontested global hegemony of neo-liberalism. It was in this context, which informed the proliferation of elections in the sub-Saharan region and indeed on the continent, from the 1990s onwards, that, after the end of the Cold War, liberalism and the free market were seen as the only viable political and economic choices (Serlis 2008, p 17).

However, in many instances elections were the result of subtle and less subtle coercion that reinforced unequal global power relations, in which 'economic adjustment and political liberalisation were made preconditions for aid targeted at development in poorer countries' (Serlis 2008, p 17). Thus elections and the liberal democracy they were intended to inaugurate were often not an 'organic' process but came to the continent in inauspicious circumstances under the threat of withdrawal of aid or other penalties that could be imposed by the West if countries did not conform. The result was formal elections that were often marred by a host of irregularities and violence and which, moreover, had little substantive connection to meaningful multiparty democracy or sustained and institutionalised democratic systems and processes.

South African citizens had fought long and hard for the national sovereignty they were finally to achieve in 1994 and it was the apartheid government which increasingly felt the pressure of economic sanctions and isolation, eventually compelling the state to agree to negotiate a political settlement for the country, which led to the holding of its first non-racial election. In the light of its fractured and divided past South Africa became increasingly concerned with the quest for 'national unity' and 'reconciliation', which it hoped would prevent violent conflict among antagonistic groupings.

This concern was initially expressed through the process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, which was widely criticised for its focus on individual human rights violations rather than the structural system of apartheid which had generated these violations (Mamdani 1998; Posel 2002; Kistner 2003), and later with the broader and ongoing project of building a 'national identity', a definitive 'South African-ness', which conceals the underlying economic and political inequalities that prevent such an identity from emerging.

Mattes (2007) argues, in this vein, that the focus by the ruling ANC on nation-building has been at the expense of an emphasis on democracy, as, he argues, support for democracy remains to some extent contingent on whether the state is able to deliver. In this context, the primary concern has been to 'legitimize the idea of the South African political community' (p 15) and create a loyalty around the, 'territorial and symbolic identity of the "new South Africa"' (p 13) that would hold whether or not specific political and economic goods were delivered. This emphasis on 'nation-building', combined with the continued political party dominance of the former liberation movement, the African National Congress, has meant that the space for significant contestation of dominant ideological paradigms is weakened. In this context, all South Africans are increasingly obliged to identify themselves with a national consensus around the values and needs of the society. Fundamental opposition to or contestation of this 'national vision' can lead to ostracism and 'othering', closing down the space for substantive opposition, as the experience of social movements such as Abahlali baseMjondolo² have demonstrated.

In the 'post-colonial' context of the global South, the contradictory impact of a consensus driven politics is particularly stark, as the transition to democracy in many of these countries has frequently been accompanied by rising levels of violence, both associated with the election process itself, which can become a moment for staging spectacles of violence in support of one or other of the participants in the electoral contest (Tambiah 1996), or in society in general, as the deregulation associated with the transition to democracy creates new opportunities for violence. As the Comaroffs (2006, p 1) have argued,

political liberation in postcolonial, post-totalitarian worlds, and the economic liberalization on which it has floated, has implied, as its dark underside, an *ipso facto* deregulation of monopolies over the means of legitimate force, of moral orders, of the protection of persons and property. And an unraveling, more or less, of the fabric of law-and-order.

2 Abahlali baseMjondolo is a shack dwellers movement formed in Durban in 2005, initially to oppose the sale of land promised to shack dwellers as part of a slum clearance initiative by the local municipality. The movement has since grown into one of the most significant civil society organisations in the country. It alleges that in an 18-month period the movement experienced more than 100 arrests, regular police assault and ongoing death threats and other forms of intimidation from local party officials. Abahlali has taken up a number of campaigns relating to land and housing issues and won a significant victory when it managed to get the proposed KwaZulu-Natal Slums Act, which was intended to facilitate evictions from slums in the province, overturned in the Constitutional Court. Significantly, Abahlali opposes participation in either local or national elections, instead supporting direct democracy and 'a politics of the poor'. Elections, it argues, are a means for elites to acquire power on behalf of the poor. Its elected president, S'bu Zikode, says about elections: 'The government and academics speak about the poor all the time, but so few want to speak to the poor ... It becomes clear that our job is just to vote and then watch the rich speak about us as we get poorer' (*Sunday Herald* 9 August 2009).

Ironically thus, while more countries than ever before have attained democracy in the sense of constitutionalism and multiparty electoral competition, substantial evidence shows that global rates of violent crime have surged and that violent crime has been especially pronounced in precisely those regions of the world in which democracy has recently taken hold, including Latin America (Fajnzylber, Lederman & Loayza 1998; Diamond 1999; Mendez, O'Donnell & Pinheiro 1999, cited in LaFree & Tseloni 2006, p 27), Eastern Europe, the 'breakaway' republics of the former Soviet Union (Hraba et al 1998; Barak 2000; Backman 1998; Savelsberg 1995 cited in LaFree & Tseloni 2006, p 27) and sub-Saharan Africa (Reza, Mercy & Krug 2000; Daniel, Southall & Lutchman 2005, cited in LaFree & Tseloni 2006, p 27).

These transitions to democracy, marked most significantly by the electoral process, have been widely hailed as the inauguration of a new dawn, a 'Brave Neo[liberal]-World' (Comaroff & Comaroff 2006, p 3). However, the effects of elections have been contradictory, leading to 'unintended, highly destabilizing effects on the fragile political and economic arrangements on the ecologies of patronage, redistribution, and survival that developed in many nation-states across the global south with the end of the high age of colonialism' (Comaroff & Comaroff 2006, p 4).

The electoral process itself, is fetishised as a panacea in the transition to liberal democracy by authors such as Huntington (1991), who define democratic consolidation almost entirely in terms of the electoral process, and is frequently interpreted in narrow, procedural terms, offering little substantive choice to voters.

It hides in its 'secretive interior' (Comaroff & Comaroff 2006, p 4) the material realities of the 'Brave Neo-World', foreclosing the collective action which could instantiate fundamental change in favour of the exercise of individual 'enlightened' self-interest.

Therefore, while it is assumed that the aspiration for 'free and fair elections' is a 'common sense' objective that merely requires tinkering with electoral mechanisms, codes of conduct, deployment of election officials and so on, what is seldom questioned is whether these aspirations are achievable or even desirable and whether, in seeking to impose consensus which disallows substantive opposition, we in fact unleash unmediated forms of violence and opposition. As Etienne Balibar (2001, p 15) has argued,

'civility' does not necessarily involve the idea of a suppression of 'conflicts' and 'antagonisms' in society, as if they were always the harbingers of violence and not the opposite. Much, if not most, of the extreme violence we are led to discuss is the result of a blind

political preference for 'consensus' and 'peace', not to speak of the implementation of law and order policies on a global scale.

What is rarely contemplated is that in as much as the state, in South Africa, as elsewhere, is constituted through a series of founding violences these violences live on, institutionalised within the edifice of the democratic state. As Agamben (1998, p 105) has argued, Hobbes's 'state of nature' is not a pre-judicial phenomenon which is displaced by the formation of the state but is, in fact, a condition that dwells continuously within the civil state. This is a condition of continuous flux and transition in which all are potentially both sovereign – with the absolute right to decide life and death – as well as bare life; life that exists on the boundaries of the political domain, unprotected by law and consequently exposed to the most extraordinary violence.

Such ambiguities, however, appear inconceivable in a South African discourse dominated by a legalistic and economic understanding of the world, including the electoral process itself. Vale, in a critique of Southern African electoral studies, points to the influence of the American discourse of applied social science, which has shaped the discipline of electoral studies in terms of an economic understanding of social relations, modelled on the market and informed by a notion of rational choice and the self-interested actor. This model of thinking has, he argues, led to a depletion of the complexity which characterises social relations and, in particular, social relations as they pertain to elections.

The study and conduct of elections has been conflated with the practice of management and the disciplining of social processes rather than their interpretation. This has led to the emphasis in the practice and description of elections on the 'tropes' of 'transparency', 'accountability' and 'governance' (Vale 2006, p 11). While these are important values, they seek, above all, to 'tame' the electoral process and the conduct of democracy itself. These are the terms in which elections are evaluated and citizen behaviour is monitored. Elections become a technical exercise; a process which needs to be 'managed', divorced from an understanding of how they are connected to social and power relations and devoid of the theorising which could link them to these broader domains.

'RE-READING' VIOLENCE

South African analysts operating within a conceptual paradigm in which violence is seen as an implacable exception to the 'proper' exercise of juridical power are frequently at a loss to understand or interpret violence which cannot be seen to be instrumentally related to identifiable objectives or purposes. Their explanations are, as Sue van Zyl has argued in relation to the internalised violence prior to

South Africa's first democratic election,³ 'additive', each analysis attempting to find the additional ingredients that could explain the *relation* between power and its violent effects in terms of a variety of historical, political or sociological accounts, or a 'judicious mixture of each' (Van Zyl 1990, p 2).

This conception is an understanding of power and of the political, which 'takes law as its model and its code' (Agamben 1998, p 5). It is a notion of power in which the site of the material enactment of power and the representation of power are conceptually distinct, making possible an 'idealised' juridical realm of power, separate from its site of violent instantiation (Feldman 1991, p 235). In this discourse politics is a purely juridical phenomenon, completely divorced and elevated from the violent and material manifestations of power. In this view it is possible to negotiate and mediate the realm of the political in purely juridical terms as what lies outside the juridico-political system is, by definition, outside of the political and is, in fact, criminal. The criminal, as the Comaroffs have argued in relation to the post-apartheid state, becomes the 'alibi' against which the integrity of the political 'community' can be substantiated (Comaroff & Comaroff 2004, p 4).

This vision of power, therefore, can only conceive of violence in an instrumental relation to a juridical power, as a strategic tool used in the pursuit of 'rationally' conceptualised and articulated objectives. This despite the fact that so much violence in the South African context, from that of the transition period during the 1990s to the current violent protests, does not lend itself to such instrumental explanations.

By unpacking the construction of knowledge about violence within a particular understanding of power it becomes possible to 're-read' this violence in terms of a significantly different conceptualisation of power, one which incorporates not only the juridical but also what Foucault first conceived of as the 'biopolitical', 'the concrete ways in which power penetrates subjects' very bodies and forms of life' (Foucault, cited in Agamben 1998, p 5). It is the articulation between biopolitical and the juridico-institutional power, that is, the relationship between life and law, which makes it possible to interpret violence properly in the political realm not as an aberration to juridico-political politics but as a critical part of the mediation between the representation and the instantiation of power.

The biopolitical nature of power has, nonetheless, as Agamben argues, remained concealed and implicit in modern juridical understandings of power and sovereignty, as is evidenced in the South African context by the struggles to

3 Between the beginning of the negotiation process in 1990 following the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners and South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994 violent political conflict, claimed the lives of approximately 16,000 people.

comprehend violence which does not appear to be linked to 'rationally' articulated objectives; conflicts which make explicit the embodied nature of sovereign power as wounds inscribed on bodies rather than the juridical, representative nature of power, expressed through the ballot and collective decision-making.

Pure violence

It is the point of articulation between biopolitical and juridico-political power at the boundaries of the juridico-political order that makes explicit what Benjamin has called 'pure violence';⁴ violence without any relation to law (Benjamin, cited in Agamben 2005, p 61); violence whose very 'excess', its normative violations, its 'exceeding' of law and of norm are, in fact, the mechanism of sovereign power. It is in this realm, on the boundaries of the juridico-political order, that the violence that we struggle so much to understand is located.

This is a violence which is not related to law. It neither tries to establish law, as in revolutionary violence, nor to defend law. Unlike 'mythico-juridical' violence, which is always a means to an end, 'pure violence is never simply a means – whether legitimate or illegitimate – to an end (whether just or unjust)'. It is instead, a 'pure medium', 'mediality without ends' (Agamben 2005, p 62).

However, such violence, as Chatterjee (2001a) points out, poses a particular problem to the modern secular consciousness, which seeks 'rationality' and 'sense' (p 18). In modern political life two key strategies are used to 'domesticate' violence. Either violence is subordinated to transcendental ethical imperatives such as justice, goodness and progress, in order to legitimise its use for these transcendent aims, or an attempt is made to establish an 'economy of violence', a cost-benefit analysis which determines whether the violence used is proportionate to the goal to be achieved (p 20).

This has led to what analyst André Du Toit (1993) has identified in the South African context as a 'radical problem of understanding' (p 2) with regard to forms of violence that do not appear to be subjugated to an ethical imperative or which are apparently disproportionate to any identifiable goals. As André du Toit points out, political violence is not unfamiliar or difficult to understand in the South African historical context, however, prior to the 1990s most violence could be relatively easily linked to the struggle against the colonial or apartheid state and the struggle to defend them. However, the anomic violence of the 1990s, prior to the country's first democratic elections, which was profoundly transgressive,

4 It is important to note that Benjamin's conception of 'purity' was about the relation of violence to law rather than a substantive characteristic of the violent action itself. Benjamin argues, 'The task of a critique of violence can be summarized as that of expounding its relation to law and justice' (cited in Agamben 2005, p 61).

violating South African citizens – men, women and children – in the ‘ordinary spaces’ of their everyday lives, could no longer be seen in instrumental relation to the struggle to overthrow the apartheid state. The ‘functions and purposes’ of this violence remained oblique precisely because they could not easily be ‘derived from’ or ‘related to’ ‘*primary* social processes and political phenomena’ or be ‘readily harnessed to an intelligible public cause’ (A du Toit 1993, p 6). This was violence that did not fit into the ““master narrative” structuring conventional understandings of political violence’ (A du Toit 1993, p 1).

It is these types of anomic violence that continue to confound analysts of the various manifestations of social violence in the post-apartheid period. This is not to say that all the violence that has taken place in post-apartheid South Africa is anomic rather than instrumental.

A number of valid social explanations can, undoubtedly, be offered for many manifestations of violence. Among these are inequality, municipal corruption, lack of access to local government, housing policy and migration. However, while valid, all these explanations finally balk at the point at which they are asked to link these underlying causal factors with the actual occurrence of violence, which often appears to be profoundly ‘irrational’, for example, protesters against poor service delivery attacking the very infrastructure which could facilitate better delivery.

The illusory nature of this search for an original a-temporal origin of power is, however, made explicit by the temporality and specificity of each social protest, which may involve a variety of common underlying structural factors that can be identified but which do not, *in toto*, explain the outbreak of violence.

As Thornton (1995, p 2) has argued, violence is, in fact, ‘peculiarly temporal’ and profoundly unpredictable; ‘the proximate causes of violence are often so complex that it is rarely possible to know exactly or precisely what triggered a violent event’ (Thornton 1995, p 9). It is, instead, a case of ‘passing epiphenomena’ (A du Toit 1990, p 119), which ‘necessarily disturb all structural causal or narrative sequences and continuities’ (Thornton 1995, p 3) and therefore cannot be properly instrumental. We can know of the possibility or even the probability of violence but we can only really know violence in retrospect (Thornton 1995) and it is in this retrospective perspective that we construct a relationship between a prior cause of power and its violent effects.

Nevertheless, in dominant South African academic discourse violence is understood as existing in an instrumental relation to the state. This understanding of violence is deeply embedded within a genealogy of thought, running from Hobbes through to Weber, which understands the foundation of sovereign state power in terms of its ability to monopolise violence within society. For Hobbes, through a social contract citizens give up their right to violent self-defence to the sovereign state or Leviathan, whether democratic or autocratic, to act as a

guarantor of peace and civility in a world that would otherwise be characterised by a 'condition of war of everyone against everyone' (Woodbridge 1958, p 270).

For Max Weber too, the essential *raison d'être* of the state is its ability to monopolise the *legitimate means* of violence over a specific territory. Therefore, in this conception, the legitimacy of the state forms the basis of the legitimacy of its monopoly on violence and its right to employ violence as part of the exercise of state power. As analyst Pierre du Toit (2001, p 72) contends, 'security', the ability to provide for the basic physical security of citizens, forms the 'core of the substance from which a social contract between state and citizen is built. When it [the state] fails to provide security, and is seen to fail, the state's legitimacy cracks at this core.'

The assumption that the basis of legitimate state authority is its ability to monopolise the means of violence in society has led to uncritical assumptions about the capacity of the state 'as the primary unit for the conduct of politics' (P du Toit 2001, p xii), to monopolise violence. During the period of conflict which preceded South's Africa's first democratic elections and which was accompanied, particularly in the 1990s, by a patent breakdown in the state's monopoly of violence, it was assumed that the restoration of democratic state sovereignty would secure the conditions of peace.

As André du Toit (1993) articulated it, this was a conception of violence within a South African master narrative of political struggle, in which the exercise of legitimate juridical state power would end violence and 'projected democracy as the solution to the history of conflict and political violence' (A du Toit 1993, p 1). In this vein, it was assumed that 'a political settlement ... will ensure that violence loses popular support when directed against a legitimate government' (Brewer 1994, pp 5-6).

Embedded, therefore, in these analyses is a teleological conception of history and its 'predictable sequences' (Foucault in Rabinow 1991) which assumes that humanity inevitably moves 'from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare' (Foucault in Rabinow 1991, p 85). While South African analysts have acknowledged the complexities of South Africa's 'bold new experiment' (Giliomee & Schlemmer 1994) and that 'the reorientation of conflict from bullets to ballots is a long, arduous, and often violence-ridden road' (Sisk 1995, p 4), the possibility of this 'transition' from a state of violence to a state of peace is posited as merely a matter of 'reorientation' in which institutional arrangements, the re-establishment of new 'rules of the political game' (Friedman 1993; Sisk 1995), would make this teleological shift possible.

What is inconceivable in this paradigm is that this state of violence and transition would, as Agamben argues, dwell continuously within the 'City',

violence not displaced but installed in law. The continuation of contemporary forms of violence in the post-1994 context thus compelled Pierre du Toit (2001, p xi) to preface his book on South Africa's 'brittle peace' with the question, 'Why has South Africa, newly democratised, not also become peaceful and free of violence?'

SOUTH AFRICAN ANALYSIS OF THE 2009 ELECTIONS

Recent analysis of the political environment during the run-up to the 2009 elections has been similarly premised on a normative assumption of the possibility of a teleological 'progress' towards a state of peace, which merely requires the modification and adjustment of the 'rules of the game'. This conception of the social in terms of the metaphor of a 'game' draws, as Vale argues, on a frame of analysis in which the social domain is interpreted in the same terms as the economic domain. Besides the analytical depletion that occurs as a result of this conflation of the economic and the social this presentation of the social as a 'neutral playing field', a 'separate domain, free from structural imperatives or questions of agency and subjectification' (Lemke 2001, p 200), masks the underlying processes of power that shape this environment, including the ostensibly neutral rules which, far from being mere technical procedures, are, in fact, what Foucault has called 'techniques' of governmentality. The apparent 'consensus' gained on the basis of such rules may well foreclose political participation in ways that, as Mouffe and Žižek argue, can produce unmediated forms of violence.

Susan Booysen's analysis of contention in the run-up to the 2009 elections reveals the limitations of this teleological and procedural approach and the fetishisation of the electoral process as a means of achieving this teleology. In her analysis Booysen assumes that the reduction in violence associated with elections in 15 years between 1994 and 2009 can be causally interpreted as a consequence of an 'increasing acceptance of the normative framework of liberal democracy' (Booyesen 2009, p 12) and, stretching the point even further, the 'consolidation of democracy' (p 12). This approach ignores the enormous ambiguity and contention associated with the institutionalisation of the 'framework of liberal democracy' in the South African and other post-colonial contexts.

Chipkin (2009, p 7), for example, has recently argued that one cannot assume that democratic social relations follow automatically from democratic political institutions. This is starkly evident in the South African context, in particular in the disjuncture between the high levels of participation in elections and the relatively high levels of legitimacy enjoyed by many formal political institutions in South Africa contrasted with the violence that characterises so many aspects of social relations in the country.

Thus, contrary to much social capital literature, which assumes that democratic institutions can only function if there are high levels of civic engagement and social connection between citizens, what the South African case demonstrates, as do the cases of numerous other recently democratised societies in the Global South (which continue to hold democratic elections in a context of high levels of social conflict), is that, 'democratic institutions can take root in a society that is ambivalent about democratic norms and values' (Chipkin 2009, p 12).

Similarly, Mattes (2007, p iii), in examining the claims of a range of variants of institutional theory that posit a direct relationship between the establishment of democratic institutions and the consolidation of democracy, found, after examining data from South Africa, that 'there is little if any evidence that these institutional successes have resulted in increased levels of public demand for democracy'. Butler (2007), drawing on Mattes's analysis of Afrobarometer survey material, reiterates that:

the wider citizenry continues to show limited enthusiasm for liberal institutions ... Only a third of the electorate consider the procedural components of the political system non-negotiable – majority rule, regular elections, freedom to criticise government, and multiparty competition. Citizens more often consider economic or substantive considerations to be the non-negotiable aspects of democracy.

In 2007 Mattes, analysing data from the Afrobarometer⁵ survey, in responses to questions about whether people would be prepared to give up democracy for development, designed to assess popular *demand* for democracy, found further evidence of the contested nature of support for democracy as a value, unattached to its capacity to deliver development.

Mattes found that popular demand for democracy between 2000 and 2006 had remained stable rather than showing an upward trend. While 65 per cent of South Africans said in 2006 that democracy was preferable to other forms of government this percentage had remained stable since 1998. Analysis of further data found that only 35 per cent declared themselves 'unwilling' or 'very unwilling' to 'give up regular elections' and 'live under a non-elected government or leader' who 'could impose law and order, and deliver houses and jobs' (Mattes 2007, p 19). Sixty-five per cent of respondents were prepared to make this compromise.

5 Afrobarometer is a research project which runs regular surveys on a range of issues concerning the social, political and economic situation in more than a dozen countries in Africa. See <http://www.afrobarometer.org/>

However, Booysen's analysis assumes that elections, as the apotheosis of democracy, can be simplistically read as direct evidence of a broader social acceptance of the 'norms of liberal democracy' and a teleological marker of 'progress' towards the 'ultimate' realisation of a liberal democratic system. The rise in contention during the run-up to the 2009 elections, thus appears in this teleology as a 'surprising reversal', an 'anomaly' in an ostensibly ineluctable historical progression.

What Booysen's analysis assumes, as do many other electoral analyses, is thus not only the neutral production of rules but also the neutral production of the South African subject, who, unproblematically, accepts the framework of liberal democracy as the most sensible and 'rational' choice and the 'only game in town' (Linz & Stepan 1996). In fact, in the neo-liberal state these processes of subjectification or production of the subject are the product of processes of power, namely a particular disciplinary relationship between state and citizen.

As Foucault has argued the modern biopolitical state does not concern itself with mere administration but is also involved in the 'governance' of all aspects of social life, including citizens' 'governance' of themselves. It is the citizen carrying the norm in personal conscience who is critical to the modern state's capacity to maintain sovereignty without continual law enforcement by producing citizens whose actions are governed by a 'morality' and conscience, which are congruent with the state's attempt to achieve the most 'economic', effective and rational government.

In the South Africa context, and the post-colonial context in general, which, historically, has been characterised by multiple overlapping systems of social authority and normative regimes, the notion of the 'good citizen' who polices him or herself in terms of a set of legal norms and values concordant with liberal democracy is problematic (Pillay 2008).

Moreover, as Michael Neocosmos (2006) has pointed out, the way in which citizenship has been constructed in post-apartheid South Africa has been fundamentally 'passive', with indigeneity (birth within the territory of South Africa) conferring the status of 'citizen' rather than a more active conception of citizenship that existed during the period of struggle against the apartheid state, when political agency formed the fulcrum of political identity. Thus, Neocosmos (2006, p 16) argues, 'the state sees citizenship being concerned with a territory under its control ... in its form of indigeneity, citizenship is given by birth and territory, not political agency and is underlined by state power'.

According to Patrick Heller (cited in Chipkin 2009, p 7) while, 'democracy in South Africa may be consolidated ... it is not "effective", by which he means that South African citizens, especially the most subordinate, like those in India, do not have the means actually and effectively to exercise their civil and political rights'.

Chatterjee, in a characterisation that resonates strongly with South African social conditions, argues that '[m]ost of the inhabitants of India are only tenuously, and even then ambiguously and contextually, rights-bearing citizens in the sense imagined by the constitution' (2001b, p 38). The state relates to these residents not as active citizens but as the passive recipients of state 'care' and 'control'. This attitude is linked to the particular form the state is increasingly taking in India and in the globalising world more generally, which is related to

the rise to dominance of a notion of governmental performance that emphasizes the welfare and protection of populations and the 'pastoral' functions of government, as Michel Foucault called it using similar governmental technologies all over the world but largely independent of considerations of active participation by citizens in the sovereignty of the state.

Chatterjee 2001a, p 14

As Yunus Carrim (2010) wrote in relation to South African citizens' involvement in violent community protests:

It reflects a far more fundamental alienation of people from our democracy. It suggests an acute sense of marginalisation and social exclusion ... Many of the protestors are alienated from the state as a whole, not just local government, and not just the whole state, but from society too.

Similarly, Žižek interprets the violence associated with civil unrest in Paris in 2005, primarily committed by first- and second-generation immigrant youth from poor neighbourhoods, in terms of the experience of exclusion. This violence, like that in India and, indeed, in South Africa, occurs in a realm of pure mediality, critically a pure mediality that is born out of social and political exclusion.

For Žižek the violence committed by immigrants in Paris was not the result of clearly identifiable political or social objectives but was, above all, about a struggle to achieve visibility. This was about a group which saw itself as excluded from the political and social space proper and wanted to 'render its presence palpable to the general public' (Žižek 2008, p 65). 'Their aim was to *create* a problem, to signal that they were a problem that they could no longer be ignored' (p 66). 'Here the medium was the message' (p 66). He uses Lacan's notion of a 'passage à l'acte' – an impulsive movement into action which can't be translated into speech or thought and carries with it an intolerable weight of frustration' (p 65), to describe this 'pure' violence.

The problems in the run-up to the 2009 elections prompt Booysen (2009, p 9) to ask 'a pivotal question about South African democracy', namely, whether the 'degrees of acceptance' of the 'rules of the game' would now be under threat as a result of the entrance of Cope into the electoral contest, which introduced the possibility of an apparently substantive challenge to the ANC's hegemony in the country. Notwithstanding the assumption that the 'rules of the game' have in fact been institutionalised beyond the procedural exercise of the vote every five years, this conception of elections and, indeed, the political domain, in terms of the norms of law, where codes of conduct and legal prescription can obviate conflict, renders violence in the political domain inexplicable.

Mouffe, in this vein, warns of the danger of reducing politics to an exchange of opinions rather than a power struggle. 'The danger of conceiving of democratic politics as a dialogue is that we may forget its primary reality remains strife' (Perry Anderson, cited in Mouffe 2000, p 51).

It is this economistic and legalistic conception of society and politics that has made it difficult for South African analysts to locate elections effectively in the larger political domain and to understand their complex and often tenuous relationship to the mediation of conflict in all areas of social life. What the liberal paradigm, which sees the political in terms of competing 'interests' in a neutral terrain (Mouffe 2000, p 52), is unable to engage with is the ambiguity of the domain of the political and, even more critically for our purposes, the inherently conflictual nature of democratic politics (Mouffe 2000), which liberal thought assumes can be managed and regulated through electoral procedure, if played by the correct 'rules'.

As Mouffe (2000) has argued, what characterises modern democracy is the articulation between two different political traditions, namely classical democracy, whose core values – equality and popular sovereignty – are different from those of the liberal tradition, which emphasises individual liberty and human rights, with which it has been articulated since the time of the democratic revolutions. Mouffe points out that the union of these traditions in Western democracies was contingent, historical and the result of protracted struggles. 'Through such an articulation ... liberalism was democratized and democracy liberalized' (p 3).

In Africa, there was no similar organic coincidence of these two traditions. The form of liberal democracy represented by multiparty elections came to the continent belatedly, although its traditions and ideas have had a much longer history there. On the other hand, the struggle against colonialism meant that popular sovereignty was foregrounded as the primary goal of national liberation movements. The articulation between these two traditions, therefore, has been

even more contingent and complex on the African continent and its tensions are evident in contemporary South Africa.⁶

Critically, the two traditions operate in terms of two different logics.

[...] democratic logics always entail drawing a frontier between 'us and them', those who belong to the demos and those who are outside it. This is the condition for the very exercise of democratic rights. It necessarily creates a tension with the liberal emphasis on the respect of 'human rights', since there is no guarantee that a decision made through democratic procedures will not jeopardize some existing rights. In a liberal democracy limits are always put on the exercise of sovereignty of the people ... in the name of liberty.

Mouffe 2000, p 4

Agamben and others have identified the critical uncertainty that is introduced by the principle of the sovereignty of 'the people', which requires a constant process of definition and redefinition of the boundaries of the people in whom sovereignty will be vested, based on a distinction 'us and them', bare life (excluded from the *polis*) and political life, which 'has to redefine and purify itself continuously according to exclusion, language, blood and territory' (Agamben 2000, p 30). Thus, while normative liberal conceptions of the political domain assume that conflict can be mediated through administration and regular elections, which allow people to 'choose' their political representatives in a 'neutral playing field', in fact these undoubtedly important processes are intricately co-ordinated with a deeper struggle for sovereignty that attempts to define the limits of the *demos* in struggles that are often bloodily enacted in violence against an 'other'; what Agamben calls *homo sacer* (sacred man), the bandit who exists in a liminal state between simple animal life and political life, 'the outlaw, the *Friedlos*, or the convict, [is] historically the symbol of the outside upon whose body and life the boundaries of the political community could be built' (Hansen & Stepputat 2005, p 15).

Partha Chatterjee (2001a) has sought to articulate these struggles that occur outside the law and constitution among people who are formally citizens but in fact exist on the boundaries of the political domain, the liminal space occupied

6 At the time of writing such tensions have been made explicit in the South African context by the attempt by the ANC to put in place measures to regulate press 'freedom' in the 'national interest'. These controversies speak to the tension between the liberal tradition, emphasising constitutional values such as freedom of expression, and the classical democratic tradition, which emphasises the sovereignty of the people, represented by the ruling political party.

by *homo sacer*. These exclusions of citizenship, he argues, underpin the emergence in India of what he calls, 'political society', which occupies a zone between, 'the state on the one hand and civil society as bourgeois society on the other' (p 8).

In this context, there has been a 'widening of the arena of political mobilization ... from formally organized structures, such as political parties with well-ordered internal constitutions and coherent doctrines and programmes, to loose and often transient mobilizations, building on communication structures that would not ordinarily be recognized as political' (Chatterjee 2001a, p 14).

This is 'a domain of politics that is located neither within the constitutional limits of the state nor in the orderly transactions of bourgeois civil society, even though it is about both' (p 16). Critically, Chatterjee argues, 'political society' exists in a 'normatively nebulous zone', a zone of violence and 'disorder'.

This is a zone where ... the certainties of civil and social norms and constitutional proprieties are put under challenge. Rights and rules have to be, seemingly, negotiated afresh. Only those voices are heard that can make the loudest noise and can speak on behalf of the largest numbers. There is violence in the air.

Chatterjee 2001a, p 20

CONCLUSION

This article has sought to dispute normative expectations that elections can conclusively mitigate conflict in society. It questions the aspiration for consensus on which this expectation is founded, which hides the implication of power in this ostensibly 'ideology free' process. This juridical, administrative vision of the political is unable to conceptually engage with conflict within the political and social domains because it cannot recognise the struggles for popular sovereignty on which many of these, sometimes bloody, conflicts are founded. The failure to recognise the conflictual nature of democratic politics and the exclusionary citizenship generated by the drive towards 'consensus' and 'national unity' creates the space for unmediated forms of violence as citizens relegated to the margins of the *polis* violently express 'an intolerable weight of frustration' in a range of apparently irrational acts of violence.

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FUTURE IMPERFECT

The youth and participation in the 2009 South African elections

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ABSTRACT

It was widely believed that more young people would participate in the 2009 general elections than had participated in elections in the past. This conjecture was based on increased youth registration figures at certain points in the registration process. Since 2007/2008 there had been an intense focus globally on the historic election of Barack Obama as the first African American president of the United States and it was surmised that his victory would invigorate an interest in politics around the world. The Obama election campaign's extensive use of new media technologies, as well as the crafting of his central campaign message to appeal to the twin ideas of hope and change were thought to have had an invigorating impact on political idealism, political activism and political participation. This, along with other factors, it is widely claimed, had an effect on political and electoral participation in South Africa, especially among the youth. This article investigates these claims and examines trends in the participation of the youth in the four general elections held in South Africa since 1994, with a specific focus on the 2009 elections.

INTRODUCTION

Many researchers, commentators and analysts, as well as the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) itself, expected more young people to participate in the 2009 elections than had done in previous elections. Indeed, many pronounced after the election that that had been the case. Yet the facts may point to conclusions

that defy what appears to have become conventional wisdom. This article investigates the veracity of claims that youth interest and participation in the 2009 elections increased dramatically and examines trends in elections past and present.

It does so first by considering the demographic that constitutes the 'youth' and the numbers of young people eligible to vote compared to those who actually registered to vote. It is only on the basis of such comparisons that it is possible to draw relatively safe conclusions about the rate and depth of youth participation in elections and the trends over time.

Whatever the eventual turnout of the youth segment in 2009 it is true that young people registered in unprecedented numbers, signalling an interest in participating in the formal process of democratic decision-making through elections. However, data derived from tertiary institutions and data about membership of trade unions and voluntary associations present a slightly different picture – levels of participation in elections for student councils, clubs and societies are, in fact, quite low. This may be an early indicator of a level of social differentiation among young South Africans. Those who are relatively privileged because of their access to education and upward social mobility might be opting out of political and electoral processes because those processes are perceived to be inefficient, passé and ineffective in catering to the needs of such a constituency. Those who are relatively less privileged (or those who are privileged but rely on political connections for business and access to goods and services) are still keenly interested in the political process as it brings access to goods and services which they would not get were they not an intrinsic part of the political process.

In addition to the fact that socio-economic differentiation shapes political participation, racial cleavages also have an impact on political participation among the youth.

[There are] significant racial differences in attitudes within the younger generation, with black youth expressing more positive attitudes or 'democratic enthusiasm' than other population groups towards voting. The most distinct difference in the intention to vote is between young black respondents aged 18-29 of whom 67% intend to vote and 43% of similarly aged in other population groups.

Roberts & Letsoalo 2009, p 12

On 22 April 2009 South Africans voted in the country's fourth democratic, non-racial election. Many interesting events that prefigured the election may have had a significant impact on the country's socio-political dynamics. The country's president, Thabo Mbeki, had been voted out of office as African National Congress

(ANC) president and, just eight months before his term of office as head of state had come to an end, had, at the request of the party, stepped down as head of state.

His resignation was followed by the formation of the Congress of the People (Cope) led by Mosiuoa Lekota, former national chairperson of the ANC, and Mbhazima Shilowa, former Gauteng premier, both former members of the national executive committee of the ANC. The newly elected president of the ANC, Jacob Zuma, was acquitted on long-standing criminal charges just weeks before the elections. The ruling party and its allies, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) were riven with ideological and personal political differences and tensions and the pre-election buildup was characterised by a spate of (sometimes violent) protests. Notwithstanding these factors, and although the ANC's two-thirds majority was reduced, the election confirmed the dominance of the party nationally, although the opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) displaced it in the Western Cape.

In the international context, the United States of America experienced something of a revolution in its own society when it elected an African American president. In his election campaign Barack Obama introduced a new style of campaigning, with a substantial focus on attracting the votes of young people. The use of technology, especially social networking sites, in order to reach out to the youth holds important lessons for both developed and developing democratic societies. The enthusiasm generated by the Obama campaign and his subsequent election may have spurred a greater interest in politics among the youth in South Africa, and possibly worldwide, not just because of the use of technological platforms that appeal to young people but because the campaign message and the inculcation of a style and type of politics that placed the youth at the centre of social and political change attracted them.

This article seeks to explore the factors behind the apparent high youth voter turnout in South Africa in 2009, with the understanding that South Africa's youth have been and continue to be politically active, beyond participation in elections. A comparison of data on population growth, the number of young people eligible to vote, and the number who registered allows us more properly to consider the seemingly glib pronouncements that the youth demonstrated an interest and participated in large numbers in the 2009 election.

Examination of these data will also allow us to make a few preliminary and generalised findings about some trends and assist us to identify what will be required to sustain the involvement of those who are participating in elections and attract the participation of those who are not. In the process we will examine the extent to which the Obama campaign, and Obama's subsequent election, influenced the South African youth vote.

YOUTH POPULATION: PROBLEMS OF DEFINITION

The varying definitions of the term youth inevitably affect any discussion of the topic. In 2000 the United Nations defined youth as 'anyone ranging in age from 15 to 24 years' (United Nations 2000). The Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa, for the purposes of the 2004 elections, categorised youth as people between the ages of 18 and 35 (IEC 2005, p 10) but redefined the age range prior to the 2009 election to 15-29. In the National Youth Act of 1996 youth are defined as persons in the age group 14 to 35 years and it is this age bracket that is acknowledged in the National Youth Policy for 2008-2013. For the purposes of this paper the age group 15 to 34 will be used. This includes teenagers aged between 15 and 17 who are not eligible to vote since the voting age in South Africa is 18. The non-standardisation of demographic categorisations creates significant difficulties with generating comparative analyses.

Because of this lack of consensus the numbers and statistics used in this paper may not reflect accurately the actual number of young South Africans who are eligible to vote. Thus, in comparing youth voter turnout in the 1999, 2004 and 2009 national elections it is necessary to be careful when drawing definitive conclusions about the number of eligible young voters, compared to the numbers who registered. These data are critical if we are to draw appropriate conclusions about the participation of young people.

Many developing countries, including South Africa, have young populations because of recent decades of high fertility along with improvements in child survival rates. Indeed, of the 40.6 million South Africans enumerated in 1996, 16.1 million (40%) were people in the age bracket 14 to 35 (Statistics South Africa 2001). Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) recorded an estimated population of 49.3 million in 2009 as per medium variant (StatsSA 2009), of whom 15.5 million (31%) were in the age group 15-34 (StatsSA 2009). The proportion of youth thus decreased by 9 per cent between 1996 and 2009, however the statistics reveal that South Africa's population is still very young. Consequently, a high number of young people would be expected to register to vote, although this does not indicate that the percentage of youth participating in elections has increased.

Table 1
Registered voters

Age band	1999	2000	2004	2006	2009
18-29	5 834 918	5 361 326	5 877 131	5 492 072	6 283 630
All registered	18 172 000	18 472 00	20 674 926	21 054 957	23 174 279

Source: IEC *South African Voter Registration Case Study* 24 October 2007

As Table 1 shows the IEC recorded a total of 18.1 million South Africans registered ahead of the 1999 general election, 20.6 million for the 2004 elections and more than 23 million for the 2009 elections. In 2009, according to the IEC, 'about 27% of the total registered voters were constituted of youth voters'.¹

Statistics of registration of young people aged between 18 and 29 show an increase. In 2009, 6.3 million young people were registered, whereas in 2004 and 1999 the figure was 5.8 million.² In 2004 the Chief Electoral Officer, Advocate Pansy Tlakula (IEC 2005), announced that '9.2 million of registered voters, representing 44.47% of all registered voters, were youth voters' (between the ages of 18 and 35). These data cannot be compared with those recorded in 1999 and 2009 as there are no data for the age group 18-35; however, 43 per cent of youth actually voted in the 1999 election (Misra-Dexter 2009).

The increase in voter registration may not indicate increased political interest, it may merely reflect population growth (Kotze 2010, p 28). Similarly, in the absence of an exit poll, it is difficult to establish whether the high youth registration figures translated into an increase in the total number of young voters. If more than 23 million people registered to vote in the 2009 general election and only 17.9 million actually voted, more than 5 million registered but did not vote. The increase in the overall voting population may have had an impact on the increase in youth registration but not necessarily on turnout.

Table 2
National election data, 1994-2009

	1994	1999	2004	2009
Registered voters		18 172 751	20 674 926	23 181 997
Ballots cast	19 533 498	16 228 462	15 863 558	17 919 966
Voter turnout		89.30%	76.73%	77.30%
Valid ballots	19 340 417	15 977 142	15 612 671	17 680 729
Spoilt ballots	193 081	251 320	250 887	239 237
% spoilt	0.99%	1.55%	1.58%	1.34

Source: Table compiled from data sources for each election listed by year (<http://electionresources.org/za/>)

1 Documented correspondence detailing registered voters between age 18 -29 by election year for 1999, 2004 and 2009, between Zandile Bhengu and IEC official Brian Heuvel on 8 December 2009.

2 Ibid.

Although there was a general increase in youth registration ahead of the 2009 elections and despite the fact that the polls indicated an increase in the number of young people who voted this cannot be used as a definite indication of a high youth voter turnout.

Interestingly, while voter registration has increased, Table 2 illustrates that voter turnout has decreased. The overall turnout for the national and provincial elections was 77.30% in 2009, compared to 76.73% in 2004, 87.9% in 1999 and 85.8% in 1994. The reason for the declining voter turnout may be found in South Africa's history. The 1999 election was only the second multiparty democratic non-racial election since the end of apartheid. This was a time of heightened political interest because of the dramatic changes sweeping through society, which could point to higher levels of political interest and thus voter turnout. Over the years people tend to lose interest in elections and government as the gap between them and the governments they elect widens.

A survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in 2005 found that

age is a critical factor in the proportion of people that [are] registered as voters. Whereas over 90% of people aged 35 or older were registered, this is the case with only 86% in the 25-34 year category. Most noticeable is the 49% level amongst the youngest (18-24) age group. More than half of the 18-24 year olds were thus not registered as voters.

HSRC 2005, p 14

A lack of interest in voting was cited as the main reason for the low registration rate in this (18-29) age cohort. This appears to indicate that interest in voting comes with maturity, since more people register as they approach their 30s. This view is confirmed by HSRC data from 2008 when it was found that:

the predominant reasons cited by 18-29 year-olds indicating that they will not vote are lack of interest. In the 18-29 age category 53% cited a 'lack of interest in voting' as opposed to 17% who failed to register as voters, 16% who lacked an I.D. book and 11% who are disillusioned with politics.

Roberts & Letsoalo 2009, p 12

ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRACY

Elections do not always contribute to the consolidation of democracy. Low youth turnout at polling stations should not necessarily be equated with politically

inactive youth. It may mean that young people are not interested in formal electoral processes and structures. Elections in South Africa have not always been an indication of democracy. During apartheid only whites could vote, and later Indians and coloureds had a limited franchise in a tri-cameral parliamentary system with each chamber representing one race and the whole co-ordinated by a President's Council. Most Indian and coloured South Africans rejected or simply did not participate in this system, as evidenced by the 'extremely low turnout levels for tri-cameral elections' (South African History Online). The large scale rejection of the system of limited and qualified 'own affairs' franchise by Indians and coloureds and the continued disenfranchisement of Africans meant that the majority of the black population had no experience of electing a truly representative government. Despite this, they remained politically engaged and mobilised, with those in exile participating in underground politics and those inside the country taking politics to the streets and confronting the apartheid system.

The popular adage 'elections are not an end itself, but a means to an end' means there are other ways to enhance and enjoy democracy. Brigalia Bam, chairperson of the IEC asserted that 'voting is just a single note in an orchestra of democracy. Free and fair elections, freedom of expression, equality before the law and due process are all aspects of democracy that we should not forget' (IEC 2009c). In addition, the enjoyment of fundamental political and socio-economic rights, a vibrant vigorous civil society and a democratic politics that extends beyond the way in which a state is managed and administered lend themselves to instilling a substantive democratic culture rather than merely a formalist, procedural democratic system.

While the systemic aspects of democracy are important to young people, hence the clamour for inclusion in institutions, the democratic goods that make society a space for vibrant expression and contestation appear to be equally important. This does not necessarily mean that elections and the vote are not taken seriously.

'In successive elections, large numbers of citizens endured considerable inconvenience to vote in a context in which the results were a foregone conclusion, and in which there was therefore no instrumental rationale for bothering to vote' (Friedman 2005, p 765, citing Friedman 1999).

It can then be safely assumed that citizens voted because they wished to express themselves, not purely to serve an instrumental purpose. Voting then assumes a symbolic purpose, beyond that of its instrumental utility to achieve some electoral outcome or to procure access to certain goods and services. It is important in that it allows

citizens to express themselves and is a significant indicator of the extent to which citizens view themselves as a part of the political process. It is, as is ordinarily understood, to be a mechanism for representation for citizens, and an opportunity for political parties to gain and fulfil the representative function in democratic institutions by winning seats in order to articulate the aspirations and interests of its constituents. The vote, or an election, amongst other things, is the first and most fundamental premise in any conceptualisation of a democracy.

Fakir 2007, p 17

As evidence below demonstrates, however, for young people a democratic vote is tied to the achievement of the instrumental purpose of finding youth representation in political office and in the claims that the youth wish to make on the state by seeing their demands reflected in policy. In addition, it appears that young people, as the evidence below suggests, expect to find other young people occupying executive positions in government institutions.

THE YOUTH AND SOUTH AFRICA'S POLITICAL HISTORY

Many interesting events which preceded the 2009 elections may have had a significant impact on socio-political dynamics in the country and on the aspirations, desires and needs of the youth.

During the apartheid era young people played a significant role in weakening the system and exposing its vulnerability. The youth became mobilised in the face of a 'new South Africa', spearheaded by the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO). As Straker (1992, p 19) argues, they 'saw themselves as leading the older generation to freedom'. The 1976 Soweto uprising is just one example of this.

Participation in the anti-apartheid struggle afforded young people (as well as their elders) the power to exert their vision of freedom, power and influence over their own lives. The ANC military wing, for instance, largely consisted of young people. Political participation was the norm and abstention was 'the exception rather than the rule' (Straker 1992, p 19). The political environment at the time demanded that young people render the system of apartheid ungovernable, especially in the 1980s. The dawn of democracy, however did not reward this group with the formal and socio-political space to participate in the construction of the post-1994 democratic governance system and its institutions.

The ANC-aligned Mass Democratic Movement, and the ANC in particular, drew its major support from three components, namely the ANC Youth League, the ANC Women's League (ANCWL) and the workers, under Cosatu's umbrella.

The struggle yielded results for the women's league, with an equity quota on the ANC's electoral list, as well as other quotas for the representation of women in public as well as party positions. Currently, women occupy high positions in all branches of government.

There have been tangible benefits for workers, too. Their engagement in popular struggle has led to the introduction of a labour regulatory regime which sets out basic worker rights and benefits and introduces minimum wages. In addition, 'worker unions have played a strong role in deploying unionists as public representatives at all levels' (Sachs 2005). Unlike these sectoral constituencies, the youth, it can be argued, have not benefited to any great extent. Youth representation lags behind that of women and workers. Michael Sachs, a former researcher for the ANC, argues that it is not that the youth are apathetic about politics but rather that 'democratic institutions have failed to engage them, the youth have given expression to their profound optimism and energy by politicising the cultural sphere' (Sachs 2005).

Whatever the eventual turnout of the youth segment in the 2009 elections, registration was high, signalling some interest in the elections as an instrument of political contestation, an important indication that they are interested in participating in the formal process of democratic elections. However, data about participation derived from electoral processes and membership of union structures present a slightly different picture. At tertiary institutions levels of participation in elections for student councils, clubs and societies are quite low. By way of example, there was a turnout of 23 per cent in the 2009 student representative council (SRC) elections at the University of the Witwatersrand and 25 per cent at the Durban University of Technology.³ The low turnout is said to have been caused by the failure of the SRCs to transcend political rivalries and differences to represent all students no matter their political affiliations (IEC 2007a).

A survey conducted by the National Labour and Economic Development Institute indicates that 40 per cent of young workers do not belong to unions (Cosatu press statement 15 June 2010). More worryingly, 40 per cent of young people between the ages of 18 and 24 are not employed, studying, or in workplace training and are not affiliated to labour unions (Cosatu press statement 15 June 2010) or student unions or are likely to be members of other clubs and societies because of their limited access to post-matriculation education and employment opportunities.

This might, in part, serve to explain the participation of inordinate numbers of

3 e-mail correspondence between Zandile Bhengu and Bafana Nhlapo, SRC president at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 12 August 2010 and correspondence between Zandile Bhengu and Malusi Phakamani Nxumalo, SRC manager at the Durban University of Technology, 12 August 2010.

young people in driving the increasingly violent protests and direct citizen action mushrooming across large parts of South Africa and may also serve to explain their low levels of membership of trade unions, clubs and societies as well as of political parties, all of which have traditionally served as agents of political and other forms of socialisation. The failure to socialise citizens, particularly young citizens, effectively has led to increasingly antisocial behaviour among the youth and, more particularly, to the inability of political parties, trade unions and clubs and societies to encourage young people to participate in formal political and decision-making processes.

These statistics may also be early indicators of a level of socio-economic differentiation among young South Africans. Those who are relatively privileged because of their access to education and upward social mobility might be opting out of political and electoral processes because those processes are perceived to be inefficient, passé and ineffective in catering to their needs. However, those who are relatively less privileged (or those who are privileged but rely on political connections for business and access to goods and services) remain keenly interested in the political process as it brings access to goods and services they would not receive were they not an intrinsic part of the political process.

During a Youth Day rally in Katlehong in June 2009 President Jacob Zuma stated that 'while the government was doing its best to improve the conditions of the youth, it was also the responsibility of young people to participate' (*The Star*, 17 June 2009). ANC Youth League (ANCYL) president Julius Malema challenged Zuma, saying it was time for the government to be more responsive to the challenges faced by the youth in exchange for the youth's participation and support. Malema further said that youth votes were explicitly given to Zuma in exchange for (or payment through) 'free education, quality jobs with proper salaries and better working conditions' (*The Star*, 17 June 2009).

On the occasion of youth day Malema, Zuma, and Helen Zille of the Democratic Alliance (DA) all focused attention on the formation of the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), an amalgamation of the Umsobomvu Youth Fund and National Youth Commission. According to Malema, the predecessors of the NYDA 'were useless and served friends, boyfriends and girlfriends of those who occupied senior positions' (*The Star*, 17 June 2010). He implored the newly formed NYDA to 'open doors for young people' (*The Star*, 17 June 2010). Helen Zille had no such hopes for the NYDA, anticipating that it would repeat the mistakes of previous government youth initiatives. She, described it as a partisan political structure rather than an organisation committed to the development of all young people, stating that it was bound to 'perpetuate patronage schemes for ANC loyalists' (*Mail&Guardianonline*, 16 June 2009). Zille further criticised the appointment of Andile Lungisa, deputy president of the ANCYL, as chairperson

of the NYDA, as a fundamental mistake (*Mail&Guardianonline*, 16 June 2009) which would serve directly to politicise a government structure intended to serve a public youth constituency rather than merely a politically partisan one.

While the ANCYL deputy president's position may, in practice, not compromise the agency's public service mandate, Zille's concern raises queries about perceptions of the separation of the ruling party from state structures and about the ability of a public agency to serve all the youth, irrespective of their political affiliations. The appointment of such a high-profile political office bearer to the chair of a government body raises the spectre of patronage being dispensed on a partisan basis. The consequences of such perceptions may be apathy among the youth generally, and especially among those who are not politically connected or members of the ruling party.

Turnout at a discussion on Youth and Electoral Democracy, in which participants were drawn from different youth organisations, was extremely low, a fact attributed to 'high disillusionment among the youth; lack of political knowledge; limited choices presented by political parties; alienation; and the unfortunate view that an individual vote does not make a difference' (IEC National Youth Dialogue 2008).

The young people who participated in the workshop refuted the idea that they are politically apathetic, arguing that their political ideas and opinions are not accommodated by political parties and state organs in a manner that is relevant (IEC National Youth Dialogue 2008).

The youth maintained that their level of participation in electoral democracy was, in part, affected by the voting age of 18, which was perceived to be too high. It was suggested that the voting age should be reduced to 16 to stimulate youth participation at an early age. This suggestion derived from a belief that 'youth at this age have the capacity to formulate political views and decisions' (IEC National Youth Dialogue 2008). Other complaints were that political leaders appeared to be generally unaccountable, particularly to the youth, and that a narrowing political space inhibited free participation. Participants furthermore argued that the current electoral system of proportional representation limited their ability to select representatives because the responsibility was left to the parties, of which they were not necessarily members. They also raised concerns about service delivery, namely that it is difficult to stimulate young people to participate in elections if they see no possibility of change or of benefiting from democracy. It was acknowledged that it is crucial for government to be accountable to the electorate by delivering on its promises. Political parties were criticised for only engaging the youth at election time.

Political ideology no longer appears to drive the youth into joining youth organisations to the same extent that it may previously have done, which is a

reflection of their changing attitudes and perceptions and, more importantly, of the failure of political organisations to address issues relevant to young people. Membership of youth movements has been viewed simply 'as a means of enhancing a young person's career or other prospects rather than as an opportunity to advance youth-driven ideas and policies' (IEC National Youth Dialogue 2008).

While a decline in participation in elections may indicate an absence of interest in formal political structures low turnout at the polls should not be used as a yardstick. Democracy takes different forms and there is clear evidence of youth participation in activities and initiatives that drive the policies governing young people. They are active in religious and environmental groups, which are part and parcel of a functioning civil society which caters to their needs and allows them to express themselves.

There is also considerable participation by young people in political parties. The ANCYL played a major role in ensuring the ascension of Jacob Zuma to the presidency of the ANC. Young people also played a key role in the Democratic Alliance's 2009 election campaign and have been at the forefront of calls for changes in the leadership and political culture of the Inkatha Freedom Party. These examples bolster the point made above that when the youth perceive themselves to have a direct stake in the outcome of a process their active participation tends to be high.

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH VOTING TRENDS: THE IMPACT OF THE OBAMA CAMPAIGN

Barack Obama's campaign and Obama's election as president may have influenced the South African youth vote. Prior to that election young voters were distanced from politics. In 2000 the American Political Science Association Taskforce on Civic Education emphasised the low participation of young people, maintaining that 'Current levels of political knowledge, political engagement, and political enthusiasm are so low as to threaten the vitality and stability of democratic politics in the United States' (Shea 2009). However, youth participation in the formal political setting changed dramatically in 2008, partly due to Obama's innovative campaigning methods.

The mass media are a significant force in modern culture and today's young South Africans have largely grown up in a mediated culture, constantly exposed to messages from a multitude of sources, among them television, billboards, and magazines. The Internet has become a dominating mass medium, combining the audio attributes of radio, the visuals of television and the depth of text. It is no surprise, therefore, that it is used as a significant tool in political campaigns.

The Pew Internet & American Life Project reported that 75 per cent of all Americans, or more than 147 million people, use the Internet. 'Among these are 91 per cent of people aged between 18 and 29' (Barron 2008). Obama, recognising the importance of the youth as agents of change, engaged them in the political sphere through e-mail, text messaging, Twitter and Facebook (through groups such as 'I was alive when Barack Obama was president' and 'Students for Obama', a strategy that resonated with them. Obama's message of hope, togetherness and belonging, proclaiming 'Yes we can', appealed to young voters, the majority of whom voted for the first time.

As Benoit & Benoit (2005, pp 232-234) point out the Internet enables information to be passed on to voters without a media filter and it allows campaigns to respond quickly to charges from other campaigns. It also allows candidates to send personalised messages to voters and, through chat rooms and other networks, gives voters the chance to put their own personal stamp on campaign information. The Internet as a tool in elections thus allows increased agency for both voters and parties.

Vargas (2008) illustrates the reach the mass media gave Obama's campaign team:

- An e-mail list that boasted some 13 million addresses.
- More than one million people, mostly young, signed up for Obama's text messaging programme.
- On election day everyone who signed up for alerts in battleground states received three text reminders to vote.
- More than five million people, mostly youth, signed up as supporters of Obama on social network sites.
- More than five million clicked the 'I Voted!' button on Facebook.

The innovative campaign evoked a renewed interest in politics among young people: 64 per cent of 18 to 24 year olds were first time voters, compared to just 11 per cent of all voters (Circle report 2008). In addition to providing Obama and other Democrats with strong support, young voters were unusually active during the campaign period. According to Pew's post-election survey of voters 28 per cent of young voters in battleground states said they had attended a campaign event; far more than any other age group.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

The Obama campaign was driven largely by a combination of traditional campaign strategies and the use of new media technology and social media platforms, which

have social penetration in the United States because of high connectivity rates. Apart from mobile phones, the same levels of connectivity do not apply to South Africa, where Internet access is still limited and costly. Indeed, 'statistics reveal that fewer than five million South Africans have access to the Internet' (Chutel 2009). The extent to which political parties used Obama-type campaign strategies to attract the youth vote and to spur young people to participate in the electoral process is worth considering.

Both print and broadcast media were active in covering election related issues leading up to the 2009 South African election. The two major national television stations, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and eTV, dominated the electronic media, while the main print media included *The Star*, the *Mail & Guardian*, the *Sunday Times*, *City Press* and the *Sowetan*. Media play an important role in democracies. As Roskin (1996) argues, media should transmit and provide factual information, raise awareness and, to a large extent, educate and develop critical thinking among the public'. However traditional media outlets may no longer live up to this role. As Fakir, Letsholo & Ngidi (2010, p 75) argue, 'technology has taken media to another level and that is a critical level where the youth operates. To target the youth for elections, more creativity is necessary.' The question is to what extent did the South African political parties themselves succeed in drawing in the youth innovatively?

Two significant changes in the communications environment, namely the widespread adoption of mobile telephony (Donner 2008), and the rise of social media (blogs, YouTube, Flickr, Facebook, Twitter, etc) mediated political participation during the 2009 elections, and appealed particularly to the youth. Between 2003 and 2008 the number of mobile phone subscriptions per 100 people increased from 35.9 per cent to 90.16 per cent compared to only an estimated 4.1 million internet users, fewer than 10 per cent of the population (International Telecommunication Union 2009). The lack of access to computers means many people access the Internet via their mobile phones. Kreutzer's survey (2009) of students in low-income high schools in Cape Town suggests that many young urban South Africans first accesses the Internet via their phones.

The ANC combined traditional campaign methods such as door-to-door and political rallies with new media outlets. For instance, it sent election updates to supporters who had signed up via their mobile phones. In the run-up to the 2009 elections the ANC announced that the National Prosecuting Authority had dropped criminal charges against Zuma, who was by then the ANC's presidential candidate, and encouraged supporters to visit the www.myanc.mobi website, a new mobile version of the party's 'traditional' social media portal, www.myanc.org.za. The mobi site encouraged visitors to 'Have your say. We are listening' (Walton & Donner 2009, p 5). The ANCYL 'adopted an unofficial but effective

mobile social network campaign in its drive to win over some of South Africa's 1.3 million youthful first-time voters, as did youth from the opposition party, COPE' (Walton & Donner 2009, p 5).

The ANC's social media campaign on myanc.org.za and on Facebook, YouTube, 24.com, blogs, and Twitter aimed primarily 'to engage with people who aren't necessarily going to vote for the ANC (Speed 2009 in Walton and Donner 2009, p 5). Indeed, South Africa's roughly 4 million 'traditional' Internet users are not the ANC's primary constituency, but the mobile site certainly ensured a wider reach.

The ANC, DA and Cope set up Mig33 groups, which, working via mobile phones, allows instant messaging, sharing of photographs, public chatrooms and the uploading of individual profiles. It also has a 'stadium' feature which supports mass chats among up to 5 000 individuals at one time. The ANCYL sent out messages to members about upcoming events, both virtual gatherings such as appearances by youth league leaders in the chat 'stadium' and messages to mobilise large crowds for rallies and meetings such as braais and parties associated with the ANC election campaign.

The Mig33 chat rooms were more popular than the ANC'S mobi site, perhaps because the youth are used to accessing the Internet on their phones. Mig33 was not used by the majority of ANC supporters but was successful in engaging a core group of young supporters (Walton & Donner 2009, p 8). The ANC also targeted the youth through campaigns in schools during school hours (Fakir, Ngidi & Letsholo 2010, p 104) and, together with the DA and Cope, used television advertising. Indeed, 'for the first time in SA television history political parties were allowed to campaign for the upcoming elections through TV advertisements' (Fakir, Ngidi & Letsholo 2010, p 104). They also campaigned on trains to reach the wider public.

The DA and Cope focused on building complex 'Obama-esque' websites in addition to using Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. The mobile version of the DA's website (mobi.da.org.za) was not prioritised and thus largely excluded the youth.

The IEC also employed modern technology to attract more, especially new, voters. On its website features such as 'X for democracy' educated new voters about the steps to follow to register and vote. The bright colours gave the site life and made it more appealing to young people. Voters could also check their registration status on the website. Young people had a problem with long queues and this gave them a better option. Chief electoral officer Pansy Tlakula was reported as saying: 'We call on eligible voters to finalise their details. We are grateful that people are using our internet facility and call centre. We are pleading for patience as we deal with the high volume of visits and requests for information'

(IEC 7 February 2009a). This shows that, although access to the Internet and new media is limited in South Africa, those who had that access appear to have taken advantage of it. It was reported that 'by Sunday of the last registration weekend, at midday, the IEC's website had recorded a total of 22 079 hits while the SMS facility had received 29 538 messages and 22 848 callers had contacted the Call Centre to enquire about their registration status or at which station they should register' (IEC 8 February 2009b). By the end of the two-day registration weekend the IEC had received more than 68 865 hits and the SMS facility 95 010.

A number of the IEC's voter education initiatives focused on the youth. Apart from encouraging young people to vote as a means of exercising their 'constitutional rights and as a means to have their voices heard' (IEC National Youth Dialogue 2008) the IEC selected a number of youth celebrities as election ambassadors 'who travelled the length and breadth of South Africa, talking to the youth about the importance of voting' (IEC National Youth Dialogue 2008). This initiative broke new ground in that the youth were targeted as an important part of the electorate. It might have been another reason for their high interest in the elections.

Nonetheless, the medium used in an election campaign may be less important than the content of the campaign. The Obama campaign succeeded in getting millions of young Americans voting, but it may have had a limited impact on young South Africans. Akoth (2009) argued that 'Generation Y voters in Africa constitute the largest voting segment of the population, yet power still rests with the older generation which has consistently failed to connect with them.'

Young South Africans may also feel disengaged from the policy process because they feel marginalised. Thomas E Patterson, of Harvard's 'Vanishing Voter Project', points to the importance of issues and voter concerns in relation to voter registration and the casting of ballots. Referring to the USA he explains that 'historically [people] have voted in higher numbers when the nation confronts big issues. That was as true in the late 1800s and 1930s as it has been more recently. The meltdown in the financial markets [in the fall of 2008] likely confirmed Americans' belief that 2008 was a watershed election' (Patterson 2008). Putnam (2000, p 35) takes this point further:

Very little of the net decline in voting is attributable to individual change and virtually all of it is generational ... [Moreover,] declining electoral participation is merely the most visible symptom of a broader disengagement from community life. Like a fever, electoral abstention is even more important as a sign of deeper trouble in the body politic than as a malady itself.

Consequently, the argument is that people are becoming increasingly individualised and unless issues are relevant to individuals those individuals may be largely apathetic about elections. Government has failed 'to create institutions that effectively champion the cause of the youth in such a way that their most basic aspirations assume the status of hegemony that informs and guides policy and practice of all the institutions of government and state' (Putnam 2000).

Young people were very active in the resistance to the apartheid system, took politics to the streets, and made apartheid unworkable because the system had a direct impact on their daily lives. The fact that this is no longer the case may explain why they now abstain from involvement in their schools, communities, and the nation. Another reason is that they may see formal political platforms as corrupt, ineffective, and unrelated to their deeper ideals.

However, as observed above, young people did register in relatively large numbers. Markinor's survey of interest in politics among different age groups found that 64 per cent of 18-24 year olds and 65 per cent of 25-34 year olds were very interested in politics' (Markinor 2002). A preoccupation of considerable relevance is unemployment, an issue the ANC used to attract young voters through its youth league website, featuring 'links to career guidance, youth in business and job listings such as BOSS, a database of youth-owned businesses' (Chutel 2009).

At the ANC's National General Council of 2000 it was noted that 'the youth in particular need to be mobilised behind the revolution, to which end resources must be directed at addressing issues such as high unemployment, which constrains the participation of the youth' (ANC 2000). The campaign appealed to the youth economically but did not mobilise them politically.

The ANC encouraged participation in the development of its policies and thus gave voice to its constituencies by 'inviting primarily its members, but also the public, to contribute ideas' to its manifesto (Fakir, Letsholo & Ngidi 2010, p 77). 'In November 2008 the ANC launched a public manifesto entitled "My ANC; My Vision; My Future" which invited the public to submit suggestions about what the manifesto should contain through a website, cellphone short messages (SMSs), by letter or by telephone' (Fakir, Letsholo & Ngidi 2010, p 77). Thus the youth could be involved at a thematic level and make sure that their voice was heard.

Cope largely failed to address the concerns of the youth and the DA's website did not differ from its manifesto, which concentrated on preventing the ANC from winning a two-thirds majority. It reminded the youth of its opposition status as a party that was not ready to rule by failing to address key issues such as HIV / AIDS, unemployment and crime, instead pinpointing the ANC's failures through its famous 'The Real ANC Today'. The other parties did not recognise the youth as pioneers and drivers of change and transformation – essentially as

political agents – and this grave mistake now counts as a lost opportunity for parties which might have attracted young and new voters. Campaigns should move from their rigid ideological nature to be more specific about addressing major issues affecting the youth.

The argument advanced here is that young people in South Africa have not been given sufficient political space to participate in formal democratic institutions. Institutions have been created and policy frameworks put in place, but the youth have not been sufficiently empowered to engage in these structures. Not all young people belong to political organisations such as the ANCYL. The lack of youth representation at high political level has, to some extent, discouraged them from participating in formal democratic structures. However, this does not mean that they do not use other means provided by a democracy to shape their future. In South Africa, they have held their leaders accountable through civic organisations, in which youth participation has been continuous. Organisations such as LoveLife, which promotes a positive lifestyle and has been active in spreading messages about HIV-AIDS, drug abuse and teenage pregnancy among other issues, have been youth-driven.

CONCLUSION

The notable difference between the youth of South Africa before and after 1994 lies in the form of their political participation. Previously young people were very active in the resistance to apartheid, took politics to the streets, and made the system unworkable. The youth of today participate in protests at tertiary level, in community level protests and in cultural political expression. Young people may be less affiliated to political parties but they are not necessarily less political.

Levels of participation by young people in formal political structures have been associated with their limited knowledge of politics. The Afrobarometer election survey for 2008 shows that more than 83 per cent of people support the notion of educating the youth about politics, with more than 73 per cent suggesting that schools should lead this initiative. Although young voters were satisfied with the way the elections were run they were less satisfied with their overall voting experience. Could this be because the parties did not communicate information relevant to the youth?

When politics is characterised and dominated, as has been the case in South Africa since 2006, by intolerance and factional debate, it becomes meaningful only to politicians and interested observers, and appears to become irrelevant to the youth, who do not see how their participation helps to address the challenges they face.

Internationally, the period 1995-2005 saw a growing acceptance of the importance of youth participation in decision-making, and successful efforts

to engage young people in the political process have led to improved policy formulation, adoption, implementation and evaluation. Young people appear to prefer issue-based activities and campaigns because they deal with topics that interest them. Political ideology no longer drives young people to join youth organisations as it has done in the past, which is a reflection of the changing attitudinal and perceptual nature of young people and, more importantly, of the failure of political organisations to interpolate the youth into their ideological and political platforms.

The 2008 presidential campaign in the US complemented traditional forms of campaigning with extensive use of new media technologies and social networking sites. Obama's campaign strategists seemed to have understood the importance of the youth as agents and organs of change and of the instruments they use to discuss these matters and tailored their campaign to accord with new modes of social interaction and media consumption. In addition to simply using the tools of youth the campaign message was crafted to resonate with young Americans. Obama's message of hope, togetherness and belonging, using the proclamation 'Yes we can', appealed to young voters, the majority of whom voted for the first time. The content of the Obama campaign and its social penetration were more important than the medium used to communicate the message and managed to reach out to ordinary American who were interested in a change in the economy and in policy.

In Africa, though, where 'generation Y voters ... constitute the largest voting segment of the population, ... power still rests with the older generation which has consistently failed to connect with them' (Akoth 2008).

It is widely assumed that the Obama election campaign had an impact on the decision by young South Africans to vote. This direct attribution can be questioned on the basis, firstly, that registration may not have translated into voting. Secondly, that 'intention' to vote as an indicator of increased interest in participation is undermined in part by the demonstration that the assumed increased interest among the youth may be attributable to factors such as a consequence of the coming of (voting) age of the 1990 generation, a rise in population growth, the drive to change the democratic trends of the country's politics and the need to reverse the inequalities which affects them.

An important factor that might have been overlooked in assessing the reasons behind the high youth voter registration and (moderately high) turnout is that young South Africans have always been politically active but have expressed themselves in ways that do not always conform or restrict themselves to the formal and procedural processes of decision-making. The youth have played a major role in what appear to be continuing social protests and what has been termed xenophobic violence in South Africa in 2008, in fact, they appeared to have been

driving these protests. They have also been active in challenging the management of tertiary institutions. Youth activism cannot, therefore, be measured solely in terms of the participation of young people in the elections, there are other preferred means of participation which are less formal and driven by political ideology.

Citizens vote to express themselves, but parties largely failed to communicate messages that are of concern to the youth. Despite great efforts by the parties, particularly the ANC Youth League, through the use of new media technology, to include young people in the political process and thus encourage young voters, the future of youth participation in elections in the country is imperfect. A comparison of data on population growth, the number of youth eligible to vote and the number of those who registered has challenged the glib pronouncements that the interest and participation of the youth in the 2009 elections increased tremendously.

If young people are to be persuaded to participate in greater numbers it seems that what may be needed is dedicated strategies targeting them on the basis of racial and socio-economic differentiation. Parties may need to craft more relevant messages which resonate with the concerns of the youth, while appointments to government institutions should reflect the youth demographic where possible. More importantly, policy must be designed and implemented that is youth focused and non-partisan rather than based on patronage.

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THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS'S UNPRECEDENTED VICTORY IN KWAZULU-NATAL

Spoils of a resurgent Zulu ethno-nationalism

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ABSTRACT

This paper probes the ANC's phenomenal performance in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), where the party not only registered a rare outright majority but also experienced a stunning rise in support, while dropping support in the other provinces. Yet the ANC-dominated provincial government in KZN did not perform dramatically differently from other ANC provincial governments. The ANC's rise in KZN can be put down to a resurgent Zulu ethno-nationalism that swelled around the party's presidential candidate, Jacob Zuma. Zuma projected himself as a victim of ethnic persecution, a view assisted by the reputation of his rival in the ANC, former president Thabo Mbeki, as a scheming and cunning politician who dealt harshly with his rivals. Zuma's candidature essentially renewed the saliency of Zulu ethno-nationalism in South African politics just as it was waning.

INTRODUCTION

The 2009 elections yielded atypical results. Both the African National Congress (ANC) and the Democratic Alliance (DA), for the first time since the birth of the democratic Republic in 1994, won outright majorities, the former in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), the latter in the Western Cape. Overall, however, support for the ANC uncharacteristically dropped – by approximately 4 per cent – from

the 70 per cent it received in 2004 to 66 per cent. The party shed support in all provinces except KZN, where it surged by a staggering 17 per cent – from 47 per cent in 2004 to 64 per cent in 2009, an increase of more than double the 7 per cent it registered in the 2004 elections. In other provinces support for the ANC dropped by an average of 6 per cent.

This article explains why the result in KZN bucked the trend in the rest of the country. Essentially, it contends that the ANC benefited from a resurgence of Zulu ethno-nationalism that had been stoked up in the course of a power struggle between Jacob Zuma and Thabo Mbeki for the ANC presidency and during Zuma legal trials, as a result of which his supporters projected him as a victim of a 'Xhosa nostra', an idea that rests on the belief that the ANC is a predominantly Xhosa party and that Xhosa speakers are intent on maintaining control and, through it, dominating state institutions.

The *Xhosa nostra* idea plays on the old ethnic stereotype long peddled by the apartheid government and vigorously exploited in recent history by Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), especially in KZN. The issue even became a subject of intense discussion in the media in the late 1990s and early 2000s. During Zuma's rape trial, using Zulu tradition as his defence, Zuma transformed himself from a mere rape suspect to a cultural figure. The idea of ethnic persecution rallied Zulu-speakers, especially in KZN, where ethno-nationalism had been a strong feature of political life.

The article demonstrates the nexus between Zuma's ANC and the resurgent Zulu ethno-nationalism through empirical findings from the Afrobarometer survey conducted in October-November 2008. Zuma's transformation into a cultural figure, however, the article further argues, predates his legal travails, nor was it a situation solely of his own making. Zuma initially undertook that transformation in pursuit of a political strategy by his organisation to dispel suggestions of a Zulu-hostile ANC. By the time he got into trouble with the law he had already developed a public image as a Zulu cultural figure, but now simply exploited it to escape conviction and for personal political gain.

The article consists of three parts. The first traces how Zulu-ethno-nationalism has historically been harnessed for political gain, especially by the IFP. Thereafter, it homes in on the ANC leadership, showing how the party encouraged the evolution of Zuma's public image as a Zulu cultural figure to counter the stereotype peddled by successive apartheid governments, and recently by the IFP, that the ANC was a Xhosa-dominated organisation. It then looks at the resurgence of Zulu ethno-nationalism, sparked by the political rivalry between Zuma and Thabo Mbeki and by the legal problems Zuma ascribed to a political conspiracy. Here empirical evidence is presented illustrating the affinity of most KZN residents for Zuma, both personally and politically.

ETHNIC POLITICS IN KZN: HISTORY AND CONTEXT

The politicisation of ethnic identity has a long history in South African political life and transcends the provincial boundaries of KwaZulu-Natal. It was implanted by the Union government and perfected over the years by subsequent apartheid governments. A segment of the African elite climbed on the bandwagon, distinguishing themselves as ethnic entrepreneurs in return for patronage and, in some instances, dubious titles.

The Union government officially inaugurated the political manipulation of ethnicity in 1927 through the Native Administration Act, which redefined Africans as subjects, denying them citizenship within the South African state. Africans were declared tribesman by virtue of their African-ness. Where there was no tribe the law empowered the native commissioner to constitute one, find a village to locate it in and assign a chief to rule over it (Mamdani 1996). The African majority was thus reduced to multiple ethnic minorities which were subsequently shoved into what the apartheid government declared 'independent states', each ethnic group with its own. Speaking in 1959 the Minister of Bantu Affairs, M C de Wet Nel, put it thus:

The Zulu is proud to be a Zulu and the Xhosa proud to be a Xhosa and the Venda is proud to be a Venda, just as proud as they were a hundred years ago. The lesson we have learnt from history during the past three hundred years is that these ethnic groups, the whites as well as the Bantu, sought their greatest fulfilment, their greatest happiness and the best mutual relations on the basis of separate and individual development ... the only basis on which peace, happiness and mutual confidence could be built up.

Mare & Hamilton 1987, p 30

The Union and successive apartheid governments used tribalism as a form of political control. Whites kept 'South Africa' to themselves. The creation of multiple Bantustans, therefore, was a pretext for denying Africans the franchise while ensuring white hegemony in 'South Africa'. But African politicians soon joined the fray. Mangosuthu Buthelezi, through the Inkatha Cultural Liberation Movement, which he founded in 1975 (and renamed the Inkatha Freedom Party – IFP – in 1990), emerged in the 1980s as the most distinguished of the African ethnic entrepreneurs. Ironically, Buthelezi had formed the IFP with the encouragement of the then exiled ANC. Thabo Mbeki, then Oliver Tambo's protégé, facilitated the discussions between Buthelezi and the ANC, meeting in London, for instance, in 1972. The ANC advised Buthelezi to establish a political organisation which would

serve as an opposition to King Goodwill Zwelithini, who strongly advocated an independent KwaZulu. The ANC essentially wanted the IFP to be an ANC proxy.

Buthelezi had been a member of the ANC Youth League while studying at Fort Hare University and had even had a stint as a radical, leading to his expulsion from the university in 1950 after he punished a student who had defied a call for a class boycott by pouring water on his bed (Massey 2010). Officialdom initially looked on Buthelezi with suspicion, even subjecting him to some police harassment. A member of Zulu royalty (he is the son of Princess Magogo, daughter of the Zulu King, Cetshwayo KaMpande), the authorities delayed recognising him as a chief between 1953 and 1957, but he was eventually appointed chief minister of the Zulu Territorial Authority in 1970. He initially appeared critical of the apartheid government, opposing the idea that KwaZulu should become an independent state, while Goodwill Zwelithini supported the idea.

Thus, the ANC thought Buthelezi would be pliant. Indeed, he was, initially, but then he proposed forming a cultural organisation and Inkatha was conceived in 1975. The term Inkatha has powerful cultural symbolism. It refers to a thick ring, made up of the many strands of grass, which symbolises Zulu unity in the circle of loyalty to the king. The IFP thus expropriated Zulu cultural symbols, history, songs, dance, praises and heritage, projecting itself as the revival of a defunct Inkatha kaZulu, which had been formed in the 1920s by Zulu intellectuals, businessmen and other influential members of the Zulu community, with the blessing of King Dinizulu, to advance Zulu nationalism (Waetjen & Mare 2008).

Despite the fact that it was projected as a cultural movement Inkatha's association with the ANC was palpable. It adopted ANC colours and claimed descent from ANC icons such as John Dube, Selby Msimang, Pixley Seme and George Champion. At the time of their deaths Msimang and Champion were Inkatha members. But Buthelezi developed ambitions of his own which were quite different from the proxy the ANC had intended him to be. His became an exclusive Zulu ethno-nationalism, not the unitary African nationalism of the ANC. He positioned his party as a proponent and guardian of the Zulu 'nation' and culture. Anybody who considered him/herself a proud Zulu was encouraged, especially through the state-controlled regional media and official rhetoric, to support the IFP. Buthelezi charged that the exiled ANC had betrayed its roots, pointing especially to its pursuit of the armed struggle as a betrayal of Chief Albert Luthuli's ideal of non-violence. That betrayal, according to Buthelezi, stemmed from the fact that the organisation had been hijacked by Xhosa speakers (Harries 1993).

King Goodwill Zwelithini became central to validating the supposed nexus between Zuluness and political support for the IFP. All political organisations that opposed the IFP, especially the ANC and its affiliates, were not just political

rivals but were declared enemies of the Zulu 'nation' itself. For that claim to carry any veneer of truth the king's endorsement was critical. The logic was simple: winning over the king meant winning the Zulu nation. Zwelithini was initially resistant, insisting on the independence of KwaZulu, which Buthelezi opposed, and the royal house distanced itself from Buthelezi. The KwaZulu Legislative Authority retaliated, stripping Zwelithini of his executive powers and rendering him a toothless king. By the early 1980s, as Waetjen & Mare (2008, p 356) put it, 'King Goodwill Zwelithini had emerged a bullied man, and an essential figure in the Inkatha mobilisation of IsiZulu-speakers'. At public gatherings the king sided with Inkatha, denouncing the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) as anti-Zulu. Speaking at one public meeting in 1989, for instance, the king said:

You know that the UDF and Cosatu have come into your midst to turn you against Inkatha. Why? It is because Inkatha is led by a Zulu? I am not being party political ... Does the ANC encourage you to be Zulu, to do your Zulu thing and play your Zulu role ... What does the UDF say about your Zuluness?

De Haas 1994, p 438

Buthelezi was aware of the importance of Zulu traditional attire and often dressed like a 'true' traditional man imbued with Zulu culture and customs. By so doing, he identified with the rank and file of KwaZulu, especially the rural constituency from which Inkatha drew most of its followers. This form of symbolism is well captured in Harries's work:

At public functions, he will often wear the leopard skins and bird feathers associated with royalty. Other traditional symbols of status and power are predominantly on show: a ceremonial axe, a baton containing powerful medicines, a small cowhide shield, and a fertility necklace.

Harries 1993, p 117

It was at these public functions, often held to commemorate Zulu history, that Buthelezi recruited Zulus to form part of Inkatha. Children were inducted into Zulu ethno-nationalism while still at school. Despite the elaborate ideological persuasion, however, IFP membership was not entirely voluntary. In some instances, locals were coerced into supporting the party as membership became a pre-condition for employment in the civil service. Such ideas were also instilled

through recruitment into state/party controlled formations such as the youth brigade and the United Workers' Union of South Africa.

The post-apartheid provincial landscape thus inherited a political culture imbued with a strong dose of Zulu ethno-nationalism. It had been cunningly nurtured by the IFP, but was also forced onto the populace through control of patronage and instruments of violence. The onset of free and competitive politics would test Zulu ethno-nationalism, revealing whether it had an independent life or whether its popular expression was contrived to flatter the political elite, thereby securing employment, while also avoiding victimisation.

PERSPECTIVES ON VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN KZN AFTER 1994

To what extent, if at all, is ascriptive identity a determining factor in voters' political choices? This question remains pivotal in scholarship on South African elections. It stems partly from the saliency of identity in the history of South African political life but is also a reflection of the persistent association of certain racial or ethnic groups with specific political parties. Some political parties not only retained but renewed their racial or ethnic appeal, with the clear intention of attracting a particular ethnic or racial group. More recently, however, electoral returns have conjured up patterns showing that identification does not presuppose causality; that identity politics does not have an independent life of its own but that its influence wanes in the absence of other supporting factors; and that what appear to be identity-based voting patterns may just as easily be ascribed to other, non-identity factors.

Identity-based analysis of post-apartheid elections first gained prominence after the founding elections in April 1994. Giliomee & Schlemmer (1994) initiated the trend, declaring the results a 'racial census'. Africans had predominantly voted for historically African parties, especially the ANC, IFP and, to a lesser extent, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), whites for white parties – the National Party (NP) and the Democratic Party (DP) and coloureds for the NP. Voters' attraction to these parties was ascribed to cultural and historical affinity. An Afrikaner nationalist party, the NP, not only appealed to Afrikaners, but also resonated with coloureds due to a shared language and religion. Because they were 'brown Afrikaners' coloured voters could not bring themselves to vote for the ANC, a supposedly 'African' party. The underlying point of this argument was that voting was an emotive exercise rather than one that was rationally driven. Voters did not probe whether or not a particular party would advance their material interests but were drawn to parties whose leaders looked and spoke like them.

Taylor & Hoeane (1999) challenged this perspective, pointing instead to a correlation between class interests and the parties' policies. White suburban voters,

they argued, did not necessarily vote for the DP because of its largely liberal English (colonial) background but may equally have been enticed to the party by its advocacy of a free market economy. The ANC's promise of a redistributive agenda, they explained further, appealed to the formerly marginalised African populace that constitutes the bulk of South Africa's poor and unemployed. The results of the 1999 elections, as Cherrel Africa explains elsewhere in this issue, limited the explanatory value of the 'racial census' thesis even further. 'Coloured' voters in the Western Cape shifted from their cultural home, the National (later New National) Party, towards the supposedly 'African' ANC, making it the largest party in the Western Cape. This flew in the face of the identity-based theory of voting.

Voting behaviour in KZN, as Thabisi Hoeane points out elsewhere in this issue, also posed a particular challenge to the identity-based analyses. KZN is largely populated by Zulu-speakers, but they do not all vote the same way, being divided between the IFP and the ANC. If ethnic identity prefigured political choice the IFP should have been the largest, if not the sole recipient of votes cast by Zulu-speakers in KZN and throughout the country. The IFP, after all, as noted above, projected itself as the guardian of Zulu culture and Zulu people.

The intra-ethnic (-group) voting differences simply indicate that what appears to be ethnically determined voting behaviour may not, in fact, be that. To begin with, the parties' support is largely patterned along a rural and urban divided. The IFP's constituency is largely rural, while the ANC's is urban-based. In the Durban metropole¹ alone, in 1994, for instance, the ANC won 41 per cent of the votes cast for the National Assembly and 44 per cent of those cast for the provincial legislature, compared to the IFP's 21 per cent and 23 per cent respectively.

The scenario was similar in Pietermaritzburg, where the ANC won 180 824 votes in the provincial election compared to the IFP's 90 621. The situation was reversed in rural areas, where the IFP trounced the ANC, especially in north and central KZN. Most of the ANC's rural votes emanated from the Midlands in the south, among farmworkers and people living in freehold areas. However, subsequent elections saw the ANC reverse the IFP's dominance among rural voters and, consequently, in the province as a whole. In the 1999 elections the ANC's rural support increased to 27.54 per cent from 17 per cent in the 1996 local elections. Conversely, the IFP's rural support dropped from 77 per cent in 1996 to 66 per cent (Johnston & Johnson 1997; Randall 1998; Piper 1999). In 2004, though falling short of an outright majority, the ANC became the largest party in KZN, winning 47 per cent of the vote to the IFP's 37 per cent.

1 The Durban metropole encompassed polling stations in Durban, Chatsworth, Inanda and Pinetown.

The geographic divide related to factors beyond ethnicity that influence voting patterns in KZN. The difference between the two locations was the salience of traditional beliefs and the institution of chieftaincy, which was far more intact in the northern and central parts of the province. As a self-styled guardian of chieftaincy the IFP's leadership overlapped with tribal leadership. At the inaugural local government elections, for instance, chiefs were prominent on speakers' platforms at IFP rallies and in 1996 the IFP successfully warded off a proposal that elected councillors replace chiefs as administrators in villages (Randall 1998).

Chieftaincy has been the bedrock of the IFP and chiefs have influence over their subjects, partly because of their control of patronage, especially land allocation and access to state services. The strategy initially paid off as the IFP outperformed its chief rival in the countryside. The prevalence of no-go areas, enforced by violence, also gave one party the edge over another in political propaganda. And the ever-present threat of violence mobilised the electoral base, bringing supporters out to vote in order to keep out the rival party.

Most analyses ascribe the reversal of the electoral fortunes of both parties to the relative cessation of violence in the province. Three months before the 1994 inaugural non-racial elections, for instance, 1 000 people were killed and throughout 1995 into the first half of 1996 there was a monthly toll of 50 to 80 deaths in the province. But, violence began to wane just before the 1996 local elections and the province would remain relatively peaceful throughout. Peace cost the IFP electoral support. Johnston and Johnson (1997, p 387) explain this as follows:

During the previous trials of strength the IFP had begun by mobilizing hostel-dwellers, then sending them out to canvass support more widely in the township in their customary muscular manner ... This time, IFP critics of party strategy argued, these tactics had not been deployed and the result had been disastrous. The fact that the IFP did extremely poorly in Mpumalanga township, the scene of a famous peace pact with the ANC, was adduced as further evidence for this proposition.

Some scholars, notably Piper (1999), thus construed the relative decline of the IFP to mean that Zulu ethno-nationalism had lost its allure. Why else would KZN supporters desert the ethno-nationalist IFP for the Afro-nationalist ANC? In other words, Zulus did equate 'Zulu-ness' with political support for the IFP. Indeed developments within the IFP pointed to the relative decline of traditionalism as a legitimising force within the party. In 2005, at the insistence of the IFP Youth Brigade, the party's general secretary was elected instead of a being appointed.

Ziba Jiyane, whose candidature was based on reforming the party, won against the leadership choice and the old guard Lionel Mtshali. Party members are presently divided between the choice of Zanele Magwaza-Msibi, a woman, and Musa Zondi, a long-serving leader of the organisation, as successor to Buthelezi. Senior leaders are reportedly in favour of the latter, while the youth brigade supports Magwaza-Msibi (*City Press*, 22 November 2009).

The very fact that the two individuals, especially Magwaza-Msibi, are serious contenders for the presidency of the IFP marks a turning point in the history of the party. Though both are Zulu speaking, neither has the traditional legitimacy of Buthelezi. Both are suave urbanites, and one is a woman. Conservative beliefs have historically been resistant to female leadership. Their nomination, especially that of Magwaza-Msibi, shows that traditional beliefs are no longer the dominant source of legitimation for party leaders. The party is gradually being modernised. But the IFP's decline does not necessarily annul the relative currency of ethnic identity as a determinant of voters' political choices or its manipulation by political parties in KZN.

THE ANC AND ZUMA'S MANIPULATION OF ETHNIC IDENTITY

Ethnic identity remained politically salient even in the aftermath of the IFP's decline. But it was taken up by a different political actor, the African National Congress, initially through Jacob Zuma on behalf of the organisation. Zuma subsequently harnessed it for personal, political gain.

The ANC's deployment of Zuma in KZN from 1991 to 1999 – making him one of the few leaders with a national profile assigned to a provincial position – was calculated to pander to ethnic sentiment. All his peers, including Thabo Mbeki, Zola Skweyiya, Pallo Jordaan and Joe Nhlanhla, took prominent positions in national politics as ministers in Nelson Mandela's first Cabinet, while Zuma was serving in KZN's provincial government. His assignment to KZN was based on two main considerations: his lifestyle and the ANC's rivalry with the IFP in KZN.

The IFP's electoral advantage over the ANC, especially between 1994 and 1996, as noted above, partly stemmed from its influence over the Zulu monarch, Goodwill Zwelithini, and the portrayal of the ANC as anti-Zulu or Xhosa-dominated. Most worrying to the ANC, however, was the political violence between ANC and IFP supporters that raged through the province (fanned by reactionary elements within the police system), which the ANC partially ascribed to the IFP's vilification of it as anti-Zulu.

In the ANC's view two things had to happen if it was to reverse this trend: the king must be wrested from the IFP and the party must cultivate an image

that resonated with some of the province's ethnically conscious voters. Zuma was instrumental to that strategy succeeding. Though Zulu themselves, none of the local politicians had the profile to pacify the monarch or soften the ANC's image among those who believed it was a Xhosa-dominated party. Other ANC provincial leaders shared the modern and anti-tradition image associated with the ANC and the UDF but Zuma was viewed differently. He represented the traditional elements of the ANC, especially Zulu tradition. He is a polygamist who still keeps a residence at his birthplace, Inkandla, which he visits regularly. Despite numerous years of exile, he has remained eloquent in the vernacular and is fond of singing Zulu folk songs. He was a regular feature at the traditional celebrations, dressed in traditional attire with a spear in his hand, even after he had left provincial politics for the national scene as deputy president of the country (Ndletyana, 2007).

Zuma projected to a suspicious 'Zulu' public and the king the non-threatening face of the ANC. He made regular public appearances alongside the king and made statements drawing close links between the ANC and the Zulu monarch. At a memorial function for one of the Zulu kings, Dinuzulu kaMpande, Zuma said:

The hardships and suffering that King Dinuzulu went through for his people did not go unnoticed by the first liberation movement in Africa, the African National Congress. It was because of his opposition to white rule and his principled stand against colonialism that the ANC, when it was formed in 1912, made him a patron of the organisation, together with other traditional leaders of Southern Africa, like King Sobhuza and Moshoeshoe. The ANC respected the institutions of African traditional leadership as it continues to do so even today. King Dinuzulu supported the ANC and the ANC supported him.

www.gov.za/presidency

One of the results of Zuma's rapprochement, according to Sunday newspaper *City Press* (12 January 2003) was

... ensuring Mandela held one of the first important meetings with the Zulu monarch at the king's KwaKhangela palace near Nongoma in 1996 where Mandela conveyed his desire to see Zwelithini calling an imbizo that would hopefully reconcile rival political parties in the province.

The report continued:

Zuma found himself being embraced not only by Zwelithini but became the only ANC leader who could move around with relative ease between Zulu traditional chiefs and indunas without causing consternation among them ... He would wear Zulu traditional garb without anyone doubting his intentions.

City Press 12 January 2003

As a result of his political interaction with Zuma, King Zwelithini subsequently played an impartial role in the inter-party rivalry between the ANC and IFP, associating equally with the leaders of both parties, thereby reducing the perception that the ANC was less Zulu or was a nemesis of Zulus. The most notable sign of improved relations was the king's presentation of the inaugural King Shaka Award to Nelson Mandela in 2001 in recognition of his sterling efforts to bring about peace and democracy, a far cry from the time when Zwelithini would not even meet Mandela.

Fearing that it was losing the contest over royal influence to the ANC, the IFP, which was the dominant partner in the provincial government, countered, in 2003, by cutting down the budgetary allocation to the royal house and refusing to settle the R93 834 bill for the king's son's school fees, resulting in the school suing the king. The ANC reacted furiously to the incident, denouncing it as a deliberate act of 'humiliation' of the king by the then IFP controlled provincial government (www.anc.org.za).

The ANC's subsequent electoral gains in KNZ were a huge credit to Zuma, who deprived the IFP of one of its major weapons, the claim that the ANC was anti-Zulu. However, once the rivalry between himself and Thabo Mbeki ensued Zuma resorted to manipulating ethnic stereotypes, casting himself as the victim of an ethnic purge. To be sure, the 'ethnic card' was handed to him by the content of e-mail messages that were allegedly fabricated by Mziwamadoda Kunene, an information technology expert allegedly contracted by the National Intelligence Agency (NIA).

According to Kgalema Motlanthe, then secretary-general of the ANC, the e-mails were left outside his office at the ANC's headquarters, in a brown envelope. Allegedly written by Mbeki's close allies, including Bulelani Ngcuka, Sakkie Macozoma and Mzi Khumalo, they detailed a plot to block Zuma's ascendancy to the ANC presidency. The 'conspirators' allegedly referred to Zuma as 'Zulu-boy', a reference to his ethnicity. Macozoma, who later quit the ANC for the Congress of the People, dismissed the e-mails as a 'hoax'. In an interview with a *Mail & Guardian* journalist, Mandy Roussow, Macozoma lamented:

The secretary general, Kgalema [Motlanthe] at that time, put it into the public domain even though his common sense would have told him it was a hoax. And even after repeated attempts to try to defuse the situation, it became very clear to me that there was no room for someone like me in the ANC.

There is a lot of emotion when your comrades turn against you [because] they don't agree with your view. When they concoct hoax emails that are obviously untrue and then use that as evidence against you, that is really painful to go through.

Mail & Guardian 9 March 2009

Zuma's legal defence and campaign for the ANC presidency latched onto the alleged reference to Zuma's ethnic identity, projecting him as the victim of an anti-Zulu campaign, while his strategists argued that his trial on rape allegations was part of a political conspiracy hatched by his opponents. Mbeki had built up some notoriety within the ANC as a scheming, ruthless opponent – a perception on which Zuma's campaign sought to capitalise.² The fact that the alleged rape victim had been advised by Ronnie Kasrils, an Mbeki ally, to lay a charge gave the 'conspiracy theory' a veneer of truth. Zuma's supporters, therefore, saw both the rape trial and the subsequent corruption trial as part of an anti-Zuma campaign driven by anti-Zulu sentiment.

Zuma bolstered the notion of an ethnic attack during his rape trial, explaining some of his actions as stemming from Zulu tradition. Albeit fluent in English, which was evident when he corrected the interpreter during the court proceedings, Zuma elected to speak in IsiZulu. Upon being asked why he had not used a condom despite the fact that he knew the woman was HIV-positive, he responded that to look for one would have meant leaving the woman in a highly aroused state, which was against Zulu tradition (Gordin 2008).

Zuma's 'Zulu-ness' played a prominent role in his trials, a factor which transformed him from a mere accused to a cultural figure persecuted because of his ethnicity. Members of the Zulu-speaking community were mobilised around his person in a number of ways. T-shirts bearing Zuma's face and proclaiming

2 Earlier in 2002, for instance, Mbeki, and Steve Tshwete, then Minister of Safety and Security, went on public television accusing Cyril Ramaphosa, Mathews Phosa and Tokyo Sexwale of plotting to oust Mbeki as president of the country. In doing so, Mbeki disregarded the advice of the then Minister of Intelligence, Lindiwe Sisulu, that the information was false. Most analysts believe Mbeki knew the information was false, but his strategy was geared to forcing the three individuals, all of whom, particularly Ramaphosa, were potential rivals, to deny any aspirations to leadership. They did precisely that but Mbeki was later forced to apologise for having accused them falsely.

'100% Zulu-boy' proliferated and multiple *Maskande* (Zulu traditional songs) were composed in his honour, including the popular *Izintombi Zoma* and *Phuzekhemisi* and became instant hits. *Izintombi Zoma's* song, *Msholozzi*, named after Zuma's clan-name in an album similarly titled, goes:

Bonke abantu bathi bafun' uZuma apha, abe nguRhulumente eSouth Africa. Abawaboni amacala agwetshwa ngawona. Amacala anawo makasulwe, uZuma abe nguRulemeni. Epalemente abavumi ukuth' uZuma abe nguRhulumeni. Kanti uzoba lisekelu kuze kubenini. Khululan' uZuma azo phatha. Umadiba wathi umakuphuma yena Umsholozzi ayophatha.

Everyone says they want Zuma to be president of South Africa. They don't recognise the charges that have been laid against him. Those charges should be withdrawn so that Zuma can become president. But those in parliament don't want Zuma to become president. How long can he remain deputy president? Set Zuma free so that he can become president. Even Mandela said when he leaves the presidency Msholozzi [Zuma] should take over.

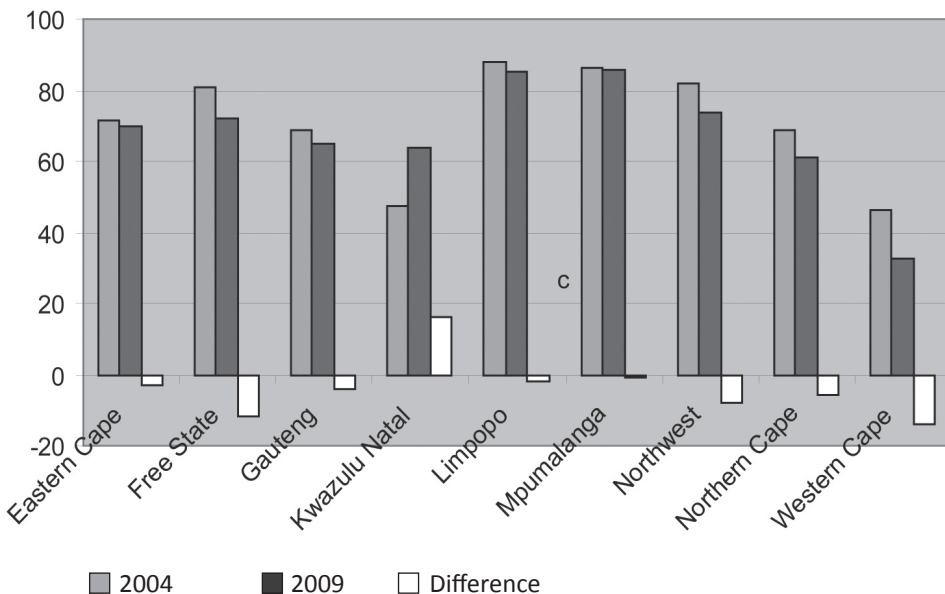
The anti-Zulu conspiracy theory lent credence to the then ongoing public debate about the alleged *Xhosa nostra* within the ANC and state institutions. According to this view, Xhosa-speakers were conspiring to preserve both the party and the public sector as their own domain of employment and influence, excluding other ethnic groups (*Pretoria News* 4, June 2002). The ANC even expressed concern, at its June-July 2005 National General Council meeting, that some of its members were resorting to ethnic mobilisation to gain positions. A discussion document, titled 'The National Question', noted:

Others engage in low-intensity tribal mobilisation, including in order to lobby support for positions in the ANC and in government. During the debate about provincial boundaries, tribal mobilisation took place among supporters of all parties, including the ANC. It was a rude reminder when even some of the most seasoned cadres of the liberation movement took positions on provincial boundaries based on tribal affiliation. Today it has become a habit among some to count the number of amaXhosa in the public service and in government. Accusations are made that many ministers and directors-general tend to appoint their own kind.

The suggestion that Zuma was the victim of an anti-Zulu campaign boosted his candidature for the ANC presidency and subsequently helped the ANC in the general elections, with ANC members and the general populace of KZN rallying around him. Branch nominations for the ANC's 2007 elective conference returned Zuma with a whopping 580 votes to Mbeki's nine (*Mail & Guardian* 30 November 2007). Of a total of 1.6 million new voters registered by the IEC in November 2008, 451 030 were in KZN, contributing to making the registration drive "the most successful ... since 2000", according to IEC chairperson Brigalia Bam (*The Star* 13 November 2008).

In the 2009 elections the ANC won an outright majority in KZN for the first time. Although the party had gradually been gaining electoral support in the province – in 2004 it emerged as the largest party – its 2009 margin was phenomenal. It won the province by an impressive 64 per cent – a gigantic leap from the 47 per cent it had won in 2004. The KZN result was unique in an election in which support for the ANC dropped by an average of 6 per cent in the other eight provinces. Habib (2009) estimated that had it not been for the surge in KZN, the ANC's national support would have dropped below 60 per cent.

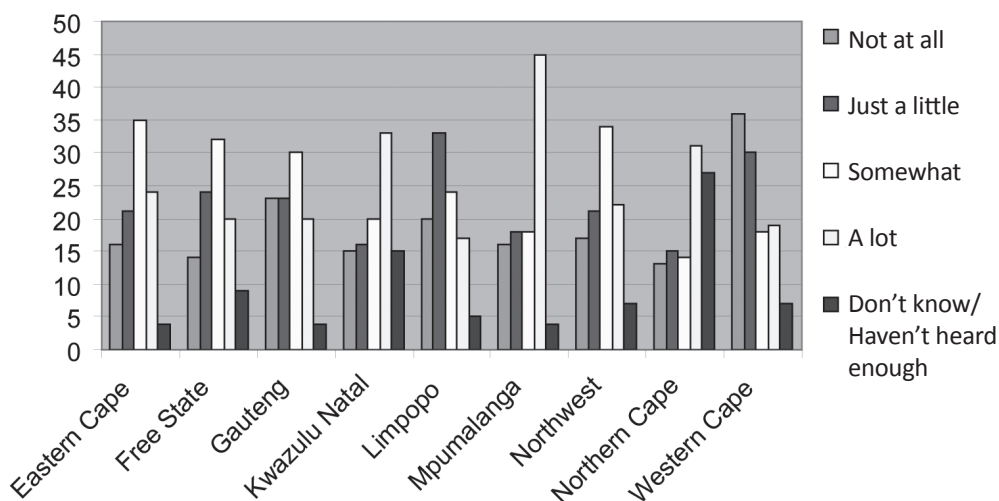
Figure 1
Electoral support for the ANC, 2004 and 2009



These results were obtained despite the fact that the KZN provincial government, which was predominantly ANC, had not performed discernibly differently from or better than other ANC provincial governments. In fact, the Afrobarometer survey revealed that while 60 per cent of respondents in North West province approved of the performance of the ANC premier, Edna Molewa, only 59 per cent of those in KZN approved of the ANC's Sbu Ndebele.³ The ANC's massive spike, therefore, had little, if anything, to do with the way people perceived the party's performance in provincial government.

Rather than relating to the popularity of the party itself, the electoral spike is related to the affinity for Zuma. Seventy per cent of the residents in the province said they trusted Zuma 'somewhat' to 'a lot', compared to 53 per cent who expressed trust in the ANC. KZN and Mpumalanga are the only two provinces where more people trusted Zuma than they did the ANC (See Figure 2). Friedman (2009, p 116) thus concludes: 'Some voters probably vote ANC because Zuma is Zulu'. This partly explains why most residents in the province were sympathetic towards Zuma during his trials.

Figure 2
Levels of trust in the ANC



3 The findings reported here are drawn from the fourth Afrobarometer survey conducted in South Africa in October and November 2008. The survey was based on a nationally representative random sample of 2 400 adult South Africans from all nine provinces. The findings have a margin of sampling error of $\pm 3\%$ at a 95% confidence level. Fieldwork was conducted by Citizen Surveys, with support from the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa) and the University of Cape Town.

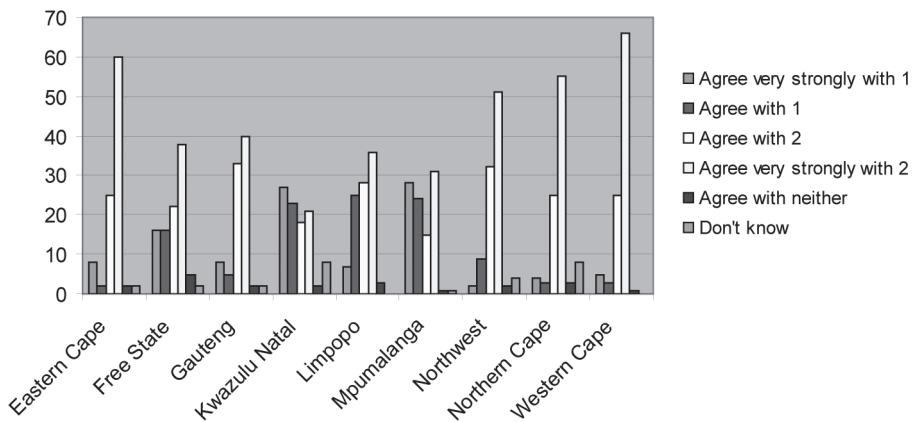
Half the population felt that 'government should immediately stop the prosecution', while 39 per cent believed the 'judicial process should continue and run its course so that we can know whether is innocent or guilty'. The majority in all the other provinces except Mpumalanga felt the trials should continue (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Which of the following statement is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2:

Statement 1: *The government should immediately stop the prosecution of Jacob Zuma.*

Statement 2: *The judicial process should continue and its run its course so that we can know whether Jacob Zuma is innocent or guilty.*



Source: Afrobarometer Survey Round 4 2008

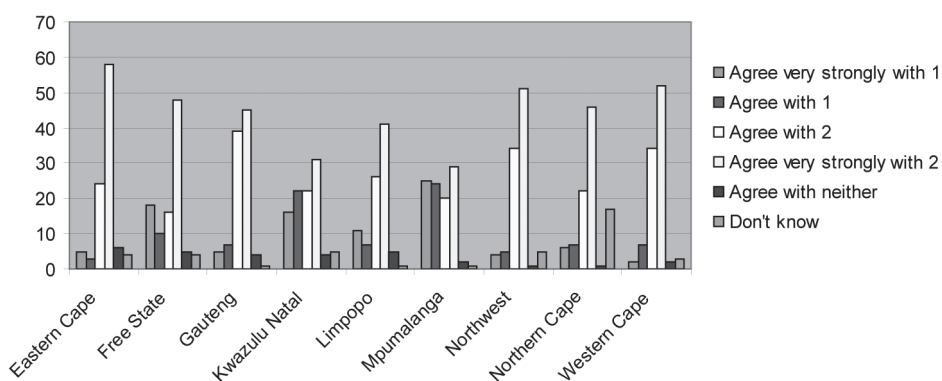
Not surprisingly, a significant number of people in KwaZulu-Natal believed Zuma's repeated protests that he was the victim of a 'political conspiracy'. Although a majority (53%) felt that the 'The Scorpions are an effective tool in the fight against crime and corruption and should be left alone', that segment was still significantly lower in KZN than in other provinces. In the Western Cape 86 per cent agreed with the statement, in the North West 85 per cent, Gauteng 84 per cent and, nationally, 72 per cent (see Figure 4). In KZN 38 per cent of those surveyed believed the 'Scorpions have been misused for political purposes and violated people's rights, and therefore should be disbanded'.

Figure 4

Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2

Statement 1: *The Scorpions have been misused for political purposes and violated people's rights, and therefore should be disbanded.*

Statement 2: *The Scorpions are an effective tool in the fight against crime and corruption and should be left alone.*



Zuma's supporters pointed to Thabo Mbeki as the source of the 'political conspiracy' and only 36 per cent of KZN residents (the lowest percentage in all the provinces) approved of Mbeki's performance. More people in the province (40%) gave acting president Kgalema Motlanthe a positive rating than gave one to Mbeki, despite the fact that Motlanthe had been in office for less than three months at the time.

CONCLUSION

Ethnic mobilisation was pivotal in getting Zuma elected to the ANC presidency and in the ANC receiving its highest number of votes ever in KZN and performing far better there than in the other provinces. The belief that Zuma had been persecuted because of his ethnicity rallied Zulu-speakers around his person and they were further mobilised by popular music.

Zuma's candidature obviously renewed the currency of ethnic mobilisation in South Africa's political life, although it is still not widespread. As Hoeane notes elsewhere in this issue the suggestion that Cope was a Xhosa-driven

party formed in response to Mbeki's defeat at the ANC's 2007 conference and subsequent dismissal as president was not validated by electoral returns. Voters in the predominantly Xhosa-speaking Eastern Cape stuck with the ANC, with more residents there expressing trust in the ANC than had done in KZN, where there was more trust in Zuma than in the party. The fact that Zuma was more popular than his party poses a sharp challenge to the ANC, which risks losing that support should Zuma vacate the presidency.

That fear may even tempt some to argue for a second term for Zuma or to elect another Zulu-speaker in order to retain the support. After all, KZN is the only province where the ANC has experienced electoral gains. Then again, in the absence of any perceived threat, or what may be perceived as ethnically driven persecution, people are unlikely to be mobilised along ethnic lines. Ethnic mobilisation in KZN was not spontaneous but was fuelled by the perception that one of their own was being persecuted because of his ethnicity.

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DURABLE OR TERMINAL?

Racial and ethnic explanations of the 2009 elections

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ABSTRACT

The perennial debate among academics, the media, analysts and the public in general, especially during election periods, is the level and extent to which racial and ethnic factors can be said to explain voters' behaviour in making their choices. There are two competing viewpoints. The first asserts that these two variables are primary in explaining voting behaviour, the second that they are of limited value in understanding electoral outcomes. The debate is significant as it is linked to and has an impact on the country's democratisation trajectory. The former viewpoint is generally negative, the latter relatively positive. The pessimistic view considers the voting patterns as necessarily imperilling democracy while the optimistic view posits that their existence in and of themselves does not threaten democracy as they have little agency in determining voters' choices. This article argues that race and ethnicity have had only a superficial effect on electoral outcomes from 1994 to 2009 and hence should not be accorded primacy in explaining the outcomes. An analysis of the 2009 elections provides tangible and incremental empirical evidence that their import and value as explanatory variables is weakening.

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the complexity of South African politics – especially in relation to assessing prospects for the country's further democratisation – it is helpful to begin to recognise the superficiality of race and ethnicity and widen the debate to consider the influence of other electoral variables on voting behaviour. It is contended that this approach contributes to a deeper understanding of electoral outcomes and of prospects for the country's democratisation.

The internalised and supposedly immutable racial and ethnic influences that are said to imperil democracy and, equally, the denialism embedded in rejecting the reality of race and ethnicity block the pursuit of other useful avenues for understanding and assisting the nurturing of democracy. This article focuses specifically on the successes of the Democratic Alliance (DA) in capturing the Western Province from the African National Congress (ANC), the efficacy of using concrete ideas to explain voting behaviour, the import of declining voter engagement and its utility in this debate, the significance of the establishment of the Congress of the People (Cope), the youth dimension and, finally, the 'Zuma/Zulu' factor in KwaZulu-Natal.

RACIAL AND ETHNIC INTERPRETATIONS OF THE 2009 ELECTIONS

Electoral politics in South Africa are shaped by identities: Voters across the spectrum tend to remain loyal to parties that represent their identity group, defined by a complex mix of race, language and culture.

Friedman 2009

The good news is that Wednesday's general election was declared 'free and fair' by the African Union ... The bad news is that results show the enduring power of race in South African politics.

Saunderson-Meyer 2009

In this section the discussion focuses on the factors that have been identified as indicating that race and ethnicity are critical variables in an analysis of the 2009 election results and in an understanding of voter behaviour.

One of the factors cited to support the contention that race and ethnicity contributed significantly to voter behaviour and to the results of the 2009 elections is the racial support base of the political parties. South African political parties are still overwhelmingly supported by groups of clearly distinct racial backgrounds. In this regard, two major demographic groups are used to illustrate the point: 'black' political parties are still largely supported by black voters and, 'white' parties draw the majority of their support from the white community. For example, an Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa) pre-elections briefing paper that analysed possible voting trends, quoting from a *Plus 94 Research* report, observed that the inquiry had revealed that '... party support in South Africa continues to be racially polarised. Black South Africans accounted for 75 % of the ANC's support amongst respondents while white South Africans accounted for 71 % of the DA support among respondents' (Sylvester 2009, p 5).

This, it is posited, is clear evidence that the majority of the support for the governing party, the ANC, and the main opposition party, the DA, was drawn from particular racial groups, underlining the fact that the primary motivating factor behind voters' choices is identity. The significance of these support patterns, in the context of this racial-ethnic debate, is to indicate that despite 16 years of democracy party support and, consequently, the way voters make their decisions, are still governed by racial identities.

This view may also be gleaned from the way some party leaders construed – and understood the main motivation behind – contemporary South African voting behaviour. For example, in arguing for what she termed a need for voters to exercise their choice on the basis of political philosophies rather than on identity grounds, Helen Zille, leader of the official opposition, the DA, wrote in a media opinion piece in January 2009 that '[m]any South Africans still believe political choice is about race' (*Business Day* 19 January 2009, p 6). In Zille's view – and it should be noted that she is not the only politician who holds that view – South African voters still prioritise racial identity at the expense of other considerations. The thrust of Zille's argument is that it is imperative for voters to abandon these influences and embrace political philosophies such as that espoused by her party, which, she maintains, is based on an 'an open opportunity society for all' (Pahad 2009).

With regard to the question of ethnic choice, the view that voters are primarily driven by ethnicity in their choice of party was substantiated by the success of the ANC in decisively defeating, for the first time since 1994, the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) in KwaZulu-Natal. The ANC won 62.95 per cent of the vote to the IFP's 22.40 per cent. KwaZulu-Natal, the IFP's stronghold, is overwhelmingly 'Zulu' and the fact that the ANC defeated the IFP there so spectacularly may well be ascribed to the fact that its leader, Jacob Zuma, is a Zulu, a factor on which he capitalised, using it as the basis for challenging the IFP's monopolisation of the Zulu ethnic vote (Sithole & Bramdaw 2009, pp 23-24). As one observer remarked: 'The ANC president, Jacob Zuma, with his grassroots appeal and celebration of his Zulu identity, played to ethnic sentiments' (*City Press* 3 May 2009, p 12).

Indeed, the argument is buttressed, quite ironically, by the IFP's own response, which suggested that the party agrees that Zuma 'out-Zulued' it. As Anthony Butler (April 2009, p 8) notes, the IFP accepted its defeat '... notwithstanding the complaint, from it of all parties, that Zuma had played the tribal card against it'. What Butler is illuminating is that the IFP, which considers itself the true custodian of 'Zuluness', was lamented the fact that the ANC had undermined this position because its leader is a 'Zulu'.

An interesting aspect of the resilience of identity interpretations of the 2009 election is the way identity is perceived to have affected the new party, the

Congress of the People, in choosing its presidential candidate. Mosioua Lekota, who broke away from the ANC and was instrumental in forming Cope, was its interim leader. However, departing from South African electoral practice, in which party leaders are considered to be presidential candidates, Cope brought in Reverend Mvume Dandala, a civil society activist, to replace Lekota.

The reason for this unusual move has been given as the fact that Lekota had lobbied within party structures for support for the 'wrong' group – whites (*Sowetan* 24 February 2009, p 4). According to this analysis Lekota's publicly expressed misgivings about the continued use of race in implementing affirmative action and his contention that white South Africans, particularly Afrikaners, had been marginalised by the ANC government pitted him against his enemies within the party. It was believed that his views were strategically unsound and would alienate black voters from Cope (*Sowetan* 24 February 2009, p 4). This argument from Lekota's detractors was said to be based on the reality that the majority of South African voters are 'black'. Hence, those who intended to support Cope would be uncomfortable with a party that criticised affirmative action by being sympathetic to the interests of 'whites' and this would hurt the party at the polls.

The ethnic dimension and interpretation of this controversy was that Lekota was removed as the party's presidential candidate at the instigation of a powerful lobby group of 'Xhosa' leaders within Cope who wanted one of their own ethnic background to take over the mantle of the party (Mashele 2009). Indeed, one of Cope's leaders, Mlungisi Hlongwane, in resigning from the party and re-joining the ANC, released a media statement giving as the main reason for leaving Cope what he referred to as 'tribal tendencies' within the party, maintaining that 'It is regrettable that there are Xhosa speaking Cope leaders who have taken a conscious decision that Cope must be a predominantly Xhosa led organization' (www.politicsweb.co.za/politicsweb/view/en/page71619?oid=1229).

The logic went thus: because Lekota is of 'Sotho' ethnic background a 'Xhosa' cabal within the party lobbied for Dandala, who is 'Xhosa', to be the party's presidential candidate.

In further relating the significance of these variables to an understanding of South African electoral politics political commentator Prince Mashele, of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), asserted that despite the fact that it was acknowledged that Trevor Manuel was the best candidate for the presidency of the ANC, because he is 'coloured' and not 'black' he could not be elected to the position and, ultimately, become the country's president. Mashele also maintained that businessman and former unionist Cyril Ramaphosa was left out of the equation for the ANC leadership as his tribe [Venda] does not have significant numerical power within the ANC and the 'Zulus' felt it was their time to rule South Africa.

The result of this line of reasoning is the conclusion that Zuma's ascendancy to the leadership of the ANC was primarily driven by ethnic factors at two levels: other 'ethnicities' were not strong enough to take up the mantle of leadership and 'tribal rotation' in ANC leadership and that of the country unofficially decreed that 'Xhosas' had to make way for 'Zulus' to assume power.

It is clear from the above that a racial and ethnic interpretation of South African elections and voter behaviour must still be applied to an understanding of the 2009 elections; parties' support bases are still racially based; leaders' conception of the motivations behind voter behaviour is informed by the notion that voters have not transcended identities in making political choices; 'Zulu' ethnic sentiments triumphed over any other explanatory variables, resulting in the ANC's successes in KwaZulu-Natal; Cope, a party that was thought to have ushered in trans-racial politics, has not been immune to the challenges posed by racial and ethnic identities; and some commentators are emphatic that identity politics still primarily defines and explains the contours of electoral politics in South Africa.

THE COUNTER EVIDENCE

But is racial and ethnic identity the only factor that motivates the choices of South African voters? This section argues that other influences must be considered.

The Western Cape, 'Coloured voters' and the DA's victory in 2009

It is a given in South African political analysis that the 'coloured vote' in the Western Cape is the fulcrum of electoral dynamics in that province in terms of determining which party wins at the polls. The influence of the 'coloured vote' cannot easily be discounted, but the argument that the numerical superiority of coloured people in the province means they constitute a unified voting bloc and make their political choices en masse can be challenged. The fact that, as *Business Day* (24 April 2009, p 1) reported, 'Hundreds of thousands of voters on the Cape Flats coloured areas such as Mitchell's Plain streamed out in record numbers to vote for the DA' does not justify the simplistic assertion that 'coloured voters' were racially motivated in their abandonment of the ANC.

Evidence would seem to suggest that far from signifying that they had abandoned a 'black' party for a 'white' party for racial reasons the fact that many coloured voters switched their support from the ANC to the DA was directly attributable to the ANC's disorganisation in that province prior to the election. That is, the party was in such disarray and so divided that it conducted an ineffectual campaign and could not convince 'coloured voters' to support it.

Accordingly, it has been noted that '[t]he provincial gains that the ANC had made since 2004 – and there were several – on the other hand had been neutralised by controversy and perceptions of factionalism' (Hofmeyr 2009, p 19). Interestingly, the ANC itself also reached this conclusion, as reflected in an official report that ultimately led to the disbandment of the provincial party structure in the Western Cape (*Mail & Guardian* 28 May 2009, p 15).

Thus, the preoccupation with factional infighting within the ANC in the Western Cape in the run-up to the elections had the effect of driving away 'coloured voters', who made their decision on a rational basis, not one founded on identity, for generally voters are unlikely to trust a party that does not inspire their confidence or is riven with internal problems to represent their interests effectively.

Apart from the reasons given above for its victory, the DA ran a very effective campaign, focusing its energies specifically on the Western Province, as evidenced by the fact that its leader, Helen Zille, stood as premier of the province rather than as a presidential or national candidate. As Hofmeyr (2009, p 20) observed in this regard, 'The DA made the Western Cape its area of focus and voters noticed it'.

Indeed, holistically, from 1994 through to 1999, 2004 and 2009 there have been shifts in the way 'coloured' voters have supported different political parties in the province, challenging the notion that they are locked in rigid racialised sentimental voting patterns. In 1994 they voted overwhelmingly for the National Party (NP) and in 1999 and again in 2004 for the ANC. These swings between 'black' and 'white' parties seriously challenge the racial view that they are an homogenous bloc primarily motivated by racial considerations; immutable and not susceptible to change.

On the contrary, it would appear that at election time 'coloured voters' make decisions related to their specific interests. They placed their faith in the NP in 1994, moved to the ANC when the NNP floundered in the run-up to the 1999 election and abandoned it in 2009 because it no longer appeared to cater for their needs.

Another factor that accounted for the DA victory in the province in 2009 can be ascribed to Zille's political acumen. It is a tricky enterprise to try to fathom to what extent political personalities ultimately influence voting decisions but it can be deduced that some do and that Zille proved to be one of them. In its post-election analysis of the Western Cape provincial elections the *Mail & Guardian* (29 April 2009, p 4) was forthright about this point: 'More than any other factor the massive swing to the DA – it took 27% in 2004 – should be put down to the personality and public clout of party leader Helen Zille.'

Viewed from another perspective, the Western Cape result emphatically challenges the view that the DA is a 'white English-speaking party'. For it is in this province that the DA has been able to dislodge the ANC from power, not

because of the strength of white voters but because of coloured and, indeed, marginally, black voters.

The results clearly show that the days of the DA as a stuffy party of English-speaking whites are over. Zille's re-orientation of the party towards a racially inclusive message and image enabled her to make inroads into the African vote and reverse ANC gains in past elections in the Western Cape's rural hinterland.

Joubert 29 April 2009, p 4

The historical reality that the coloured people in the province are not wedded to one political party indicates that to ascribe emotive and racialised explanations to the behaviour of 'coloured voters' in the Western Cape is to limit analysis.

South African political parties are defined as being racial purely on the basis that their support is primarily based on race. Hence, the ANC is considered to be 'black', the DA 'white' and the Minority Front 'Indian'. What is immediately striking, and missing from this categorisation, is that there has never been a 'coloured' party in post-apartheid South Africa. Therefore, the question that needs to be considered is why the third-largest of South Africa's racial groupings does not feel the need to form a party. This question would be particularly relevant in the Western Cape, where people designated as coloured form a sizeable majority of the voting population to the extent that there is a specific 'coloured' vote. Taken to its logical conclusion then, if political cohesion is deeply ingrained in other South African racial groups why is it absent from the 'coloured' group? The answer is that no single racial solidarity factor impels them to form a distinct political organisation. They vote for political parties according to their interests and inclinations, hence they were able to vote for the 'black' ANC in 2004 and for the 'white' DA in 2009.

The conclusion that can be derived from this is that there is no homogenous 'coloured' voting bloc and the 'coloured' population has no need to form a political party since its political interests are represented by other parties. If we recognise the racial/ethnic view that the 'coloureds' are a 'swing vote' in the Western Cape and their motivation to vote for either a 'black' or a 'white' party is not based on race what should be considered is what variables are at play here to explain their voting motivations.

The utility of ideas

A pre-elections *Plus 94* research survey noted that ANC voters are mainly attracted to the party because they believe it will provide them with housing and social

grants, while the main motivation for aligning with the DA and Cope is a desire for 'change' (*Sunday Times* 29 March 2009, p 4). This indicates that ANC policies, which emphasise the provision of social services, are the main attraction for black voters – the majority of whom still need such assistance – and thus that they support the ANC not because it is a 'black' party but because of its commitment to the transformation of society, which is underpinned by the provision of services which have an impact on the lives of the poor. It is therefore not surprising that most of the ANC's supporters are black, given that the majority of South Africa's poor, thanks to the legacy of apartheid, are black.

On the other hand, the DA's and Cope's espousal of the message of 'change' and their argument that the ANC has abused its powers, has been unaccountable and corrupt and has blurred state and party functions is attractive to the middle and upper classes across the racial spectrum. These factors undermine the racial and ethnic theory. Furthermore, in their campaigns these major South African political parties do not make their pitch to voters on the basis of race or ethnicity, but on what they will concretely offer.

Despite the above observations crude and unsubstantiated racial analysis of parties' political campaigns persist. For instance, the DA's campaign battle cry, 'stop Zuma' was, in some quarters, taken to have racist undertones, with, for example, Alan Boesak, Cope leader in the Western Cape, charging that, 'Cheap rhetoric that smacks of racist undertones, playing the man and not the policy, welcome to the world of the DA, a party infused with apartheid-style politics which has no place in our country' (www.iol.co.za/news/politics/boesak-attacks-da-stop-zuma-ccampaign-1.440074). But this is a superficial and, indeed, a disingenuous interpretation of the focus of that campaign. For nowhere does the press statement released by Zille in announcing the campaign mention Zuma's race – it focuses on what the DA construes Zuma to represent: an ANC leadership that will undermine the Constitution and threaten press freedom and the judiciary, and so on (www.org.za/newsroom.htm?action=view-news-item&id=6620). Thus, in the DA's view Zuma was merely the symbolic embodiment of what was wrong with the ANC and Boesak's racial charge was without foundation or credibility.

DECLINING VOTER ENGAGEMENT

Although interest in South African elections has remained high among voters, as indicated emphatically by the high voter turnout in successive elections and voter registration in 2009, there is incremental evidence that, overall, voters are increasingly disengaging. Although those voters who do register are enthusiastic about participating there has been an overall decline in the number of voters who go to the polls in each election. In 1994, 19 million of an estimated 22 million voters

(there was no voters' roll in this election) cast their votes (a turnout of 86.9%); in 1999 16 million of a registered 18 million voted (89 %); the figures in 2004 were 15 million of 20 million (76 %) and in 2009, 17 million of 23 million (77 %).

Reasons for the lack of interest in elections can be classified broadly in two categories: those who are apathetic and negative, having lost hope, for whatever reason, in the political process, and those who are content that democracy is on the right path so they feel no need to participate.

If the former is the primary reason racial and ethnic explanations face serious difficulties. The logical consistency of the racial/ethnic interpretation is that it would be easy, and indeed a compelling choice, for voters to vote for existing 'racial/ethnic' parties given their affinity to the racial and ethnic backgrounds. For, if existing parties do not attract a significant portion of voters how is the view sustainable that voters are moved by passionate racial and ethnic sentiments in making their party choices. Which necessitates the following rhetorical question: what, then, motivates these despondent voters not to vote for existing parties when it is argued that they have an intrinsic attraction? Clearly the answer must be sought elsewhere – that they feel that existing South African political parties do not reflect their interests, whatever those might be. On this basis, therefore, racial and ethnic interpretations fall short.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FORMATION OF COPE

One of the most significant political occurrences in post-apartheid South African politics has been the formation of the Congress of the People. Firstly, for the first time since 1994 the ANC faced a significant split, which led to the formation of this party by senior and credible leaders and ANC stalwarts such as former Gauteng premier Mbhazima Shilowa and former Defence Minister Mosioua Lekota. The significance of this development was that potentially the ANC, for the first time since 1994, was facing a formidable challenge to its power. And indeed, the uniqueness of Cope is that unlike many new parties it performed very strongly, if not exceptionally, becoming the third-largest party in the country after the elections, winning more than a million votes. Very significantly, Cope is the official opposition in five provinces, meaning that it has more widespread support nationally than the DA, despite the fact that it was less than a year old by the time of the election and was riven by serious internal problems.

The import of the emergence of Cope to the racial/ethnic interpretation is that it is highly questionable that those who voted for it are intrinsically tied to their parties by race and ethnicity. If that were the reality, why was it possible to have this seismic shift, with so many voters placing their faith in Cope? Does the emergence of Cope not signify that, indeed, there is a new politics emerging

in South Africa which goes beyond race and ethnicity? It is, of course, early and it would be perilous to give a definite answer at this juncture. But it is also safe to point out that there is a ray of hope that the emergence of Cope signifies a maturing of South Africa's democracy, which trumps the assertion that race and ethnicity underlie the country's politics

Analysis indicates that the success of Cope, far from being an expression of racial and ethnic sentiment, can be ascribed to other variable. For example, Ndletyana (2009) and Piper & Matisson (2009) have argued that the main driving force of the intensive and fractious debates that preceded and took place during the ANC's Polokwane conference, which ultimately led to the formation of Cope, can be best understood through the prism of ideological differences within the ANC not racial/ethnic motivation. In this regard, therefore, the split within the ANC and the subsequent formation of Cope can be ascribed to concrete ideological realities rather than to emotive identity politics, once again straining the emphasis of the former as driving South African politics, especially its electoral processes.

THE YOUTH DIMENSION

One enduring trait of post-1994 South Africa has been the extent to which the youth have been considered to be apathetic and indifferent to political processes such as elections. The abiding interpretation of the phenomenon is that in a democratic South Africa the youth have interests over and beyond politics; that they are the 'born free', who have little to do with the pre-1994 political contestation. This observation is, to a large extent, based on reality, although it is not absolute. The 2009 elections, however, indicated that is changing and there has been an unprecedented upsurge in youth interest in the elections in terms of intention to vote.

In the last registration drive held by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), in February 2009, a staggering 73 per cent (1 099 519) of total new registrations (1 505 642) were young people aged between 18 and 29 (IEC 2009).

The relevance of this youth interest to the debate is that in and of itself this phenomenon presents formidable challenges to the racial and ethnic assertions. For it should be explained what particularly attracted the youth to participate in such numbers in this particular election? Can this in any way be linked to identity politics? Or are there other explanations that would shed light on this sudden surge in youth interest? The latter interpretation should take precedence on many grounds. First, arguably the 2009 election campaign was bereft of any overt racial/ethnic issues, with parties focusing on other matters relevant to the electorate such as jobs, corruption and so on. This is in contrast to, for example, the 1999 elections, which were laced with acrimonious racial campaigning. On this

basis it can be argued that the claim that elections hold a racial/ethnic attraction for the youth can be dismissed out of hand.

In that case, what stoked this interest? One of the explanations is that the 2009 election was one of the most highly contested in post-apartheid South Africa, with the emergence of Cope and its potential to challenge the ANC, the DA re-envisioning itself as a post-racial party and the highly contested political terrain that informed the election, such as Jacob Zuma's legal problems and his prominence as a political leader and the ousting of Thabo Mbeki at Polokwane and his subsequent dismissal as the country's president by his own party.

All these issues ignited serious interest, which touched the youth as well. On this basis, therefore, it can be surmised that young people became interested in the election in order to make their mark on society, a conclusion that challenges the view that race and ethnicity are the primary determinants informing political participation. The fact that the country was dealing with critical issues drew this significant section of society into the centre of politics, not identity, showing that other variable can and should be used to explain the motivation for political participation. The youth wanted to be heard – not because of their racial/ethnic backgrounds but because the issues involved had a direct impact on their lives as citizens.

ZUMA AND THE 'ZULU' FACTOR IN KWAZULU-NATAL

The argument that Jacob Zuma, in a move unprecedented for an ANC leader, fully exploited his Zulu identity has some validity. This is reflected in the observation of Sithole & Bramdaw that 'Zulu royalty including the Zulu Monarchy takes pride in the fact that a Zulu will, for the first time in 15 years of our democracy be in charge of the country. This was evident in the public appearances and meeting Zuma held with the Zulu monarch King Goodwill Zwelithini, on the evening of the Polokwane conference' (Sithole & Bramdaw 2009, p 23). Thus Zuma's Zulu factor is linked to the ANC's success in KwaZulu-Natal, as significantly pointed out by Habib (2009, p 12): 'The ANC lost electoral support in all provinces except KwaZulu-Natal. In the latter its electoral support jumped by a massive 943,481 votes from 47.7 % in 2004 to 63.97% in 2009.' The argument thus flows in the following manner: for the first time the 'Zulu' electorate had one of their own leading the ANC, hence the 'Zulu' IFP had a serious rival, leading it to lose the election. Deductively, this might arguably marginally be so, but to what effect and to what extent can it be the primary reason for the ANC's success in KwaZulu-Natal?

One flaw in this argument is the overarching, and usually uncritically considered, perception that the IFP has always been the dominant party in

KwaZulu-Natal politics. The evidence points in a different direction. Even before 1994 KwaZulu-Natal was one of the provinces most politically contested by allies of the ANC and the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the then Inkatha, as unfortunately evidenced by the serious political violence that racked the province. The argument would therefore be that the IFP has never had the untrammelled support of 'Zulus' in the province. Indeed, electorally, since 1994 the IFP had been gradually losing whatever power it had mustered among 'Zulu' voters. In 1994 it narrowly won the province with 50.32 per cent to the ANC's 32.32 per cent; in 1999 its support fell to 41.90 per cent to the ANC's increased 39.38 per cent; in 2004 it lost the province to the ANC with 36.82 per cent to the ANC's 46.98 per cent and, in 2009, the ANC won its resounding victory, with 63.97 per cent to the IFP's 22.40 per cent. So, incrementally, since 1994 the power of the IFP has been waning in KwaZulu-Natal without the influence of the 'Zuma/Zulu' factor.

Thus, to the extent that Zuma's 'Zuluness' can be ascribed any force in the 2009 elections it is emphasised by tilting the balance spectacularly in favour of the ANC in what was already a process in motion. The import of this analysis is that other factors should be taken into consideration. One element that militates against this 'Zuma factor' is the fact that, by most accounts, the ANC, since it assumed control of the province in 2004, has made serious inroads into IFP rural strongholds because of its efficient management of service delivery in the province. Sithole & Bramdaw (2009, p 24) observe that:

Service delivery played a huge role in winning support for the ANC. Most KZN government departments embarked on service delivery and developmental programmes which targeted the province's rural communities between 2004 and 2009 ... Although IFP leader Buthelezi has often warned his councillors against the lack of service delivery, it remains that IFP-controlled councils are amongst the worst performing in KZN.

Thus the ability of the ANC provincial government to deliver on its promises and the IFP's failure to deliver on its overshadowed the ethnic interpretation in that rural Zulu voters had the evidence before their eyes that the ANC could deliver and they deserted the IFP. The import of this is that there is a problem with analyses that assume that the fact that the IFP's home base is in KwaZulu-Natal, where most of its members are located, means the party was dominant in that province. The above evidence, that other considerations came into play, refutes this assumption.

Indeed, the internal logic of the racial/ethnic view is that the ANC is a 'Xhosa'-dominated party rooted in the Eastern Cape province. Taking this

perspective into consideration it would not have been beyond the realms of possibility that in the 2009 elections, with the ANC being led by a 'Zulu', there would have been a backlash of Xhosa voters in the Eastern Cape that would have resulted in them abandoning the ANC in droves. However, this did not come to pass, indicating that although the ANC marginally lost support in the Eastern Cape this was not the result of any 'Xhosa' backlash. If anything, the erosion of support for the ANC in the Eastern Cape can be explained in terms of the emergence of Cope and the failure of such parties as the United Democratic Movement, which, although once very strong in that province, lost half its support in 2009 (Hoeane 2009, p 172).

Ironically, the view that the ANC is dominated by 'Xhosa' and is rooted in the Eastern Cape suffers from the same deficiencies as the contention that the IFP's stronghold has always been in KwaZulu-Natal. The reality is that very significant numbers of card-carrying members of the ANC are from the Eastern Cape and can hence be classified as 'Xhosa', but they do not constitute the majority of ANC members countrywide. Indeed, in general terms, there is no indication that the fact that the ANC is led by a 'Zulu' has had any effect on its power in other provinces. The party's electoral support has declined marginally in each province, except, of course, in KwaZulu-Natal, and the analysis of this decline is not pinned on the ethnic factor.

The apparent paradox in this regard is that it is only in KwaZulu-Natal that the ethnic (Zulu) factor is considered to have played a role, whereas the ANC's marginal decline in other provinces is ascribed to other considerations. For consistency of analysis it would appear that the ethnic interpretation in KwaZulu-Natal is skewed, as it is applied selectively. This evidence affirms that for ANC supporters and voters the ethnic background of the party's leader is not relevant.

CONCLUSION

The fact that racial and ethnic patterns can be discerned in South African elections, as they were in 2009, is not irrefutable proof that these identities are primarily responsible for voting behaviour. It is undeniable that such concerns might motivate some voters but the issue to confront is the fact that it is necessary to take other variables into account in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the motivations of voters.

These include factors such as material reasons for choosing parties, voters' assessment of the performance of parties, and the role and attraction of political leaders. Merely ascribing voting behaviour to emotive identity considerations does not address the bigger picture. Indeed, to assist the democratic consolidation

of South Africa it is imperative that social scientific research engages in this endeavour and moves beyond the superficiality of race and identity because, as explanatory variables, they fall short.

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SURVEYS

Scientific predictions or navel gazing?

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ABSTRACT

Pre-election surveys to predict election outcomes have produced inconsistent results because different researchers or research organisations apply different methodologies and research designs even when dealing with the same subject. The object of this article is to interrogate the nature of survey research as a scientific tool in general and to trace the development of its use in political and government settings, especially in South Africa, to predict election results. The study strives to establish whether or not some pre-election surveys in South Africa rely on inadequate methodology, or else succumb to political pressure to produce predictions that favour a certain party? Attention is directed to issues of reliability and the validity of survey results that can predict the outcomes of elections with a high degree of accuracy. We examine the extent to which different survey organisations and researchers heed the prerequisites and demands of scientific methods in research and, more especially, the methodologies used in surveys. Examining results produced by various research organisations we explore whether political surveys today are adequate tools to predict scientifically outcomes in an election or whether they are simply mechanisms used to arrive at desired goals at the expense of scientific methods. Common flaws in methodologies used to make predictions are identified and discussed.

INTRODUCTION

It is important for different research surveys to produce consistent results that predict sound pre-election outcomes. This is because different researchers

or research organisations apply different methodologies and designs even when dealing with the same subject. While some draw and weight accurately representative samples that present a valid picture of the population and its demographic variability some may be said to bias their methodologies, either by neglecting real variability in complex populations such as that of South Africa or by purposely designing their surveys to meet their assumptions about certain political parties.

This article interrogates the nature of surveys as a scientific tool and traces the development of their use in political and government settings, especially their recent application in South Africa. The study strives to establish whether some surveys in South Africa rely on inadequate methodology or succumb to political pressure to produce predictions that please the dominant party? South Africa's multicultural society and its history of socio-economic inequalities contribute to uneven results in some surveys. The results of methodological bias are high in multicultural societies such as those in South Africa and the United States. For example, the 1936 poll conducted by the Literary Digest in the United States erroneously predicted an election victory for Alf Landon over Franklin Roosevelt, mainly because the investigators biased their survey by over-representing Landon's supporters and received a sloppy response rate from the sample (Squire 1988; Weisberg, Krosnick & Bowen 1996; Crossen 2006).

This type of error bias in pre-election surveys confirms some of the general disadvantages not only of survey methodologies in the political polling field but also of most of the research methods used or preferred by researchers in other research fields. In South Africa particularly surveys have – as the Literary Digest did some 50 years ago – committed the bias of over representing people from the middle class and those with access to telephones, while neglecting the majority (Idasa 2006; Franklin 2003; Squire 1988). For this reason this article further explores the extent to which different survey organisations and researchers pay attention to the prerequisites and demands of scientific research methods, especially methodologies, in conducting their surveys.

Although political polls are intended to collect quantitative information on the views or attitudes of potential voters in order to predict the outcomes of an election they share some common flaws with other types of surveys, such as those used in the broader social sciences. In general, surveys depend on the subjects' motivation, honesty, memory, and ability to respond (Caplan 2002). Accordingly, respondents are not motivated to give accurate answers in all settings. For example, it may be hard for participants to recall information or to tell the truth when answering a controversial question (Palmquist 2005). Most surveys' weaknesses contribute to their unevenness, thus, when predicting possible outcomes of an election it is important to acknowledge factors that

influence the behaviour of the respondents and not merely to probe the survey methods.

With South Africa at the apex of its democratic consciousness the need and use of political surveys to predict election outcomes is on the rise. Since 1994 South African research and media organisations such as the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa), the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), Ipsos Markinor, and *The Star* newspaper, among others have conducted pre-election surveys that have sought, among other things, to uncover people's voting intentions and their attitudes to democracy, economic evaluations and other political issues (Mattes, Gouws, James & Kotze 1994). However, prior to the 2009 national and provincial elections most of these research surveys released inconsistent results about the outcomes. According to Schulz-Herzenberg (2009, p 1) 'public opinion polls in the months prior to elections were often a source of contestation, as they returned contradictory results and analysts could not easily make sense of voter intentions'.

Although the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) predicted that the African National Congress (ANC) was likely to accumulate less than 66 per cent of the votes, the organisation's overall forecast in 2009 was not significantly accurate when compared to the results (Cronje 2009). The results produced by other research organisations, such as the HSRC and Ipsos Markinor, were also inconsistent. These errors not only put South African pre-election surveys at risk because of uncontrollable quantities of uneven survey data, they also put in doubt the validity and reliability of political surveys in South Africa in general.

The inconsistent results may be the result of research organisations using different methodologies in making their predictions and may also call into question the ways in which the research organizations and the IEC compute the percentage of votes cast for a particular political party. There is no consensus on whether computations should be based on the number of registered voters or on the number of voters who actually vote.

Pre-election surveys have general disadvantages that may affect all who use them, and these may differ from survey to survey depending on the political setting of a particular country. Truman (1951) found that election prediction surveys based on forced-choice scales had a higher degree of error than those that used subjective or open scales. He further found that subjective scales could only introduce errors in political settings where more than two candidates or parties were involved in an election. Survey researchers tend to use different scales without paying attention to the influence they may have on the final results. The pressure of conducting pre-poll surveys and producing the results within a short time does not allow enough time for researchers to interrogate the validity of the measuring scales they choose to apply. Smith (1987, p 595) asserts that

most public opinion surveys have a narrow focus and share common features with omnibus surveys. This raises the question of whether political surveys are adequate tools today for scientifically predicting election outcomes or whether they are simply mechanisms used to arrive at desired goals at the expense of scientific methods.

THE NATURE OF SURVEYS

According to Idasa (2006, p 1), surveys are 'methods of gathering information from a sample of individuals within a particular group or population'. Although it might be difficult to point to the year in which the first survey was used it is generally understood that the use of surveys as professional tools for gathering and measuring information began in the first half of the 19th century, with pre-poll surveys such as Gallup and the Literary Digest gaining popularity as effective scientific predictors of potential election winners in the United States (Smith 1987; Squire 1988).

It is because of the fallacies arising out of some of these studies that researchers like Parry & Crossely (1950) first raised general questions about the validity of surveys. For example, Parry & Crossely (1950, p 66) noted that there 'seemed to be less concern with the more vital matter of validity as representation of truth' in popular government surveys, while Adcock & Collier (2001) and Clausen (1968) have noted that despite the advances in political science methods, little attention has been paid to measuring validity.

As Rymarch (www.socialresearchmethods.net/tutorial/Rymarchk/rymar2.htm) has noted, the difficulty of using any method to measure a phenomenon of social science is that you never know for certain whether you are measuring what you want to measure. In this case, validity is an adequate test tool to determine whether a researcher measures what he or she desires to measure. Despite these concerns, many organisations and individuals in different fields continue to use surveys to gather information or draw conclusions about particular groups, or even to compare and measure people's opinions about and attitudes to certain products, as is the case in market research.

THE HISTORY AND APPLICATION OF SURVEYS IN SOUTH AFRICA, 1994-2009

The use and application of surveys in South Africa cannot be separated from the country's political history. Even prior to the existence of the apartheid political system South Africa was largely a divided society. It was only in the 1970s that the first pre-election poll was cast among white South Africans by the Argus Group

and Dagbreek newspapers (Seekings 1997). Seekings (1997, p 288) cites concerns that might have helped to build the culture of biased pre-election prediction as 'a neglect of explicit analysis of voting behaviour' and comments on 'the primacy of racial and ethnic groups that have been taken for granted'. According to Seekings (1997) a thorough analysis of voting behaviour would have required the use of survey data about individual attitudes rather than merely aggregated election results. The problem is further exacerbated by delays in political polling in South Africa as compared to Britain and America, the two countries on which it has consistently modelled its electoral system.

Discrepancies first appeared in the early 1900s when the franchise excluded black South Africans and women from voting. For example, despite the South African Act of 1909, which unified the self-governing British colonies and the inland provinces, no provision whatsoever was made for the eventual extension of the franchise to all adult citizens irrespective of race and gender (electionresources.org/za/system/). Although the South African Population Census in the 1980s was enumerated according to the place where persons were located during the census, the census itself did not accommodate all those persons who were not present within the peripheries of South Africa on census night (that is, midnight, between 6 and 7 May 1980). This methodological preference did not give a true picture of the population, even within segregated boundaries. It was, by its nature, a product of the political reality of the time and part of the development of biased surveys in line with the government's needs at the time.

The government, representing minority whites in South Africa during the apartheid years, monopolised and manipulated political institutions, which conducted surveys to favour it. Government institutions that conducted surveys during the apartheid period included the HSRC, Statistics South Africa and other institutions related to producing professional information for the state. For example, White (1992) reports Cloete, Muller and Orkin's construct of the HSRC's history as consisting of changes designed to legitimate the reform initiatives of PW Botha by 'providing scientific knowledge or evidence in support of the social programme'. Most privately-owned research organisations that conduct political opinion surveys are fairly small companies that specialise in designing the questionnaire to be used, tabulating the answers, analysing the meaning of the tabulations and reporting the results to the study sponsor. But they too sought information with regard to methodology and other specialised techniques such as sampling from public institutions such as Statistics South Africa and the HSRC.

Political opinion surveys were extensively used in 1994 (Seekings 1997) and Southall (1994, p 637) reports on the study of methodologies, motivations, shortcomings and results of various opinion polls undertaken between 1990 and 1994 and how they affected party strategies during the negotiations that preceded

the first democratic elections. Few could legitimately claim to have overcome the numerous difficulties associated with polling most of the African segments of the electorate and the result was both over and under estimates of the level of support for particular parties. Among the methodological problems were the fact that few Africans had telephones and that communities were not easily accessible because of the political violence of the time. Moreover, it was costly for researchers to reach the more remote rural areas (Southall 1994). The result was false predictions by many researchers about the 1994 elections.

The HSRC, for instance, was completely wrong, predicting that 67 per cent of voters would vote for the ANC, 17 per cent for the National Party (NP) and 6 per cent for the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) (Southall 1994, p 637). In fact, the ANC won 63 per cent of the votes, the NP 20 per cent and the IFP 10 per cent (see Table 1).

Table 1
HSRC prediction and the results announced by the IEC in 1994

Party	HSRC	IEC results
ANC	67%	62.6%
NP	17%	20.4%
IFP	6%	10.4%

Source: *Sunday Times* 8 May 1994 (Southall 1994)

The challenges for pre-poll predictions in the pre-1994 era included not only poor methodology and unsound assumptions about party support but also inaccurate registration figures and assumed population size.

The methodological problems persisted in relation to later elections. For example, the Afrobarometer Survey of 2008 found that support for the ANC had declined, with only 52 per cent of respondents indicating that they would vote for the party if elections were to be held the following day (Sylvester 2009). Table 2 summarises the results forecast by various survey organisations compared to the actual results announced by the IEC.

An analysis of Table 2 shows inconsistencies among the research organisations, with some predicting the results accurately and others completely missing the mark. There was, however, a shared inconsistency in predicting the results of the larger parties like the ANC and the DA. Schulz-Herzenberg (2009) noted that Afrobarometer, the HSRC, Ipsos Markinor and Plus 94 predicted support for the ANC in the 2009 as 45 per cent, 47 per cent, 61 per cent and 65 per cent respectively.

Table 2
Predicted vs actual results

Survey organisation	Political party			
	Year	ANC	DA*/NNP**	Cope***
HSRC	1999			
	2004	67.8	10.5	
	2009	47.0	7.0	3.0
Plus 94 Research	1999			
	2004			
	2009	61.0	16.0	15.0
Ipsos Markinor	1999	64.7	9.5	
	2004	68.0	12.0	
	2009	64.0	10.8	8.9
Markdata	1999			
	2004	73.7	11.2	
	2009	70.5	20.6	
IEC Actual	1999	66.3	9.0	
	2004	70.0	12.0	
	2009	65.9	16.7	7.4

Sources: SASAS (2003); Eisa (2009); IEC (2009)

*Democratic Alliance; **New National Party; ***Congress of the People

Only two were close to the mark – in fact the ruling party won 65 per cent of the vote. The predictions about the smaller parties were more consistent, as demonstrated by the newly formed Congress of the People (Cope) which, they correctly predicted, would steal the limelight from the existing smaller parties.

HOW CAN PREDICTION SURVEYS BE IMPROVED?

Political leaders, policy makers, journalists and social researchers have shown a consistent distrust of survey results. For example, South African President Jacob Zuma has laughed off the Ipsos Markinor polls, saying they have always been off the mark (SABC 2009, February). The truth is that most predictive surveys, irrespective of the size of the organisation that commissions them, are neither reliable nor valid nor realistic in their projections.

Weissberg (2001) attributes their flaws to their inherent propensity to measure the wishes and desires of respondents and to the fact that they have little to do

with direct policy. Although he agrees that surveys are important as they provide scientific means to a political debate, he acknowledges that the answers may be interpreted as responses to the 'wishes' of respondents.

Lynn & Jowell (1996), on the other hand, believe measurement errors are responsible for the flaws in most surveys. For example, analysing the methodological errors of the 1992 Market Research Society (MRS) report on the underestimation of support for the British Conservative Party Lynn & Jowell (1996) found that the main factors contributing to prediction errors in the 1992 polls were late swing (people switching their choices immediately before casting a vote), a disproportionate number of people who refused to reveal their voting intentions and inadequacies in the quota variables used (resulting in sampling bias).

After analysing flaws involving sampling errors, response bias and other sources of errors in many election surveys, Lynn & Jowell (1996) suggest that a high quality two-stage clustered probability sample of 2000-3000 voters be selected from the voters' roll. If this strategy were used only registered voters would be included in the survey, thus ruling out selection bias and improving and minimising sampling bias. They suggest that the use of probability sampling other than quota sampling reduces selection bias. It is recommended that fieldwork be carried out for no more than four days so that the response rate is modest. Most of the suggestions centre on improving and eliminating bias in surveys.

Exit polls, polls of voters taken immediately after they have left the polling station, are another type of survey used to predict election results. Unlike opinion polls, which ask for whom the respondent intends to vote (or some similar formulation) an exit poll asks for whom the voter actually voted. A similar poll conducted before voters have voted is called an entrance poll. The difference is that opinions polls make an appeal for predictability and are liked by many researchers because they promote debate and curiosity. The next sections deal largely with suggestions of how to improve on the accuracy of election polls or surveys.

SURVEYS AS SCIENTIFIC PREDICTION TOOLS

Inaccuracies in survey results may stem from many factors, including the failure of the survey to be in line with changes in the political landscape that may, to some extent, have affected the attitudes and opinions of the public (Idasa 2006). Factors that concern the application of surveys themselves include faults and biases that may be present during the research design, sampling, and data collection.

Most methodological faults involve errors and bias in the methods themselves: sampling error, data collection methods, question design, language, response error and others (Idasa 2006). Researchers who do not include sufficient respondents in their sample may affect their surveys by acquiring low response

rates, for example, by using online surveys for populations that may not have access to the Internet or to basic computers (Idasa 2006).

One effective way to determine whether surveys have abided by the scientific rules is to test for validity and reliability (Litwin, 1995; Schulz-Herzenberg 2009). What is more crucial to guarantee that surveys sustain their scientific nature is the extent to which they measure what they intend to measure. Alongside the question of validity are questions involving reliability, objectivity, errors of measurement and sampling errors. Other issues that may lead to errors include data-collection methods, for example, telephone or postal, interviews, questionnaires, household based surveys and random selection of people in cities and villages used by different research organisations. There are many methods and designs that may influence the accuracy of prediction polls, and each may be applied differently according to the specific context or nature of what is being studied.

VALIDITY OF SURVEY RESULTS

According to Palmquist (2005) validity in surveys is of greater concern to researchers than reliability. Testing for validity is even more crucial in pre-election surveys where predictive and response validity plays a major role in determining the accuracy of survey methodologies in providing forecast outcomes. According to Cronbach (cited in Crocker & Algina 1986; Kane 2008) validation is the process by which a researcher collects evidence to support the types of inferences that are to be drawn from test scores. This literally means that validity ensures that test providers support what they aim to test. As Adcock & Collier (2001) maintain, validity also concerns linking ideas, as concepts developed by researchers with facts, as is the case in ecological validity measures. A number of researchers and theorists (eg, Worthen, Borg & White 1993; Crocker & Algina 1986; Palmquist 2005) concur that validity can be checked in four different ways:

- Face validity, or to what extent does a survey appear to be able to measure what it is supposed to measure.
- Content validity, or to what extent do the items in a survey represent the content it needs to measure.
- Criterion-related validity, or the extent to which it may be concluded from an individual's score how well he or she is likely to perform on some other task measured by the same test.
- Construct validity, or an agreement between a theoretical concept and a specific measuring device, such as an observation.

Validity is broader and becomes more complex when internal and external validity types are introduced to define the kind of validity concerned. Hernon & Schwartz (2009) describe external validity as the extent to which findings are generalisable to a population, while internal validity is the extent to which the research has interpreted the findings correctly or whether or not other factors or variables have been included in the study. Validity measures, like reliability measures, apply to both qualitative and quantitative research designs such as choice of instrument designs and methodologies such as data collection and sampling methods (Adcock & Collier 2001). However, to determine whether a survey is able to predict the outcomes of the pre-election poll one would, by default, seek to test the validity of the scales used, concentrating on the accuracy, response validity, and contextual specificity of the scales.

Testing for predictability and accuracy

Testing for predictive validity in survey results is a 'valid' approach to determining how scientific the survey is. Predictive validity is the measure of validity where the construct or attribute being investigated is correlated with some behaviour that occurs at a later point (www.Psychlab1.hanover.edu/Classes/Research/Terms.html). This type of validity forms part of the criterion-related validation procedure and aims to test the ability of the measure to predict something it should theoretically be able to predict, or how well it can predict or estimate future performance on some valued criterion other than the test itself (Crocker & Algina 1986; Worthen, Borg & White 1993; Trochim 2006). This means that if we were to scrutinise the degree to which the measure can accurately predict the outcome we would be testing for the measure's predictive accuracy.

Diebold & Kilian (2001, p 157) note that 'it is natural and informative to judge forecasts or outcomes by their accuracy'. It is no surprise that Parry & Crossely (1950) have associated predictive validity with predictive accuracy, while recently Moskowitz & Pepe (2004) have advanced the science of predictive accuracy by providing prognostic factors as possible indices to help predict unknown outcomes. Furthermore, developments in validation testing of measures have necessitated testing for reliability in predictive accuracy tests; that is, the coefficient between the predictor variable (X) and criterion (Y) needs to be determined. For example, in regression analysis, the goal is to find the line that best estimates or predicts the outcome of a Y variable (changes in dependent variable) from X (when independent variable is manipulated or varied) that is, the standard error of estimate or a measure of the accuracy of predictions made with this regression line. Reliability, sampling errors, response errors, and methodological errors all affect the extent to which the measure will be accurate.

Contextual specificity in research

According to Adcock & Collier (2001) contextual specificity is the concern with differences in context that can affect the validity of a measurement. They assert that the same score on a measured indicator may yield different meanings in different contexts. In this way, care is taken with the type of population researchers choose to include in a survey. Because there are different cultures within a single population the items included in the measurement tools must be scrutinised and specified to suit particular subgroups. However, theorists, researchers and research organisations have had problems with understanding culture, let alone its measurement and conceptualisation.

While the social identity theory has long suggested that each individual is influenced by a plethora of cultures and subcultures – some ethnic, some national and some organisational – culture has also been conceptualised as a single, unified and universal concept with which specific groups identify themselves. There is an assumption that an individual living in a particular place at a particular time belongs to a single culture; a problem that leads to reduced variance in predictive models (Goliath 2002). It remains a challenge to survey researchers to build into their predictive models the diversity in culture as it exists in South Africa.

RELIABILITY OF SURVEY RESULTS

Reliability means ‘repeatability’ or ‘consistency’. A measure is considered reliable if it gives the same result over and over again (Trochim 2006). Surveys are reliable if they are consistent, that is, if their applications yield consistent results on several occasions. Reliability in surveys is affected by the inconsistencies caused by random errors. According to Adcock & Collier (2001) random errors occur when the repeated measurement procedures yield inconsistent results.

Exell (2001) considers random errors to be changes that occur either at the environmental level or as a result of an unreliable measuring instrument. At the environmental level changes leading to errors in surveys procedures include unexpected real life changes involving, among others, changes in political cycles, changes in economic conditions or changes in the political views of respondents. Other differences may arise from sampling. For example, the sampling techniques of pre-poll surveys are not normally census designs, compared to the South African Electoral Commission’s policy of an ‘all eligible voters’ design, meaning that there is a high chance that the sample survey may involve people who are not eligible to vote. Samples of the pre-polls seldom assimilate the overall population of actual voters.

Random errors at the measurement level involve measurement error (Adcock & Collier 2001). This means that the measuring instrument used by pre-poll surveys lacks the strength to yield similar results when repeated over time. This could be vital in the sense that survey items in an instrument are different from the simplified items found in a ballot paper. Ballot papers don't ask questions, the nature of which respondents may find demanding in pre-poll surveys. In his critique of the new polling methods Sullivan (2009) found that Internet respondents who are surveyed multiple times per week on different topics develop survey fatigue as they pursue prizes like tote bags, gift certificates, T-shirts and even cash. Though studies on ballot design (eg, Kimball & Kropf 2005; Denver, Johns & Carman 2009) have attempted, using survey theories, to investigate the features of ballot designs and their impact on voting errors the issue still rests on the reliability of the method and measures. Exceptions are when there are similarities between the designs of ballot papers and of surveys.

SURVEY METHODOLOGIES

Sampling

With regard to sampling techniques Mugo (2002, p1) cautions that although 'it is cheaper to observe a part rather than its whole, we should prepare ourselves to cope with the dangers of using them'. What Mugo warns about is the complexity surrounding the dynamics in human populations and the laws guiding demographic profiling and distributions in research surveys. According to Mostert, Hofmeyr, Oosthuizen & Van Zyl (1998) populations are complex and susceptible to change caused by processes of mortality, fertility and migration and such complexities and changes in populations also affect sampling and how it should go about calculating sampling error and applying valid sampling techniques. This is true, considering the outcomes of important estimations about people in diverse populations. From the early days of surveys sampling has been a major problem as it affects the outcome. Noticeable pitfalls normally range from the creation of sampling frames from available census data to distributing such data randomly across all sectors representatively.

Many surveys are culpable of producing inadequate results if they prove to be poor and show bias in important aspects of research such as response rate, geographical/sample coverage (coverage error resulting from poor random sampling or exclusion of other important people from sampling frame), under-sampling and over-sampling, measurement bias (or unreliable tools of measurement) and social desirability (or the bias of researchers for reasons other than the objective of the survey) among other problems.

Other survey research biases occur in conjunction with this, for example, the way a survey is conducted, the way questions are itemised and asked, the state of the survey respondent, the reliability and validity of measures and the form in which the language appears or in the manner in which it is used in the testing tool. More specifically, there is frequently bias when the survey sample does not truly represent the population. In that case the sample may be deemed inaccurate or invalid and non-dependable or unreliable. This is because it is crucial for a sample to define and represent accurately the total of the population that is left out of the study (Guy, Edgley, Arafat & Allen 1987).

Different research organisations apply different sampling methods and techniques. Although the choice of the sampling method or technique may yield particular results, the quality and accuracy of results desired for specific research study depend on the harmony between the objectives of the study and its actual design. Just as there is agreement between the research design and procedures of collecting data, there is also agreement between the design of the study and the type of sampling. For example, in most cases surveys are designed for large statistical groups in which sampling procedures can either be a census, cross-sectional or even longitudinal design.

Surveys, like many other research designs, have special sampling procedures valid for desired results. Surveys mainly apply sampling procedures that define statistical groups that are independent from their natural settings and, because of the high need for representivity, surveys take the direction of probability sampling procedures (Guy, Edgley, Arafat & Allen 1987) which include simple random sampling, clustered sampling and stratified sampling techniques.

Large research organisations such as the HSRC, MarkData, Ipsos Markinor and many others use different sampling techniques to conduct their pre-poll surveys and their results are seldom consistent with the actual electoral results, mainly because of sampling flaws.

Guy and his colleagues (1987) have noted an important factor with regard to opinion polls – organisations rarely make use of a total population when conducting their polls. Consequently, the results obtained by most South African pollsters are inconsistent with those of the IEC. Whereas the electorate is national and equivalent to a census in all respects, most pollsters sample inaccurately in their attempt to predict results. There may also be inconsistency among the pollsters themselves: some sample those actually registered to vote and who are going to the polls on election day, others falsely assume that all citizens are eligible to vote, without confirming their voter status and willingness to vote. Still other organisations base their assumption on voter turnout. Below is the summary of sampling procedures different research organisations in South Africa construct for pre-poll surveys:

Mark Data

Mark Data uses an Omnibus survey based on a multi-stage stratified probability sample of 2 300 adult South Africans living in all types of residential circumstances from deep rural traditional areas to small towns and large cities, including suburban residential areas, flats, townships, informal areas, hostels and commercial farming areas. For specific pre-poll surveys Mark Data utilises a simple random sampling technique targeting potential voters on a data collection method called a 'secret ballot' to trace their voting preferences and to determine their willingness to vote. Like many research organisations Mark Data prefers face-to-face interviews conducted in the home language of the respondent and employs and trains fieldworkers to carry out the interviews. In the pre-election analysis in 2004 Mark Data excluded from their results all respondents who indicated that they would either 'not vote' or were 'very unlikely to vote'. Respondents who were uncertain about which party they would support (which, in their analysis, constituted about 20% of the sample) were categorised on the basis of other questions, including their rating of the major parties and their leaders. The predictions of the 2004 election pre-polls were based on the assumption of a fairly high turnout.

Ipsos Markinor

Ipsos Markinor conducts independent and autonomous socio-political surveys biannually, with additional surveys in election years. A standard sample size of 3 500 respondents is used. Like many research organisations Ipsos Markinor strives for representivity; respondents who are representative of the entire adult South African population. Like Mark Data Ipsos Markinor offers Omnibus surveys in pre-polls, but goes further, using data collection methods encompassing, firstly, the household type of face-to-face interviews (or what they call the 'Khayabus') and secondly the computerised form of telephonic interview (the 'Telebus'). The Khayabus includes selected cities in Gauteng (ie, in districts of the West Rand, the East Rand, the Vaal, Pretoria and Johannesburg), Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Bloemfontein, Welkom, Port Elizabeth, East London and Cape Town. It also includes non-metro districts in all nine provinces, including deep rural areas. The Telebus uses 88 stations in six centres across the country and, like the Khayabus, also includes cities and towns (brandsandbranding-online.co.za/images/brand_profiles/09_Profiles/Ipsos.pdf).

HSRC

The HSRC's pre-poll survey is drawn from the set of questions in the HSRC's South African Social Attitude Survey (SASAS). SASAS draws on a representative sample of about 5 734 South Africans aged 16+ years from the HSRC Master Sample. The sample is stratified by the sociodemographic domains of province, geographical

subtype and the four population groups. This is done mainly through household face-to-face interviews, using trained fieldworkers combined with the advanced geographic information systems (GIS) (Pillay, Roberts & Rule, 2006).

TOTAL SURVEY ERROR

One of the most important aspects to bear in mind when projecting or drawing conclusions from surveys is the issue of total survey errors (TSEs), or the interactions between many sources of errors in the survey. TSEs include sampling error, coverage error, measurement error, and non-response error. Editing and processing errors – errors in estimates derived from survey data – are vital in interpreting research results and are important in determining the outcomes of research surveys. TSEs can be both systematic and random. They can be identified as systematic error when the cause or source of the error is known or could be predicted as bias resulting mainly from the measurement instrument (Adcock & Collier 2001; Exell 2001; Litwin 1995). Random errors are unpredictable and usually unknown. The goal of research is to minimise the degree of TSEs in surveys.

Researchers quantify *sampling error* to understand how much the results of the sample may differ because of chance when compared to what would have been found in the entire population. In preparing for surveys whose outcomes would be generalisable to the target population, those conducted by large research houses, in particular the HSRC in the social sciences, Statistics South Africa in demographics, Ipsos Markinor in economics, and the Medical Research Council (MRC) in medical sciences, take steps to boost the confidence level of their research results by calculating the margin of error. In reporting on the accuracy of results the HSRC states the confidence interval of 95 per cent of accounted margin of error, thus accounting for only a ± 5 per cent of error agreeable within the social sciences (www.comfsm.fm/~dleeing/statistics/notes010.html).

Despite the allowance made for such systematic error there is also the possibility of a random error in survey sampling. One of the sources of such error is selection bias. Similar to coverage error, selection bias is motivated by researchers who draw samples without considering all the angles of demographics in the population. Selection bias is common, though not limited to, non-paper/non-face-to-face methods like Internet, telephone, cellphones and e-mail. An example of selection bias was identified in the recent American elections where YouGov/Polimetrix's polling showed that John McCain would win the state of Indiana by eight points. In fact, Barack Obama won the state by nearly one percentage point (0.9%) (Sullivan 2009). YouGov/Polimetrix sampled respondents who had agreed to be a part of their sample pool in the past and had neglected to update the pool.

The goal of *non-response error* is to minimise error by collecting data on all members of the sample. Bias, in this case, is the failure of surveys to predict accurate outcomes compatible with an election sample. This is the proportion of responses drawn at random from the population who actually participate in a survey reflecting the views of the population interviewed (Global Market Insite Inc – GMI 2010). The main cause of this error is the method used for collecting data. For example, researchers may opt to draw their data using Internet surveys from a number of people in areas with low Internet access. It is most likely that the Internet or telephonic response turnout in villages is lower than in metropolitan areas, where a significant number of people have access to computers.

The tendency to use electronic devices instead of traditional paper survey designs is one of the leading factors in measurement bias and error. For example, in its defence of mobile surveys, Mobile Researcher, a software-as-a-service company (www.populi.net/mobileresearcher/) has argued that without a dedicated survey design tool that asks questions consistently and if the logic is not described clearly to the fieldworker, outcomes can vary significantly.

It has analysed problems faced by paper surveys as involving issues of fieldworker bias, fatigue, misinterpretation of question items, influence to responses and localised terminology, among others, and has judged the design process that involves multiple stakeholders in research as resulting in inaccurate survey outcomes (www.community.populi.net/mobileresearcher/index.php/2010/03/paper-versus-mobile-data-collection/). Lindner and Wingenbach (cited in Wiseman 2003) suggest that researchers should report response rates and discuss how potential non-response error was handled because failure to do so brings the validity of survey findings into question. This is true because surveys that have high response rates are said to restore confidence in the findings (Wiseman 2003; Traugott & Katosh 1979).

DATA COLLECTION

Demographically, South Africa's population is diverse in terms of culture, race, level of development and settlement (Mostert, Hofmeyr, Oosthuizen & Van Zyl 1998). For this reason collecting data is a complex exercise in a country in which political opinions may have a different impact on some cultures, subcultures and regions from others.

There are likely to be conflicts of values and ethnic differences in relation to specific norms, attitudes, and cultural expectations in different geographical regions and settlements such as urban areas versus villages and in respondents with different educational backgrounds or socio-economic status. As Smith (1976) has long maintained, social scientists and researchers risk losing sight of other

regional systems altogether in some cases, or assume them in others, as in the case where rural areas may be assumed to belong to a broader national category.

Unlike those involved in ethnographic and other qualitative studies where caution and site background are empirically considered and efforts made to study and understand the cultures of the regions under investigation, researchers who rely on quick facts may miss what Smith (1976) calls the 'cultural ecology' of the social systems being studied. Research organisations such as TNS Research Surveys, for example, which, in collecting data prefer to use electronic surveys and other innovative methodologies, for instance, online panel research, which save time and money, may spend little time studying cultural differences. This exposure to fallacies involving interpretations and language may result in bias.

In face-to-face interviews non-translated tools frequently yield unreliable outcomes and unreliable questionnaires produce meaningless results (www.evensenwebs.com/reliability.html). Surveys should be conducted in an unambiguous manner to minimise response errors and fieldworker bias or (mis)interpretation of measuring tools. For this to happen, evidence of measurement reliability should be revealed, especially in the cases of research organisations that use electronic methods that may be concealed from the subjects of the surveys.

At the centre of data collection is the question of the validity of what is collected or captured. Data that come from observations may be numbers, text, or even shapes, therefore it makes sense for researchers to be clear about what they actually aim to collect. In other words, 'data should capture the meaning of what the researcher is observing' (Durrheim 2002, p 46). But this also depends on the type of research the researcher is embarking upon. Different research studies are designed differently and each design is underpinned by particular philosophical paradigms or theories, for example, guiding the nature of surveys is a law-like positivist ontology underpinning objective quantitative designs. Consequently, the type of design the researcher chooses will determine which data collecting methods he or she is most likely to use.

Surveys follow particular methods of collecting data. For example, when collecting data researchers can interview respondents, conduct telephone interviews, or mail questionnaires to participants. Different organisations or researchers use those approaches that are convenient or most compatible with their established hypotheses and objectives.

Data collection in surveys is mostly undertaken through a primary data collection process that depends on the method employed. Fieldwork is most commonly a process in which researchers opt to undertake face-to-face interviews, but this is not to say that it is limited to this process. Fieldworkers are employed and trained to do telephonic interviews or to mail out questionnaires.

Questionnaires are a popular means of collecting data, but are difficult to design and often require many rewrites before an acceptable one is produced. Some of the advantages include the fact that they can be used as methods in their own right, be posted, e-mailed or faxed, cover a large number of people or organisations and have wide geographic coverage, that they are relatively cheap, and that no prior arrangements are needed. But they can, on the other hand, be difficult to administer because of design problems and they have a pedigree of low response rate or response turnaround.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions and inferences drawn from many studies depend on the results, but the way the results are obtained remains a subject for further inquiry. Quantitative surveys strive for objective generalisation of results or claims that, prior to dissemination, are assumed to be true. The viability and authenticity of claims can be determined by the manner in which they are obtained (Cicourel 2007). There are many ways to obtain and interpret survey results and standards and guiding statistical analysis are used in doing so. Many pre-poll surveys may present results that are incompatible with results of the actual polls or may lack the 'ecological validity' vital to making accurate claims about situations. But there are other processes that should be considered before embarking on analysing data. One such process is data management.

Because the process of collecting data is not always 'clean' many survey organisations outsource or prepare the capacity for data management, that is, they prepare to capture, clean and process data before it can be analysed. Whether researchers collect data electronically or by the traditional face-to-face method questionnaires from the field always come with incomplete information or with errors overlooked by fieldworkers, mistakes that amount to errors that should always be taken into account.

Surveys that yield reliable results use various methods to make up for the errors encountered during data collection. Unfortunately, not all those who conduct surveys have the capacity to use data mining techniques to authenticate the results and failure to use such techniques contributes to variabilities and inconsistencies of results. By cleaning and preparing data researchers increase the validity of their claims and the objectivity of their generalisations. Recently, advanced computerised methods such as optical mark recognition have been applied to research surveys and test scoring procedures. These are scanning devices that can read carefully placed pencil marks on specially designed documents, and their use in census surveys, elections and other test-scoring exercises have proved to be accurate and to increase reliability (Freundberg 1993).

The choice of analysis methods and the way certain indices are computed in surveys has an effect on the output results and interpretation. Specific analysis methods are underlined by the objectives and goals of the survey. Some methods have high psychometric properties in assessing degrees of correlation between variables, some assess the predictive abilities of some variables on other variables, and others simply describe the nature of data. The point is that to use analysis methods for purposes for which they are not intended affects the results.

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