



National Identity and Pride in a multicultural society: The South African perspective

Jarè Struwig & Arlene Grossberg

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South African society characterised by a diverse plurality of groups “named” in terms of specific identities by others, or who have “claimed” exclusive identities for themselves.

Concurrently, the contemporary world is characterised by the conflicting pressures of globalization and fragmentation.

South Africa has to deal with those same issues overlaid on to the apartheid social contours and erosions.

Ten years into the new democracy, and the abolishment of apartheid racial identities, the question now concerns:

- **How do various sectors of South Africans construe an inclusive national identity and how is this contested?**
- **How does this national identity relate to perceptions of democracy, trust in the government and other key institutions in the democratic system and to satisfaction with living conditions?**
- **How do we compare with other countries in terms of national pride and identity?**

Why focus on National identity?

National identity has a strong relationship with practical concerns about the establishment of 'national legitimacy' and stable democracy.

National identity is one of the most discussed but least understood concepts of the late 20th century . The precise definition of national identity is unclear.

There is a constant need to explore those processes which are responsible for the *creation* and *recreation* of national culture, identity, pride and consciousness.


METHODOLOGY

□ Data for this study is drawn from the International Social Surveys Programme (ISSP) module which was fielded in the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS).

□ The ISSP is a program for international comparative attitude studies. The module national identity was fielded in 1995 and again in 2003.

□ South Africa became a member of the ISSP in 2002 and has therefore only fielded one module on national identity namely the 2003 module.

□ 2003 data was only available from South Africa and comparative data in this study is thus 2003 data for South Africa and 1995 data for all other countries.

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- In this study:
 - In developing a typology of *national identity/national pride*, the ISSP questionnaire was scrutinized for variables that are associated with *national identity* and *national pride*.
 - Typical ISSP questions relating to national identity /and pride were cross tabulated with *biographical variables* to draw important tendencies. The biographical variables LSM, race, province, age, gender etc.
 - Key aspects of sustainable democracy, such as acceptance of a democratic system, institutional trust and perceptions of living conditions are described and related to national identity.

Most Important Self-Identification descriptor

	Botswana (%)	Zambia (%)	Mozambique (%)	Lesotho (%)	SA (%)
Current/previous occupation	6	13.9	17.8	12.6	13.9
Race	0.3	.3	1.3		
Language/tribe/ethnic	27.3	9.8	14.1	4.9	
Gender	2.1	1.5	1.6	.3	8.5
Age group	.5	.5	2.2	.8	3.4
Religion	7.6	17.9	4.1	11.6	9.6
Preferred political party, group, movement	.5	.3	.3	.1	.6
Nationality	11.9	.3	11.9	11.9	7.4
Family or marital status	-	-	-	-	
Social class	5.9	14.3	1.8	9.9	1.3
Part of the country you live	.3	.4	.3	2.6	3.2

Most important Self-Identification by race, 2003 ISSP survey

	Black (%)	Coloured (%)	Asian (%)	White (%)	Total
Current/previous occupation/homemaker	16.1	8.5	16.0	11.5	13.9
Race/ethnic background	27.1	11.1	9.7	7.4	20.7
Gender	9.9	11.6	2.8	2.4	8.5
Age group	4.1	3.4	2.1	1.4	3.4
Religion	6.1	13.0	22.2	12.2	9.6
Preferred political party, group, movement	7.7	8.8		3.3	6.6
Nationality	7.5	8.5	7.6	5.7	7.4
Family or marital status	23.5	23.9	23.8	23.4	31.4
Social class	5.5	2.8		2.7	1.3
Part of South Africa that you live in	3.3	3.1	2.8	3.0	3.2

Allegiance to the country

Eighty three percent of South Africans have stated that they would rather be a citizen of South Africa than any other country. This shows there is a strong allegiance to the country.

Statement	Black	Coloured	Indian	White	TOTAL
Would rather be a citizen of South Africa than any other country	87.4	68	79.7	65.2	83

SA better country

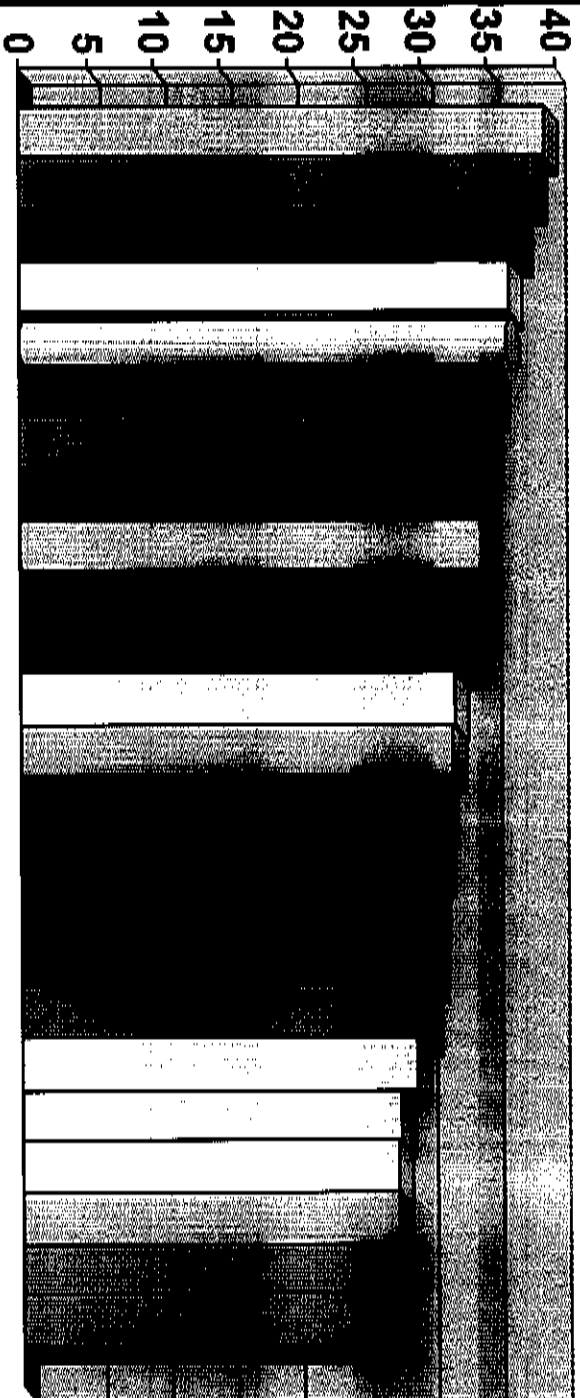
Statement	Black	Coloured	Indian	White	Total
South Africa is a better country than most other countries	69.7	54.3	64.4	45.3	58

**Comparative analysis of national pride
and national identity using ISSP data
(1995-2003)**

**Pride=democracy, political influence, economic
achievements, social security system, sport, science,
literary achievements and history.**

**National identity=birthright, citizenship, obey laws,
church ancestry.**

National Pride Comparative analysis (ISSP) multi-item analysis (mean)



- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ireland | <input type="checkbox"/> United States | <input type="checkbox"/> Canada |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Austria | <input type="checkbox"/> New Zealand | <input type="checkbox"/> South Africa |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Norway | <input type="checkbox"/> Great Britain | <input type="checkbox"/> The Netherlands |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Japan | <input type="checkbox"/> Spain | <input type="checkbox"/> The Philippines |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Germany (West) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sweden | <input type="checkbox"/> Bulgaria |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Germany (East) | <input type="checkbox"/> Slovenia | <input type="checkbox"/> Italy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Czech Republic | <input type="checkbox"/> Hungary | <input type="checkbox"/> Slovakia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poland | <input type="checkbox"/> Russia | <input type="checkbox"/> Latvia |

National identity comparative analysis (ISSP)

	Important and very important			
	SA	USA	IRL	CND
Truly South African/American/Canadian/Irish is to have been born in (Respondent's country)	92	69	86	46
Truly South African/American/Canadian/Irish have (Respondent's country's) citizenship	94	93	91	87
Truly South African/American/Canadian/Irish lived in (Respondent's country) for most of ones life	86	73	82	52
Truly South African/American/Canadian/Irish speak at least one official language	90	93	42	81
Truly South African/American/Canadian/Irish member of the Christian church	80	54	55	24
Truly South African/American/Canadian/Irish respect (Respondent's country's) political institutions/laws	79	93	89	94
Truly South African/American/Canadian/Irish feel South African/American/Canadian/Irish	88	87	96	88
Truly South African have South African ancestry	85	-	-	-

Association between NP NI/and socio-political conditions

Variable	National identity		National pride	
	ρ	*P value	ρ	*P value
Education	0.046	<0.001	-0.123	<0.001
Employment status	0.023	=0.002	-0.032	<0.001
Household income	0.054	=0.004	-0.226	<0.001
*Expectancy that live will improve	0.059	<0.001	0.087	<0.001
*Satisfaction with the way democracy works in SA	0.179	<0.001	0.072	<0.001
*Trust in National Government	0.081	<0.001	0.126	<0.001
*Trust in Courts	0.075	<0.001	0.076	<0.001
*Satisfaction with cutting crime	0.029	=0.012	0.018	<0.001
Satisfaction with job creation	0.020	<0.004	0.072	<0.001

Conclusion

Findings indicate that many people are proud of South Africa and have a strong allegiance to the country. Though South Africa has a short history of inclusive democracy, it compares favorably with established democracies in terms of national pride.

➤ Our research shows that national identity relates to socio-economic living conditions and perceptions of democracy, trust in the government and other key institutions in the democratic system and to satisfaction with living conditions.

➤ Favourable socio-economic-political conditions encourage the development of a strong common identity. In many instances, disfavoured conditions weaken a sense of national identity and pride.

➤ Daniel and de Vos (HSRC, 2002, 27) suggest that there is little cause for complacency in this country, that the democratization process remains fragile, with high levels of dissatisfaction over issues such as crime, violence, and too little faith in the judicial process and rule of law.

➤ In a diverse multicultural society like South Africa national unity can be promoted through principles based on the constitution - the construction of an open and inclusive vision of national identity stressing a common commitment to civic culture including the promotion of mutual tolerance and the amelioration of social and economic disadvantage among citizens.