

## **QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG SOUTH AFRICANS**

**ABSTRACT.** Quality of life, while a subject of interest and relevance to all countries, is of particular interest in a country such as South Africa where, up until 14 years ago opportunities and resources were allocated to citizens on the basis of their racial classification. In modern-day South Africa a democratically elected government strives to redress inequalities and prejudices of the past in the attempt to provide all South Africans with a better life. Just how far has South Africa progressed in achieving this goal, however? This study has undertaken to measure the quality of life of South Africans in attempt to ascertain which factors are determining what make South Africans happy and who those happy and satisfied South Africans are. Data from a nationally-representative survey of a sample of 3321 adult respondents was used. The survey, the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS), is an on-going, annual survey measuring the South African public's attitudes, beliefs, behavior patterns and values in relation to democracy and governance, social identity, service delivery, among other subjects. Households were selected from a master sampling frame and respondents randomly selected within those households. Data was analysed by cross-tabulating happiness, life satisfaction and optimism with seven predictor variables, namely, race, gender, age, geotype, education level, economic status, satisfaction with basic governmental services, and fear of crime. The second part of the analysis was employing a series of linear regressions. The main findings were that: 1) life satisfaction and happiness levels fell along the same lines as previous research on quality of life in South Africa, namely that being white and having a higher income than most tended to mean a high quality of life, and that, 2) while black Africans still held much hope and optimism for the future, their quality of life appears to be determined by their current life circumstances.

## I. Introduction and Background

South Africa is a unique landscape for quality of life (QOL) research. In this regard the racial segregation system of Apartheid sought to ensure that the majority of the country's resources went to the minority white population (Lund, 2008). This resulted in gross inequality between the racial groups, the severity of which still remains with South Africans' legacy today (Adato, Carter & May, 2004; Davids, 2006; Hamel, Brodie & Morin, 2005; May *et al.*, 1998). One of the fledgling democracy's main mandates since inception of democracy in 1994 has been to close the gap between the haves and the have-nots, or what have traditionally been white and black South Africans. While inroads have been made in the provision of basic services such as electricity, sanitation and housing, there are still high levels of inequality (Buhlungu, Daniel, Southall, & Lutchman, 2007; Leibbrandt, Poswell, Naidoo, Welch, & Woolard, 2005; Statistics South Africa [STATSSA], 2007). Moreover, these differences in living conditions and quality of life have been found to still fall along racial lines, with the historically-privileged white population still enjoying dramatically better living conditions than the historically-oppressed black African population (Higgs, 2007; Møller, 2004c).

The diversity in living conditions amongst its people has resulted in South Africa often being described as a Third and First World country rolled into one. Add to that the cultural diversity in the form of ethnicity, religion and language, and one has a "social laboratory for studying quality of life" as Møller (2004, p. 1) put it. Assessing the subjective well-being of South Africans therefore serves to: 1) provide a useful barometer for the government's progress in its efforts to provide all South Africans with access to basic services, such as housing, electricity and health services; and 2) it is useful for gauging the mood in the country. This study serves to provide recent findings on the QOL of South Africans; detail the factors that are influencing South Africans' QOL; and sketch the profile of those South Africans that report highest and lowest levels of QOL.

## II. Theories underlying quality of life

It is against this background that the present study examines definitions of quality of life and theories underlying these definitions. Møller (2006), for instance defines quality of life as how well a country's citizens live. Higgs (2007) uses the term Everyday Quality of Life (EQL), which is defined as "a function of the resources and external factors that affect how that person is able to live (in the broadest sense), the internal choices that a person makes and their effects on that person, how that person perceives her or his individual needs are being satisfied, and his or her perceived level of subjective well-being or happiness." (p. 333). Quality of life is also often conceptualized as subjective well-being, a term that is often used interchangeably with 'quality of life'.

Quality of life is often theorised as comprising of *life satisfaction*, *happiness*, and *optimism* (Møller, 2004c). Life satisfaction is said to represent the more cognitive aspect of individuals' perception of their quality of life (McKenna & Andrews, 1980) (Michalos, 1980), whereas happiness is an emotive interpretation of subjective well-being (Campbell, Converse, & Rogers, 1976; as cited in Haller & Hadler, 2006) (Gundelach & Kreiner, 2004; Lane, 2000).

Quality of life theories tend to fall into two categories: the bottom-up or the top-down model. The bottom-up model states that one's satisfaction with the various domains in one's life determines overall well-being and happiness (Møller, 2004). This theory has traditionally dominated QOL research. The newer top-down model, also known as the Multiple Discrepancy Theory purports that one's overall satisfaction with life determines how one feels about the various aspects of one's life (Møller, 2004). An example of the top-down model at work in the South African context is the 'Madiba fever' or Mandela factor as Møller (2004) puts it. After the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994, South Africans of all racial groups displayed significantly more positive views of the future (Møller, 1994).

Regarding the QOL construct, it has material, relational and symbolic dimensions. Material dimensions includes factors such as delivery of basic services (such as water and sanitation) and income, while relational dimension would be the inheriting of views of life satisfaction from one generation to the next (Møller, 1995d, as cited in Møller, 2004). Lastly, an example of the symbolic dimension in South Africa is the national pride instilled through sporting achievements as well as subscribing to the idea of a rainbow nation (Møller, 2004).

In view of the aforementioned, the present study views quality of life from a life satisfaction, happiness and optimism perspective. More specifically, the present study examines factors (predictor variables) that predict quality of life in terms of life satisfaction, happiness and optimism perspective. Factors that have been identified as influencing QOL are individuals': race, gender, age, geotype, education level, economic status, satisfaction with basic governmental services, and fear of crime. To examine the impact of the predictor variables on QOL (measured separately by three variables: life satisfaction, happiness and optimism) bi-variate and multivariate data analyses were conducted. Moreover, secondary data analysis was employed using the 2008 South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS). The next section outlines the research methodology and detail information of the SASAS survey.

### **III. Research Methodology**

The SASAS survey is a national representative survey. The SASAS surveys measure the South African public's attitudes, beliefs, behavior patterns and values with regards to democracy and governance, social identity, service delivery, access to information and other important social issues such as perceptions of crime. All SASAS surveys are designed to yield a representative sample of adults of 16 years of age and older, regardless of their nationality or citizenship. The HSRC Master Sample was developed using the Census 2001 and with the Enumerator Area (EA) as the primary sampling unit. The value of using the HSRC Master Sample was that a national representative sample can be drawn and the results of the survey can be properly weighted to the 2001 census

population figures. Explicit and implicit stratification is applied to ensure that the geographic profiles of the targeted population such as province, environment milieu, age category, sex, race education level, Living Standard Measurement (LSM) and current employment status are represented in the sample<sup>1</sup>. The 2001 census database contains descriptive statistics, such as total number of people and total number of households, for all EAs in South Africa. Detailed maps were also developed for each EA showing the boundaries and households within it. Households were selected from the master sampling frame and are geographically spread across the nine provinces. Once interviewers arrived at the households, they randomly selected the respondents from these households for interview. Direction maps to enable fieldworkers to reach the selected EA were also provided.

The 2008 survey was administered to 3321 respondents across South Africa. About 76 percent of the respondents were black African, 10 percent were Coloured, 11 percent were White and 3 percent were Indian / Asian. More females (53 percent) than males (47 percent) participated in the survey. Over half (58 percent) of the respondents came from urban formal areas, 11 percent from urban informal areas, 26 percent from tribal or traditional areas and 5 percent from rural formal areas. About 15 percent of the respondents completed primary or some primary school, 74 percent obtained secondary or some secondary education and 12 percent completed tertiary or some tertiary education. The sample was also disaggregated by LSM. Just about half (50 percent) of the respondents were classified as those with a medium LSM, 32 percent with a high LSM and 18 with a low LSM. With regards to age, the sample were equally distributed

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<sup>1</sup> The living standard measure (LSM) used in this study is based on the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) AMPS 2005 survey. The SAARF LSM has become the most widely used marketing research tool in Southern Africa. It divides the population into 10 LSM groups, 10 (highest) to 1 (lowest). The LSM is a unique means of segmenting the South African market. It cuts across race and other outmoded techniques of categorising people, and instead groups people according to their living standards using criteria such as degree of urbanisation and ownership of cars and major appliances. A total of 29 variables are used. Each variable carries a different weight, some positive, others negative, and the respondent's position on the SAARF LSM scale is arrived at by adding together the weights of the variables that she/he possesses. A constant is also added to the total score to remove negative total scores. For more information on LSMs, please visit: [www.saarf.co.za](http://www.saarf.co.za)

among those age 16 – 24 (27.8 percent), age 25 – 34 (26 percent), age 35 – 49 (24 percent) and those age 50 and older (22 percent).

#### **IV. Analysis approach of the present study**

The analyses approach of the present study consists of two parts. The first part of this paper present the findings of the comparisons of QOL (life satisfaction, happiness and optimism) by the predictor variables of race, gender, age, geotype, education level, economic status, satisfaction with basic governmental services, and fear of crime. These predictor variables have been identified in the literature as factors that have been known to influence QOL (Ball & Chernova, 2008; Fadda & Jirón, 1999; Hayo & Seifert, 2003; Møller, 1996; 1999; 2000; 2004b; 2004c; 2005; Møller & Devey, 2003; Møller & Jackson, 1997; Powdthavee, 2003; Roberts, 2006; Shinn, 1986). The findings in part one are presented in a very one-dimensional manner, whilst often these predictor variables or socio-demographics are somehow related. In an attempt to control for such possible relationships, a series (three) of linear regression analysis was performed in which the socio-demographic variables mentioned above (such as race, gender and geotype) were all considered. The linear regression results constitute the second part of the analyses approach of the present study.

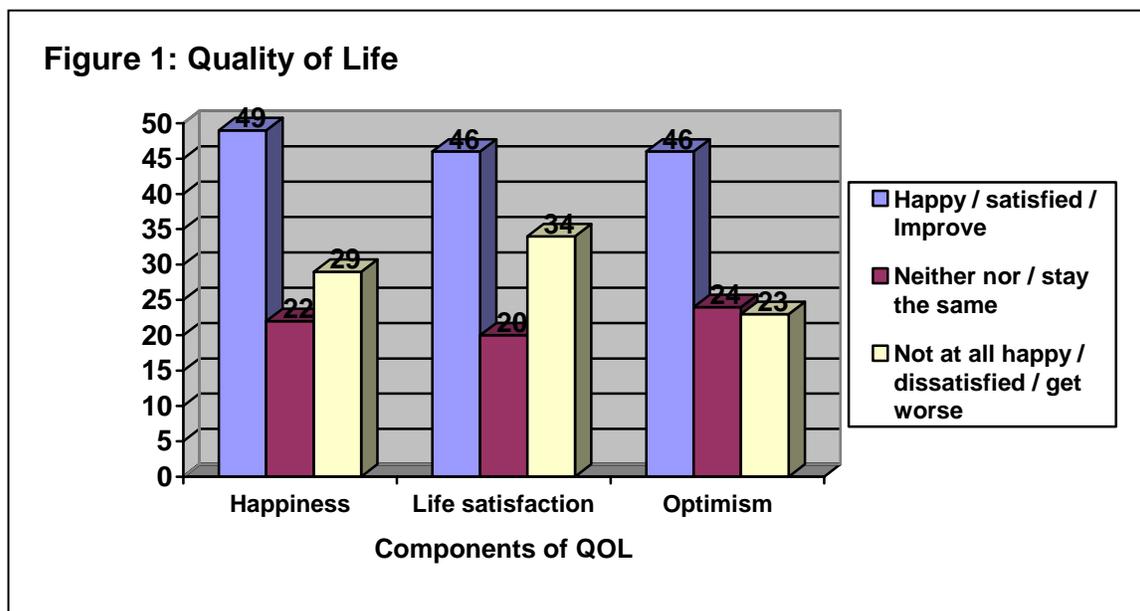
By employing linear regression analysis the present study argues that QOL can be explained by a number of competing theories. More specifically, the study shows that each of the identified independent variables (education, age, race, etc.) impacts on QOL. Furthermore, each independent variable's relative strength in predicting the three perspectives of QOL are established through the regression analyses. In sum, this study investigates QOL, as defined by life satisfaction, happiness and optimism and its interaction with several socio-demographic variables.

#### **V. Findings of the Present Study**

The survey asked respondents, ‘Taking all things together, would you say you are: very happy, happy, neither happy nor unhappy, not happy or not at all happy?’ The results indicate that just under half (49 percent) of South Africans are happy or very happy, while about a third (29 percent) felt that they not happy or not at all happy (Figure 1). A large proportion (22 percent) indicated that they are ‘neither happy nor unhappy’.

When asked about ‘How satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?’ the survey found that 46 percent of the respondents are ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with their life as a whole, compared to 34 percent who were ‘dissatisfied’ or ‘very dissatisfied’. About 20 percent indicated that they ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’.

To assess optimism the study examined the survey question which asked respondents ‘Do you think that life will improve, stay the same or get worse in the next 5 years for people like you?’ The results showed that 46 percent believed the situation will ‘improve’, 24 percent felt it will ‘stay the same’, 23 said it will ‘get worse’, and 6 indicated ‘do not know’. Overall, the results reflect that just under half of the respondents are respectively ‘happy’, ‘satisfied’ and optimistic, compared to less than a quarter that is ‘unhappy’, ‘dissatisfied’ and not optimistic.



## *QOL and race*

Due to South Africa's history of institutionalized racism, race has consistently predicted the QOL of South Africans, with whites enjoying the best QOL and black Africans the worst (Møller, 2000; Roberts, 2006). A 25-year South African QOL study, the South African Quality of Life Trends Project has mirrored these findings, consistently establishing race as the predictor of South Africans' QOL. Due to the fact that race has historically predicted what level of income a South African would be able to attain as well as his or her access to resources, this predictable associating between race and QOL has been easy to understand. The South African Quality of Life Trends Project's later findings in 1999, however, while still reflecting that white South Africans enjoyed the highest QOL, found that black Africans who also enjoyed high incomes had similarly high QOL levels. These findings were revolutionary at the time as it represented the changing face of the South African upper class. It also served to further bolster the idea that economic status is the biggest predictor of QOL, even more so than race.

Regarding happiness and race, the results from this study reflects that whites and Indians / Asians were the happiest, with 80 percent and 75 percent being either 'happy' or 'very happy', respectively (Figure 2). Sixty-two percent of coloureds stated that they were 'happy' or 'very happy', while black Africans were the only race group to have less of its members' state that they are 'happy' (42 percent) than the national average (49 percent)<sup>2</sup>. Life satisfaction scores were very similar, although proportions were slightly lower across the board. Once again, whites (76 percent) held the highest proportions of those either 'very satisfied or satisfied with their life', with Indians / Asians (67 percent), coloureds (59 percent) and black Africans (39 percent)<sup>3</sup>. In contrast to views about life satisfaction, black Africans (50 percent saying it will 'improve') were the most optimistic

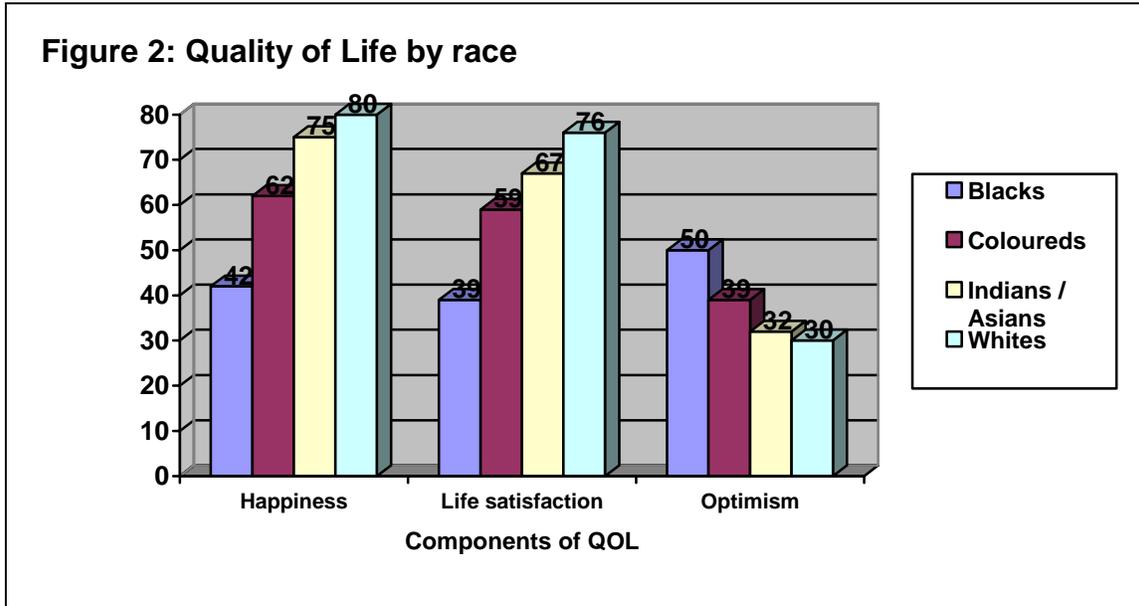
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<sup>2</sup> (Pearson Chi-square = 3187282.6, *df* = 15, *p* = 0.000).

The Pearson Chi-square test showed that there is **no significant difference** in happiness levels between race groups (Pearson Chi-square = 561409.559, *df* = 4, *p* = 0.000).

<sup>3</sup> Life satisfaction - Pearson Chi-square = 3.032, *df* = 15, *p* = 0.000).

that their life will improve in the next 5 years, compared to coloureds (39 percent), Indians / Asians (32 percent) and whites (30 percent)<sup>4</sup>.



### *QOL and gender*

Fadda and Jirón (1999) have argued that gender needs to be taken in to consideration in QOL research. They state that QOL is a subjective perception and men and women differ in their perceptions of their lives, particularly in “gender relations, needs and roles, to access to resources and to decision-making processes within the household” (Fadda & Jirón, 1999, p. 263). In this regard, the present study found that a larger proportion of men (48 percent) than women (40 percent) are ‘happy’ (Figure 3)<sup>5</sup>. Life satisfaction levels also vary between men (50 percent) and women (42 percent)<sup>6</sup>. Views about

<sup>4</sup> Optimism - *Pearson Chi-square* = 1193053.4, *df* = 9, *p* = 0.000).

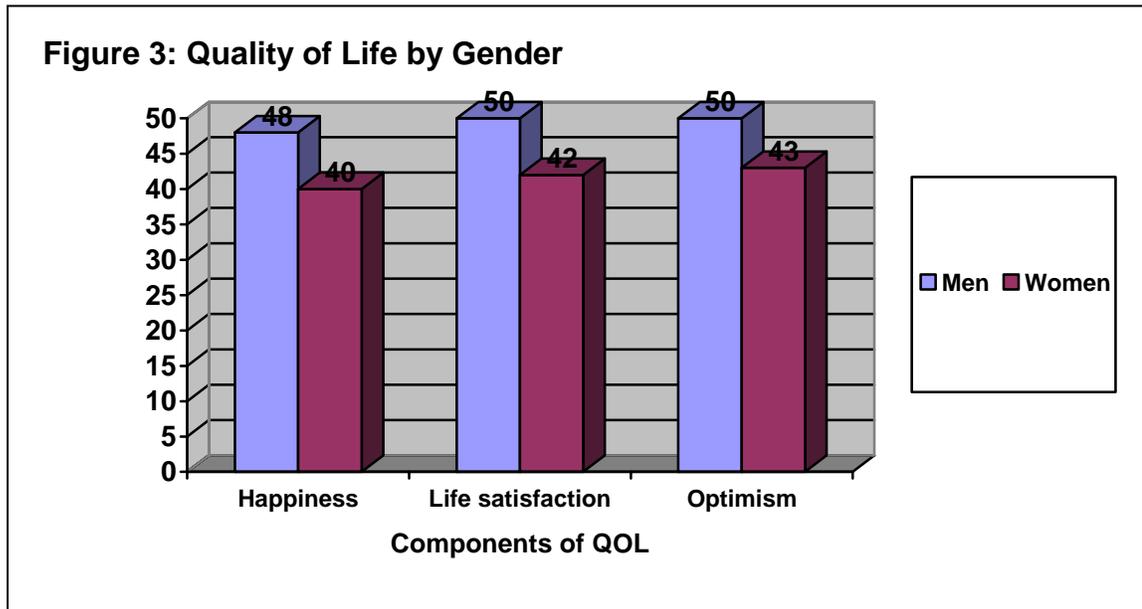
<sup>5</sup> Gender Happiness - *Pearson Chi-square* = 282554.3, *df* = 5, *p* = 0.000).

<sup>6</sup> Gender life satisfaction - *Pearson Chi-square* = 293229.2, *df* = 5, *p* = 0.000).

whether life will improve in the next 5 years differ between men (50 percent) and women (43 percent)<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Gender optimism - *Pearson Chi-square* = 377700.4, *df* = 3, *p* = 0.000).

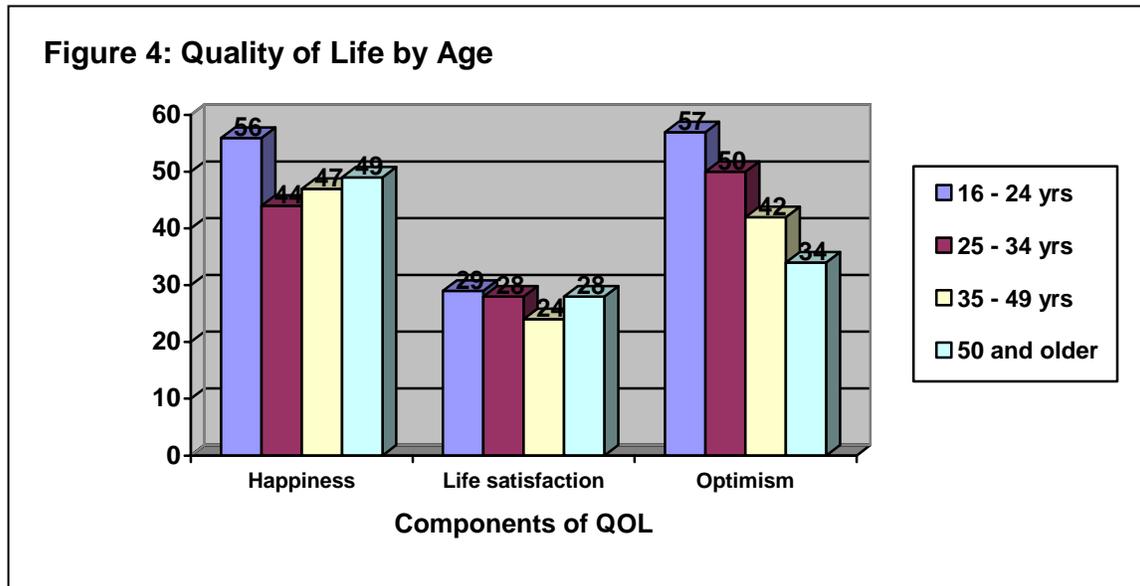


***QOL and age***

Regarding QOL and age, most studies have included research on the elderly and the impact of health-related matters on their QOL (Delaney et al., 2003; Jones, Voaklander, & Johnston, Suarez-Almazor, 2001; Sundt et al., 2000). Also compare Møller and Devey’s (2003) findings that most elderly South Africans are income-poor and living in multi-generational households.

When the data from the present study is disaggregated, one finds that younger respondents are happier than the older respondents (Figure 4). For instance, 56 percent of the respondents in the age group 16 – 24 years indicated that they are ‘happy’ or ‘very happy’ compared to the age groups 25 – 34 years (44 percent), 35 – 49 years (47 percent) and 50 and older age group (49 percent). There is very little variation among the various age groups with regards to life satisfaction. For instance, 29 percent of those in the age group 16 – 24 indicated that they are ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ compared to 28 percent in the 25 – 34 age group, 24 percent (35 – 49 years), and 28 percent (50 and older). The study found that optimism about the future decreases with age. For example, 57 percent

of the younger age group (16 – 24 years) indicated that ‘life will improve in the next 5 years’, compared to 50 percent for the age group 25 – 34 years, 42 percent (35 – 49 years) and 34 percent (50 and older).

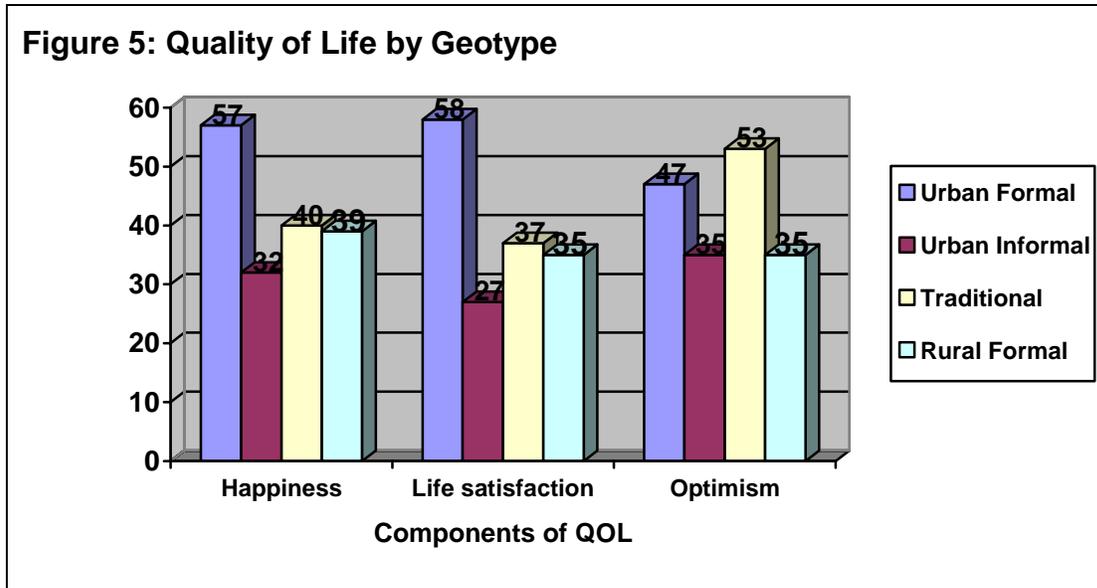


***QOL of geotype***

In this study geographical location refers to urban or rural; and formal, informal or traditional areas. Areas therefore have been categorised as urban-formal, urban-informal, tribal, and rural-formal. Research examining the impact of geotype on one’s QOL is very limited within South Africa. However, a recent South African study found that residents from coastal cities, and Cape Town in particular, enjoyed the highest level of QOL out of all South Africans (Naude, Rossouw & Krugell, 2008). They took non-monetary but objective measures of QOL into consideration, such as literacy levels, life expectancy and environment.

Results from the present study showed that respondents from urban-formal areas displayed the highest proportions of individuals who were ‘happy’ or ‘very happy’ (57 percent) as well as proportions of ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ (58 percent). In both

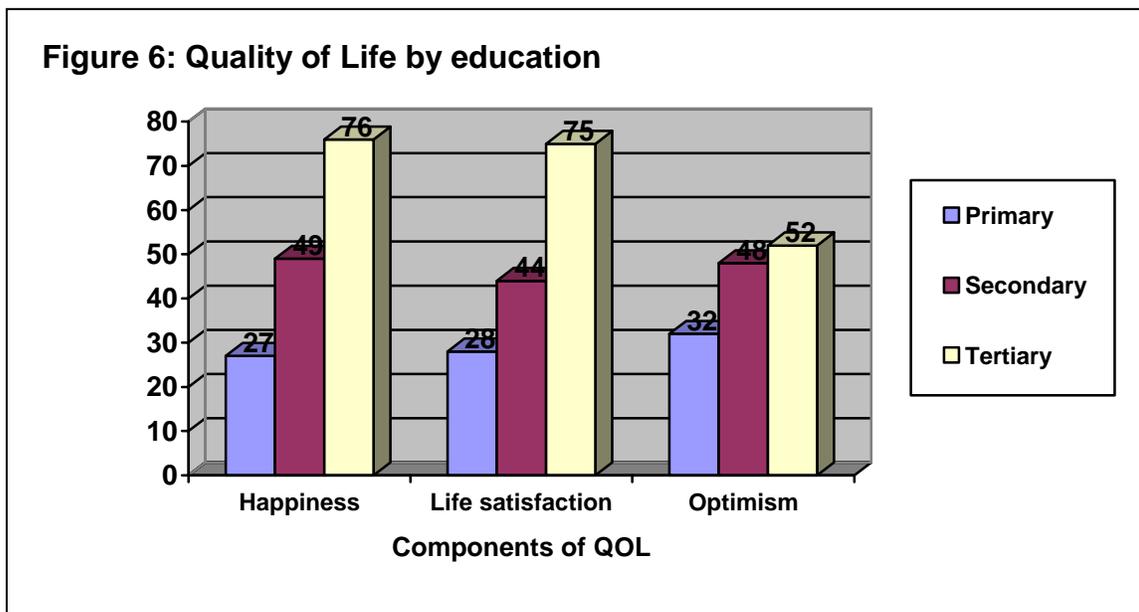
instances these were higher than the national average: 49 percent for happiness and 46 percent for life satisfaction. The urban-formal dwellers were also optimistic that ‘life will improve in the next 5 years’, compared to those people living in urban informal and rural formal areas. However, the respondents from traditional areas seem to most optimistic that their ‘life will improve in the next 5 years’.



### *QOL and education*

Level of education has been highlighted by past research as a variable impacting on quality of life. A 1997 study by Ross and Willigen found that those who were well-educated experienced lower levels of emotional distress as well as lower levels of physical distress. They determined that education often results in paid work and economic resources resulting in higher sense of personal control, and this in turn leads to less emotional distress in one’s life. Similarly, Hayo and Seifert (2003) found that education positively impacted on happiness. While Shinn (1986) also found that educational attainment improved the quality of life of those who lived in Korea, they did not find that this applied to those members of their sample residing in the United States of America. Interestingly, Haller and Hadler’s (2006) findings were contradictory, namely that education did not have a significant effect on happiness.

With regard to the present study, Figure 6 shows that the higher your education the more happy you are. For instance, a larger proportion of respondents (76 percent) with tertiary education indicated to be ‘happy’ or ‘very happy’, while 49 percent was reported for those with secondary education, and 27 percent for those with primary education<sup>8</sup>. Regarding life satisfaction the survey established that respondents with a tertiary education are most satisfied while those with primary education are the least satisfied. For instance, 75 percent of the respondents with tertiary education indicated that they ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with ‘life as a whole these days’ compared to 44 percent of the respondents with secondary and 28 percent with primary education. Those respondents with higher levels of education are more optimistic that life will improve in the next 5 years, compared to those with lower education. About 52 percent of the respondents with tertiary schooling believed that life will improve in the next 5 years while 48 percent was recorded for those with secondary education and 32 percent for those with primary education<sup>9</sup>.



<sup>9</sup> (Pearson Chi-square = 561409.559, df = 6, p = 0.000).

The Pearson Chi-square test showed that there is no significant difference optimism levels amongst respondents with primary, secondary, or tertiary education.

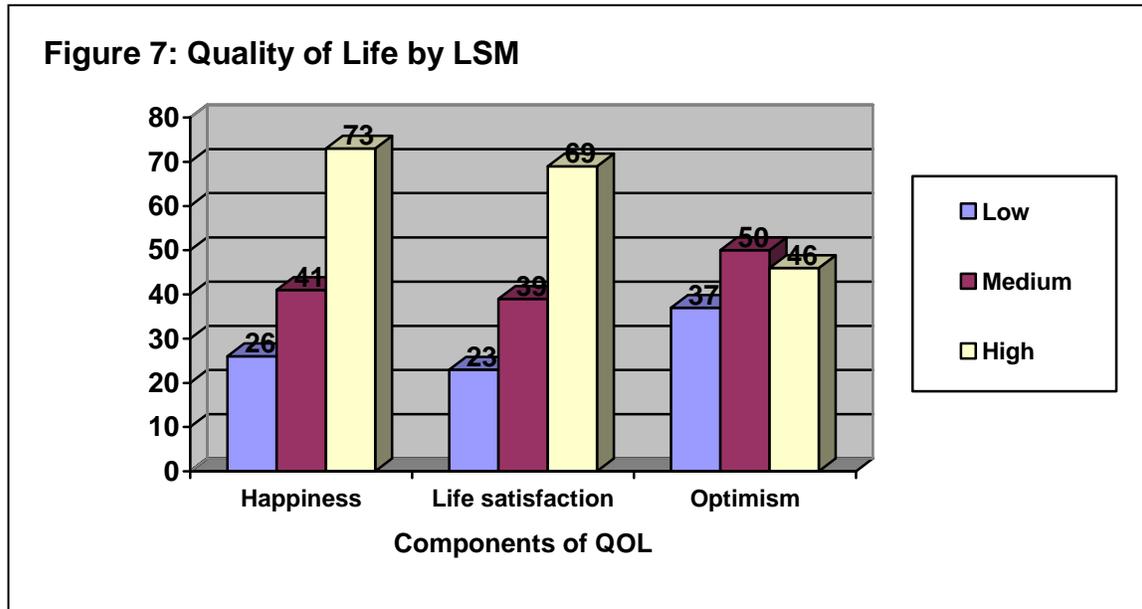
### *QOL and economic status*

As alluded to above, economic status is as significant a predictor of variance in levels of QOL. This is so much so that Ball and Chernova (2008) found that one's income, whether it is absolute income or perception of income in relation to others, was positively and significantly correlated with happiness. Furthermore, they found that it was especially the perception of whether one earned more than others that contributed to happiness.

In South African research, Møller (1999; 2004b) found that income is even more influential a predictor of QOL than race. When one combines race with income level, though black African elites were found to have the most optimistic view of the future than any other group (Møller, 2004b). Economic status also influences the kinds of factors that influence happiness. For example, in the 1999 results of the South African Quality of life Trends Survey, poorer respondents reported that improvement in their material living conditions, such as housing, access to jobs and infrastructure services would make them happy (Møller, 1999). Their richer counterparts stated that a reduction in crime and a stronger economy would make them happy (Møller, 1999). This is in keeping with Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs that only once one's basic needs of food, shelter, and security are met can one be concerned with higher-order needs. Bookwalter and Dalenberg (2004) also noted a distinction in the determinants of respondents' subjective well-being. Transportation and housing is what determined the well-being of poorer households as opposed to sanitation, water, energy, education and health which was important in richer households.

This study's results on happiness and the economic status (measured by LSM) followed a logical pattern, with LSM correlating with happiness (Figure 7). The highest proportion stating that they were either 'happy' or 'very happy' came from the group with a high LSM (73 percent), the next highest proportion from a medium LSM (41 percent), while the lowest proportion came from the low LSM (26 percent). Life satisfaction scores followed the same pattern although proportions were slightly lower: 23 percent, 39

percent, and 69 percent for low, medium and high LSM groups, respectively. It is not surprising that respondents with a low LSM (37 percent) is the least optimistic whether their ‘life will improve in the next 5 years’, compared to those with a medium LSM (50 percent) and high LSM (46 percent).



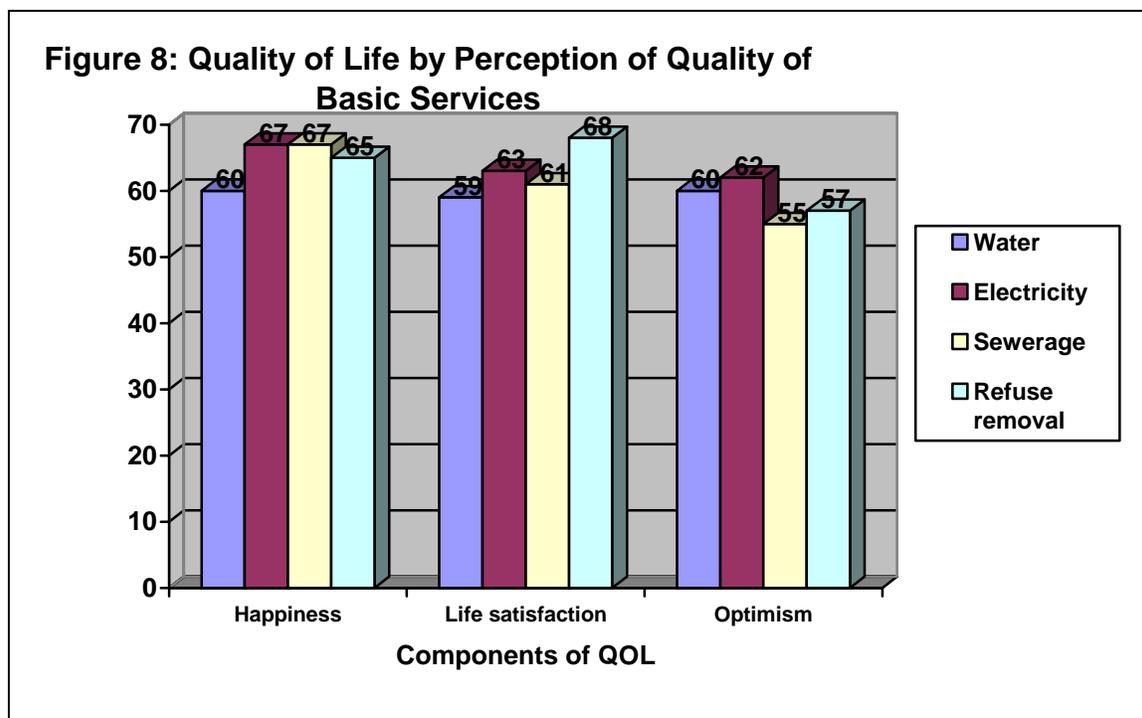
### *QOL and satisfaction with services*

While progress has been made since South Africa’s democracy through its Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) to provide basic services, such as housing, running water and electricity to residents of informal settlements, the backlog is tremendous<sup>10</sup>. Research has predictably shown that lack of these services substantially affects one’s QOL (Møller, 1996; Møller, 1999; Møller & Jackson, 1997). In South Africa, beneficiaries of these basic services have been found to rate themselves as having a higher QOL than non-beneficiaries (Devey & Møller, 2002; Møller, 1996; Møller & Devey, 2003). There is therefore a significant number of South Africans whose lives are

<sup>10</sup> 2007 data from STATSSA’s Community Survey states that 14.4 percent of South African households are informal dwellings, **8,3 percent** have **no toilet facilities**, **7,1 percent of households received no refuse removal services**, 74,4 percent of households had access to piped water within 200 metres, and 80,0 percent, 66,5, and 58,8 percent of households used electricity for lighting, cooking and heating, respectively.

negatively affected by the fact that they do not have access to the basics that make for healthy, hygienic and convenient living conditions.

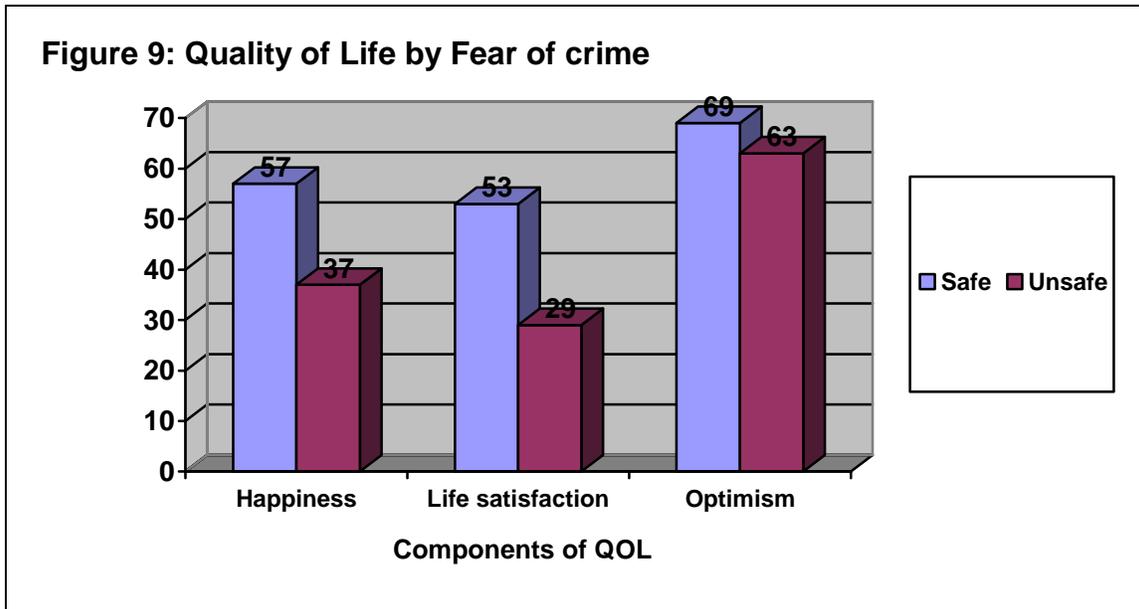
It should be noted here, however, that respondents' opinion on housing was not included. To examine the influence of the quality of basic services on respondents' QOL the survey asked respondents, 'In your opinion, what is the quality of the following services in the area where you live?' Response options with regards to 'water', 'electricity', 'water-borne sewerage' and 'refuse removal' range from a 'very high quality' to 'very poor quality'. The results showed that respondents that are 'happy' or 'very happy' are generally pleased with the quality of service provision, while those who are 'unhappy' or 'very unhappy' are very negative about the quality of service they receive with regards to 'water', 'electricity', 'water-borne sewerage' and 'refuse removal' (Figure 8). Regarding life satisfaction the survey revealed that those respondents who are 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with their life as a whole are also in agreement that the provision of 'water', 'electricity', 'water-borne sewerage' and 'refuse removal' are of a very high quality. The respondents who are optimistic about the future are also those who believe that they receive a high quality service when it comes to the provision of 'water', 'electricity', 'water-borne sewerage' and 'refuse removal'.



### *QOL and fear of crime*

Safety from crime is one of the aspects of their life that South Africans are least satisfied with (along with income levels and job opportunities) (Møller, 2004a). Recent studies from South Africa on QOL and crime has shown that fear of crime reduces perception of QOL even more so than actual criminal victimisation (Møller, 2004c; Møller; 2005; Powdthavee, 2003). Møller's (2004a) proposed explanation for this is that most crimes in her study were property crimes which meant that the victims were therefore higher-income earners who enjoyed a higher standard of living and reported higher levels of satisfaction with life (Møller, 2004a). This explanation has gained plausibility through findings of the 2005 study by Møller which surveyed household members the Eastern Cape Province and found that victims of crime still reported a higher life satisfaction than non-victims if the those victims were materially better-off (Møller, 2005). It was found that, while crime did result in a certain level of stress for victims, the impact of crime on victims' QOL was not nearly as significant as the long-standing issues of racial inequality and poverty. Other interesting findings from this study were that crimes that most negatively impacted on individuals' QOL were individual crimes, rather than property crimes; and that individuals who felt vulnerable to crime had a sense of general vulnerability to all misfortune.

Figure 9 reveals that a large proportion of respondents who are 'happy' or 'very happy' feel very safe (57 percent). In contrast, a smaller proportion of respondents who are 'happy' or 'very happy' feel 'very unsafe' (37 percent). Life satisfaction results showed that a larger proportion of respondents who are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their life as whole feel safe (53 percent), while a smaller proportion who are 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' feel 'very unsafe' (29 percent). About 69 percent of the respondents who think that their life will improve in the next 5 years feel safe, compared to 63 percent of the respondents that feel 'very unsafe'. In sum, those respondents that are happy, satisfied with their life as a whole and optimistic about the future personally feel safer than those who are unhappy, dissatisfied with their life and pessimistic about the future.



***Predicting Quality of Life***

Linear regression analysis was used to test for the contribution of each independent variable in predicting the dependent variable. In other words, the independent variables were regressed on the dependent variable which is ‘QOL’. Using stepwise regression, three models are presented (see Table 1). These models allow us to indicate the relative strength of each independent variable in predicting QOL as measured by happiness, life satisfaction and optimism. Model 1 (Happiness) explained 23.7 percent of the variance with LSM, fear of crime, race and the satisfaction with basic services index (SBSI) as the most significant predictors. Model 2 (Life satisfaction) explained 22.9 percent of the variance with LSM, fear of crime, SBSI and race as the most significant predictors. Model 3 (Optimism) explained 1.8 percent of the variance with race, geotype, SBSI and LSM as the most significant predictors. The section that follows discusses the results of the series of regression in more detail.

**Table1: Quality of life by independent variables**

	Model 1 Happiness		Model 2 Life satisfaction		Model 3 Optimism	
	<i>b</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>Beta</i>
(Constant)	3.809		3.723		1.974	
Fear of crime	.134	.147*	.139	.151*	-.001	-.001
Sex / gender	-.039	-.018	.012	.005	.188	.054*
Race	-.141	-.137*	-.121	-.117*	.139	.088*
LSM	-.445	-.289*	-.455	-.292*	-.142	.060*
Geotype	-.092	-.087*	-.097	-.091*	-.139	-.087*
Education	-.154	-.076*	-.124	-.060*	-.105	-.034
Age	.017	.023	.005	.006	.061	.053*
Satisfaction with Basic Services Index	.085	.130*	.096	.144*	.087	.086*

B is the unstandardised coefficients; Beta (B) is the standardised regression coefficient

\* Significant at .05 level

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>R</i>	.489	.480	.144
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.239	.231	.021
<i>Adj. R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.237	.229	.018

## VI. Discussion of Results

The general picture of QOL in South Africa is that roughly half of its citizens are happy, satisfied and optimistic for the future. In terms of sketching the demographic profile of the happiest and most satisfied of its citizens, those who are most educated; have the highest economic status; perceive themselves as receiving high quality basic services; and who feared crime the least enjoy the highest QOL. It is important to note, however, that had housing been included in the perceptions of basic services asked of respondents, the results might have looked very different. Latest statistics show that 14.4 percent of South Africans live in informal dwellings (STATSSA, 2007). The overwhelming majority of these South Africans are black Africans. Many of the public protests in the last few years have been to express frustration with lack of or inadequate housing (Violent protests over SA housing, 2007; Mass protests against housing shortages in

South Africa, 2005; Struggle for Housing in Kliptown, South Africa Continues, 2007; Marrian, 2009).

Whites (follow closely by Indians / Asians and black Africans substantially lower than all groups) have the highest QOL. Black Africans, while reporting the lowest levels of life satisfaction and happiness, were the most optimistic of all race groups, which affirms other research (Roberts, 2006). Also in keeping with results of past studies (e.g. Roberts, 2006), whites displayed the lowest levels of optimism. Interestingly, however, Indians / Asians displayed almost as low levels of optimism as whites, which seems to suggest that race is overridden by economic status<sup>11</sup> as a predictor of optimism in the case of Indians / Asians.

Another unusual finding was that individuals with a high economic status were also the most optimistic. This is interesting, as, given the finding above, that whites and Indians / Asians are the least optimistic, one might have expected those with higher economic status (who are more likely to be white or Indian / Asian) to be low on optimism. Once again, the idea that economic status is more significant in determining QOL than race is supported in this finding.

Males and females seem to have note-worthy differences in QOL, with males reporting a higher QOL than females. This finding suggests that, despite numerous efforts by government, such as the provision of social grants to address the difficulties faced by vulnerable groups, such as women and the elderly (Office of the Presidency), we still have a long way to go as a country.

Age only significantly predicted optimism, with younger respondents more optimistic about the future than the older respondents. Age does not however, have predictive value for differences with regards to life satisfaction and happiness.

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<sup>11</sup> Note that in this study, the living standard measure is being used as proxy for economic status. It is however acknowledged that the living standard measure is only one component of economic status.

An interesting finding from the data, and one that could have methodological implications for future studies is that optimism did not form as big a component of QOL as life satisfaction and happiness. It would be interesting if future studies into QOL would test optimism to determine whether or not it forms a substantial enough part of the QOL construct to be considered a facet of QOL.

Most of these results have been fairly predictable and consistent with previous research (Klasen, 1997; Powdathee, 2003; Roberts, 2006).

## **VII. Conclusion**

South Africa comes from a past of great struggle against injustice and inequality. While great strides have been made to afford all its citizens freedom and equal access to rights and resources, the struggle for freedom has now been replaced with the struggle for an acceptable quality of life.

The South African government's response to its citizens' needs has differed in accordance with the three main stages that have ensued since South Africa's democracy. First there was the Mandela era in a fresh-faced and newly-democratic South Africa in which the idea of the 'rainbow nation' was emphasized. It was a time of reparations with the endeavours of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission at the forefront leading this process. South Africa's victory at the 1995 Rugby World Cup on home grounds was an event that epitomised the feeling of hope and optimism that pervaded the country at the time. Møller's research (Møller, 2004) found that the feel-good factor of Mandela's message significantly impacted on South Africans' perceptions of their QOL.

The end of Nelson Mandela's term in 1999 as president also saw the end of this 'honeymoon' period and saw government needing to knuckle down and address the bread-and-butter issues that still concerned the majority of South Africans. This new era, led by South Africa's second democratically-elected president, Thabo Mbeki ushered in a

period focused on economic policies and service delivery. By 1999, South Africans' view of the quality of their lives, while largely determined by the reality of their lives, was still influenced by their level of optimism about the future (Møller, 2001).

During his two-term and nine-year tenure, Mbeki's focus was on putting the mechanisms in place, such as policies and state institutions, to facilitate the delivery of basic services. Mbeki experienced many capacity constraints however, and towards the end of his second term, the masses were becoming impatient and there were a spate of public protests. South Africans wanted to see tangible improvements to their personal and daily lives. The data on which the current study's findings are based comes from this twilight period of the Mbeki dispensation. In keeping with the dissatisfaction that the masses were displaying during this time, the findings from this study reflects that optimism was no longer enough to temper South Africans' perception of their QOL. A good illustration of this is the fact that while black Africans display the highest levels of optimism, they have the lowest level of QOL overall.

This leads into the current term of President Jacob Zuma. The latest elections have been the most controversial in South Africa's democratic history. For the first time since democracy the African National Congress (ANC), South Africa's ruling party, appeared to be fractured. Certain sectors of ANC supporters were unhappy and one consequence of this was the formation of the Congress of the People (COPE) with many prominent ANC leaders joining this political party. One lesson that was learnt from this time was that Zuma's government needs to always be aware of and take into consideration the mood in the country.

In the State of the Nation Address by the newly-elected president Zuma, he outlined the key areas his dispensation would focus on (South Africa, 2009). This includes reducing job losses through the 'training lay-off' process, a "scaled-up" industrial policy action plan for the specific industries as well as "fast-tracking" of an expanded public works programme and the community work programme. In terms of education, an early childhood development programme would be stepped up to ensure universal access to

Grade R and doubling the number of zero- to four-year-old children in early childhood development institutions by 2014. Other education-related goals are to improve school management through compulsory formal training of teachers to be promoted as principals or heads of department; increase enrolment rates in secondary schools to 95 percent by 2014; and the use of "innovative measures" to re-enroll pupils who have dropped out of school.

In this address Zuma also proposed a reduction in the cost of telecommunications to be reduced and the roll-out of digital broadcasting infrastructure and signal distribution transmitters. He also emphasised the continued importance of governmental social grants although not in way which could lead to dependency. Lastly, while nation-building was mentioned in this presidential address, no goals or programmes were identified as relating to this objective. It should be noted, however that programme and policies to promote social cohesion has already been included in other strategy documents.

The present study found that race and economic status (as represented by the LSM) are still the biggest factors in determining quality of life in South Africa. When one analyses government's objectives in relation to this, socio-economic status and by extension race, is a common underlying theme. From trying to mediate the effect of job losses through the 'training lay-off' process and public works programme and community work programme, to continued emphasis on social grants. This might not be as much a reflection of the extent to which the new dispensation has its finger on the pulse of the nation, as is a reality that socio-economic status and race are integral influences in most problems hindering progress in countries.

While this study has found that the majority of South Africans are happy and satisfied with their lives, there are certain groups that government should be focusing on. This includes the least educated, the lowest SES groups, and women. Although social grants are currently available to children, the elderly, and the disabled, the working poor and unemployed are not being included in these.

Something else the results of this study draws attention to is whether or not optimism should be a component of the quality of life construct. Optimism did not seem to predict QOL scores very well. When one contextualises these findings, however, we might be able to conclude that given the current economic and political climate in South Africa and in the world at large, optimism is no longer a good predictor of quality life. While many South Africans are still quite optimistic for the future, the reality of the lived day-to-day existence is more influential in determining their subjective well-being.

The mood of a country's people is an integral factor in the progress of that nation. Governments are increasingly affording the subjective well-being of their citizens importance in considering policies and programmes (Roberts, 2006). Attempts to determine what makes their citizens happy (Donovan, Halpern, & Sargeant, 2002) and using this as a barometer of national progress more so than gross national product (Priesner, 1999) is becoming increasingly common. The lesson to South Africa therefore is that, while South Africans have not given up on the future, their present is not sufficiently satisfying to keep people content. It is therefore vital that the new administration delivers on their promises from the recent elections, as South Africans' tolerance and patience is waning.

Suggestion for future research is to place factors that may influence QOL together as conceptual models, for example an economic model might include unemployment, economic status, and whether or not one receives basic services.

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