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**The Anxious and the Climbers:
Ambivalent Attitudes towards Democracy among
South Africa's Middle Class**

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Abstract

Beyond the hopes placed in Africa's emergent middle class as an engine of economic growth, some analysts see this group as a bastion of political stability and enduring democratisation across the continent. This paper's approach differs from that of most studies, which treat the middle class as a homogeneous group, through two key contributions. First, using cluster analysis, I propose a novel way of conceptualising social class that broadly draws on the Weberian idea of shared life chances. I apply this method to South Africa and identify five social classes characterised by their members' living standards, overall life satisfaction, and self-perceived upward mobility. Second, the empirical analysis reveals significant discrepancies in attitudes towards democracy between the downwardly and upwardly mobile strata of the middle class, which I term the "anxious" and the "climbers," respectively. On the one hand, the "climbers" show the highest generic support for democracy as a form of government, whereas the "anxious" middle class displays feelings of resignation. On the other hand, I find indicative evidence of a status-quo bias among the "climbers." Rather than assuming a more demanding or critical stance in politics, they allow their political priorities to be at least partly shaped by an interest in securing and expanding attained living standards; being upwardly mobile is even associated with a higher tolerance for government attempts to constrain freedom of information, opinion, or expression.

Keywords: South Africa, middle class, democratic consolidation, political attitudes

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1 Introduction

The wave of upbeat stories on African growth as a positive outlier in a world increasingly characterised by economic volatility, financial turbulence, and political instability has been excitedly embraced by the business community.¹ More than a few companies, management consultancies, and fund managers have celebrated the continent as the “new frontier.” A central protagonist in this optimistic narrative is Africa’s emergent middle class. Encouraged by an influential report by the African Development Bank (2011), the business community has

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set great expectations in the face of a massive number of new middle-class consumers (McKinsey 2010, 2012; Deloitte 2012). Recently, however, more critical voices have emerged. Depending on the underlying understanding of class, the storylines range from the middle class as the star of hope for a better future to the doom of a missing middle squeezed between persistent poverty and an increasingly rich elite.

Beyond the hopes that Africa's new middle class will become an engine of economic growth through shifting consumption and production patterns, some analysts expect this class to foster stability, progress, and democratic consolidation throughout the continent. However, not everyone equates the springing up of shopping malls, European-style coffee shops, movie theatres, and new housing complexes in a number of African cities (Resnick 2015) with the rise of a growing, politically conscious middle class that supports democracy and refocuses attention in public politics toward "higher-order" needs such as the promotion of human rights and condemnation of corruption. To what extent do rising incomes and falling poverty rates in a number of African countries provide a necessary or even sufficient condition for democratic consolidation and good governance in these societies?

Generally, it seems that the historical role attributed to the middle class in the developed North, as the backbone of both democracy and long-term economic growth (Birdsall 2010), is not only over-simplistic but has also frequently been superimposed onto the African context without substantial knowledge about this so-called emergent middle. While analysts increasingly argue that estimations of the size and economic potential of Africa's new middle classes may have been exaggerated (Credit Suisse 2015), knowledge on the political values, attitudes and behaviours of these new "non-poor" is just beginning to evolve. The present paper aims to provide new insights in this regard, with a particular focus on the South African case. It makes two main contributions.

First, recognising that material wealth is a necessary but insufficient condition for the way social class is measured and understood, I propose a novel framework for conceptualising social class that offers a more nuanced picture than standard approaches in the economic literature. Specifically, sharing some commonalities with Sen's (1993) capability approach to well-being, I follow the broadly Weberian perspective that members of the same class should share common "life chances." These denote the opportunities that each individual has to reach a position in life in terms of procuring goods, having a career, and attaining inner satisfaction (Weber 1978 [1922]; Breen 2005). Using data from the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS), I translate these three aspects into three main indicators: (i) an asset-based measure of "objective" living standards, (ii) a measure of "subjective" life satisfaction, and (iii) a measure of perceived upward social mobility. Instead of imposing arbitrary class thresholds, I use a clustering algorithm to partition the survey population into five internally coherent classes: (i) the "poor," who lead the most precarious lives with limited opportunities for improvement; (ii) the "strugglers," who share many characteristics with the poor but are highly optimistic regarding their chances for upward mobility; (iii) the downwardly mo-

bile stratum of the middle class, whom I call the “anxious” given their self-reported fears of not being able to sustain their position in society; (iv) the upwardly mobile stratum of the middle class, whom I call the “climbers” given their high aspirations to move up the social ladder; and (v) the “elite,” who are the only class able to afford a luxurious lifestyle.

Second, on this basis, I provide evidence regarding the extent to which there is an identifiable link between class membership and people's general attitudes towards democracy, their assessment of the functioning of the public sector, and their demands to improve government performance and accountability in South Africa. Specifically, I explore the extent to which the middle class can be expected to aid the endurance of democracy and shape the public policy agenda in ways that reduce corruption, improve service provision, and tackle persistent poverty and inequality. I find significant discrepancies in the attitudes towards democracy between the downwardly and upwardly mobile strata of the middle class – that is, between the anxious and the climbers. On the one hand, the climbers show the highest generic support for democracy as a form of government, whereas the anxious middle class displays feelings of resignation. On the other hand, I find indicative evidence of a status-quo bias among the climbers. Rather than assuming a more demanding or critical stance in politics, they allow their political priorities to be at least partly shaped by an interest in securing and expanding attained living standards. Socially upward mobility can furthermore be associated with a higher tolerance for government attempts to constrain freedom of information, opinion, or expression.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews core theoretical arguments and empirical findings that link the middle class to democracy. Section 3 explains the clustering approach and characterises the five social classes identified. On this basis, Section 4 empirically investigates the link between social class and political attitudes. Section 5 summarises the findings and concludes.

2 The Link between Socio-Economic Development, Class Attitudes, and Democratisation

Over the past decade, the middle class has become an increasingly popular way to explain heterogeneous paths of development in the context of today's low- and middle-income countries (see, among others, Cárdenas et al. 2011; Bhalla 2007), and high expectations have been placed on its transformative potential (Giesbert and Schotte 2016). Middle-class citizens have been assumed to be crucial to economic reform (Birdsall et al. 2000); to supporting democracy, good governance, the rule of law, and property rights (Birdsall 2010); to objecting and fighting corruption (Birdsall 2015); and to promoting public investment in health and education (Loayza et al. 2012) and infrastructure (Bhalla 2007).

However, links between the size of the middle class and desired outcomes – especially democratisation – have generally been based either on historical comparisons with the role

played by the bourgeois middle class in nineteenth-century Europe,² or on observed cross-country correlations (see, among others, Barro 1999; Chun et al. 2011; Easterly 2001; Easterly et al. 2006; Josten 2013; Loayza et al. 2012; Solimano 2008). But what are the conditions or mechanisms through which the emergence of a larger middle class is likely to support democratisation from a micro-sociological or behavioural perspective?

The process of modernisation seems key in this regard, as it is expected to enhance people's capabilities and loosens constraints on autonomous human choice in three important ways (Inglehart and Welzel 2005a, 2010): (i) by raising incomes, which makes people more materially independent; (ii) by increasing formal education and access to information through mass media, which makes people intellectually more independent (Bell 1973; Lerner 1958; Lipset 1960); and (iii) by diversifying human interaction and allowing people to connect and disconnect more freely, which makes them socially more independent (Durkheim 1988 [1887]; Simmel 1984 [1908]; Tönnies 1855 [1887]). This increased material, intellectual, and social independence can be assumed to nurture a sense of existential security and autonomy that leads people to become more articulate, prioritise self-expression values, and demand institutions that allow them to participate in decision-making. While the interests of the poor are considered to be dominated by survival values, which subordinate human freedoms to the satisfaction of basic needs, the emergence of larger, more affluent, and better-educated middle classes has been associated with this modernisation process. As the middle class expands in a non-democratic regime, repressing these liberty aspirations would become increasingly costly for the ruling elite and conflict with economic efficiency considerations (Inglehart and Welzel 2005a, 2010).

However, three main arguments challenge this perspective.

First, particularly with respect to the developing world's "new middle classes," scholars continue to stumble over the question of whether economic security enables or deters middle-class demands for democracy and good governance. A number of studies have pointed to the need to distinguish the already established and secure upper middle class from a lower stratum that remains at the edge to poverty (Birdsall et al. 2014). While some scholars consider the high economic vulnerability of this lower group as a sign of their dominant concern with "survival," others see them as a "catalyst class" that has the greatest interest in becoming a motor for political and economic reform, whereas the upper middle class's desire for stability and securing obtained privileges opposes attempts to overturn the status quo (see Ansell and Samuels 2010; Fukuyama 2014; Wietzke and Sumner 2014).

A *second* and related argument concerns the theorised link between socio-economic development and empowerment, which relies heavily on the assumption that the private sector

2 Analogies to the Western European experience are often flawed because of the different social conditions in the Global South and because, even within Europe, the middle class was not always unambiguously supportive of democracy and – as in case of monarchic France or absolutist Germany – sometimes even reinforced authoritarianism (Bigot 2012; Rosenfeld 2016).

is the main source of employment, granting the middle class financial independence from the state. In many late-developing countries, however, growth has been state-led and accompanied by a large, patronage-based public sector (Rosenfeld 2016). Several authors have argued that the resulting reliance on the state places important constraints on the middle class's autonomy and ability to become an agent of change (see Handley (2015) for a discussion on the African context).³ This concern is particularly relevant once we bear in mind that, in recent times, the most prominent threat to democracies has not been revolutions or military coups, but long-standing rulers clinging onto power.

The *third* argument concerns the reliability of existing empirical evidence in support of a link between socio-economic development and democracy via a change in value orientations, generally relying on cross-country analyses. *Firstly*, there is the question of the direction of causality. Several scholars have argued that democratic mass values are not a precondition, but emerge through habitation once well-functioning democratic institutions are in place (Jackman and Miller 1998; Muller and Seligson 1994; Rustow 1970).⁴ *Secondly*, Acemoglu and Robinson and co-authors (2009) have argued that the positive relationship between income per capita and the level of – or shifts to – democracy in cross-country analyses is driven by omitted country-level factors such as history and geography. *Thirdly*, there is the question of whether the linkage between socio-economic development and a rising emphasis on self-expression values detected at the country or societal level is also reflected at the individual level.

Country-specific studies for sub-Saharan Africa at best support this linkage only partly. In the case of Zambia, for instance, Danielle Resnick (2015) investigated the role of the middle class in democratic consolidation, with a particular focus on the relationship between class, political participation, trust, and values. Her study reveals that despite holding strong values in some regards, Zambia's middle class is less likely to vote or demonstrate. This finding may partly be explained by this group's distrust in political institutions, but opposes general propositions on the political activism of the middle class acknowledged by other studies. Moreover, her results suggest that the largest difference in views is between the rich and the poor at the two extremes, rather than between the middle class and the rest. This may be interpreted as supportive evidence for a mediating role of the middle class in society. Robert Mattes (2015) concluded that black middle-class South Africans (including the black elite) do not exhibit strictly more democratic behaviour than their poorer counterparts; they

3 This argument shares similarities with Barrington Moore's (1966) famous analysis of France. He argued that only societies with a sufficiently strong bourgeoisie would become democratic, whereas societies in which the land-owning elite is so strong that the emerging bourgeoisie has no other option but to enter into an alliance with them would turn into dictatorships (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006).

4 Inglehart and Welzel (2005a) attempted to rebut this argument, emphasising that demands for political self-expression, representation, and suffrage historically arose within authoritarian societies and led to mass demands for democracy, even in societies that had no experience with its practice (see also Markoff 1996; Finer 1997).

even tend to be more likely to exit the democratic process rather than to voice their concerns through voting or other forms of political engagement. However, this group's policy priorities underpin Inglehart's post-materialist theory to some extent: Mattes (2015) confirmed that black middle-class respondents are overall more likely to prioritise higher-order needs of good governance and self-expression and be less concerned with basic needs than their poorer peers.

3 The Conceptualisation of Social Class

The way in which the middle class is defined and conceptualised will be of significance for any conclusion drawn, not only regarding this group's size, but also for the estimated impact of class on whatever outcome of interest (Burger et al. 2014), including its role in politics and relevance for policymaking (Visagie and Posel 2013; Visagie 2015).

3.1 *Rival Class Concepts*

As a sociological concept, we may agree that social class broadly identifies a group of social actors who share a common position in the national distribution of power, generally defined in terms of people's access to desired (economic or non-economic) resources (or their lack thereof) (Arthur 2014). While most class concepts may conform to this general definition, it still leaves many aspects of class unclarified – first and foremost concerning which key resources are relevant in determining class status.

Within the Marxist tradition, society is divided along the lines of ownership and non-ownership of property, which translates into a clash of antagonistic material class interests. In this setting, the material welfare of the capitalist class causally depends upon the material deprivations of the working class, who are denied access to certain productive resources. Weber expanded the Marxist notion of class to also include not only income but also "security of employment, promotion opportunities, long-term income prospects and the general array of social and material advantages that Weber referred to as a person's market situation or 'life chances'" (Southall 2016: 6).

It is difficult to deny that Weber's multidimensional approach seems to offer more purchase in analysing patterns of social stratification, although the concept's empirical operationalisation remains challenging. In order to derive a comprehensive measure of social class, one would ideally like to have information on a broad range of factors (Cheeseman 2015), which could include the respondent's family background, education, job, and wage earnings; household characteristics such as housing type and ownership of assets; and self-perceived life chances. However, to keep definitions workable and cope with data limitations, social scientists frequently revert to singular indicators of "life chances" such as education and occupation (for South Africa see Visagie and Posel 2013; Seekings and Natrass 2008; Southall 2016) or income (see inter alia AfDB 2011). Definitions based on the latter have been particu-

larly controversial and subject to heated debates in the literature (for an overview on South Africa see Zizzamia et al. 2016).

Most relevant in the context of this paper are those conceptualisations of social class that authors have used when studying political class attitudes based on opinion survey data. Class analyses prove particularly challenging in this context, given that large cross-country opinion polls such as the World Values Survey (WVS) or the Afrobarometer do not generally record information on respondents' incomes, mainly because these one-shot questions have been found to generate unreliable answers.⁵ Nonetheless, class definitions can hardly do without any information on material well-being. To circumvent this problem, scholars have derived alternative ways of measuring living standards. Preferably, if available, an asset index can be constructed,⁶ although this is complicated by the limited asset information that most of these polls provide. Alternatively, both Cheeseman (2015) and Mattes (2015) have proposed a rule to distinguish the middle class from the poor using a question that captures physiological security or lived poverty, which they compare to alternative definitions based on occupation (full-time employment) and education (post-secondary educational training or university). However, none of these indicators allows us to distinguish the middle class from the upper class (given the broadness of questionnaire categories). Analysts thus essentially end up comparing attitudes of poor versus non-poor respondents. Some authors have questioned the relevance of such conceptualisations for policymaking, given that middle class and the rich may have very different needs and pursue very different interests (Visagie and Posel 2013; Visagie 2015).

Differently from these approaches drawing on a set of "objective" criteria defined by the researcher, more than a few empirical studies have relied on respondents' "subjective" class status or self-perceived income position (see, e.g., Pew Research Center 2008; Amoranto et al. 2011). While conceptually appealing, the reliability of these analyses may be questioned. It has been shown that many respondents who see themselves as standing on the middle rung of society's ladder, would be placed either at the top or the bottom based on the common yardsticks of income, education, or employment (for South Africa, see Burger et al. 2014; Seekings 2007). This apparent mismatch has been linked to a tendency among respondents to allocate themselves in reference to their own peer group instead of the entire population ("reference group hypothesis") (Phadi and Ceruti 2011).

3.2 *A Novel Approach to Conceptualising Social Class*

The multidimensional approach I suggest in this paper is vaguely inspired by the Weberian premise that members of the same class should share common "life chances" (see Breen 2005), defined as "a shared probability of procuring goods, gaining a position in life, and

5 Some country-specific surveys do, however. See, for example, Zambia's 2008 Governance Survey (Resnick 2015).

6 Lopez-Calva et al. (2011) impute incomes to the 2007 Ecosocial values survey's by matching the asset section (for six Latin American countries) with information from external household surveys.

finding inner satisfaction" (Weber 1978 [1922]: 302). I attempt to translate these three aspects into three main indicators measuring (i) "objective" living standards, (ii) "subjective" life satisfaction, and (iii) perceived upward social mobility. These three aspects will constitute the class-defining criteria. In this way, I aim to capture the concepts of economic security and opportunity from both an "objective" and "subjective" perspective, and to account for potential variations in the political attitudes of individuals who diverge in terms of mobility prospects.

To operationalise these criteria, I use data from the 2012 wave of the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS), a repeated cross-sectional survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). Each round of SASAS is designed to yield a nationally representative sample of the adult population (aged 16 and older), stratified by province, geographical subtype, and majority population group. The 2012 dataset contains approximately 2,500 observations sampled from 500 enumeration areas. I restrict the sample to respondents aged 18 years or older with non-missing information on the relevant measures of class discussed below. The core advantage of this dataset is that it collects detailed household-level information on a wide range of housing characteristics and ownership of consumption durables, which allows me to construct a reliable measure of "objective" living standards.

The class groupings presented in this paper are derived in three steps.

In a *first step*, I use principal component analysis (PCA) to construct two asset indices that compose the "objective" living standard measures (LSMs). The first is based on characteristics of the household's dwelling and ownership of basic durables,⁷ while the second captures high-end lifestyles based on luxury consumption goods and services available to the household.⁸ Thus, I strive to identify households along the whole wealth distribution, including those with living standards far above the South African average.⁹ The principal components are extracted separately for each of the two asset subsets (assets are categorised as "basic" if owned by at least one out of three respondents, and "luxury" otherwise).¹⁰

In a *second step*, I derive two "subjective" indicators; the first captures overall life satisfaction and the second reflects perceived chances for upward social mobility (perceived opportunities for "gaining a position in life"). In order to derive an indicator of overall life satisfac-

7 The selection of "basic" consumer durables closely resembles the components of (but is not identical to) the Living Standard Measure (LSM) developed by the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF). The SAARF LSM has fed into various class analyses (see, e.g., Udjo 2008), including the much-quoted classification of the "black diamond" market segment (UCT Unilever Institute of Strategic Marketing, 2007).

8 Before the principal components were estimated, all variables were centred at zero and scaled to have a unit variance.

9 I acknowledge that household surveys generally fail to capture the very richest households.

10 Plugging the full set of assets into a single PCA would yield two principal components, where the one with high loadings on the "luxury goods" would have negative loadings on the possession of some basic goods and dwelling characteristics. This underpins the assumption that the two asset subsets capture distinct wealth concepts.

tion, I use six questions that address respondents' satisfaction with their "life as a whole," "personal circumstances," "standard of living," "future (financial) security," "occupation (study/job)," and what they are "achieving in life." Perceptions of upward social mobility are captured by two questions in SASAS (using a five-point Likert scale): "In the last 5 years, has life improved, stayed the same or gotten worse for people like you?" and "Do you think that life will improve, stay the same or get worse in the next 5 years for people like you?" This latter set of questions will likely be closely interlinked with respondents' overall life satisfaction. In order to prevent the derived mobility measure from being driven by respondents' general attitude (optimism or pessimism) towards life, I extract two uncorrelated principal components from the full set of questions, where one captures social mobility and the other (which is orthogonal to the former) captures overall life satisfaction.

For a detailed variable description and the PCA results, please refer to Appendix A.1.

In a *third step*, the class categories are derived. Here, my aim is to avoid the pitfalls of traditional approaches that impose arbitrary cut-off points and often result in groups with low internal cohesion (Burger et al. 2014). Therefore, I use cluster analysis to extract natural groupings, or "clusters," inductively from the data. Using this approach, I aim to partition the survey population such that (i) members of the same class are as similar as possible with respect to the indicators defined above, and (ii) respondents assigned to different classes are as different as possible along all defined dimensions.¹¹ I first apply a hierarchical clustering approach, from which I conclude that a partition into five clusters (classes in the following) appears reasonable. In order to arrive at an even more robust and stable grouping, I fix the number of classes at five and run a k-means clustering algorithm (MacQueen 1967) on 400 bootstrapped datasets drawn from the initial sample with replacement (stratified by province, geographical subtype and majority population group). The classes are ordered in ascending order of the member's average standard of living and each respondent is assigned to the class (1–5) that he or she most frequently ended up in across replications.¹² Additionally, discriminant analysis has been used to assess the cluster validity. Based on their scores on the four discriminant dimensions (LSM basic, LSM luxury, mobility, and life satisfaction), 92–95 per cent of all individuals appear correctly classified in each grouping.

3.3 A Profile of South Africa's Five Social Classes

In this subsection, based on the results of the cluster analysis, I provide a profile of the five social classes identified for South Africa. According to my findings, life satisfaction and wealth measures tend to be closely correlated, but perceptions of social mobility vary im-

11 This underlying idea is closely related to the polarisation method initiated by Esteban and Ray (1991, 1994) to find homogeneous social clusters. Here, income similarities or differences form the basis for identification and alienation (see also Esteban et al. 2007).

12 Note that the k-means algorithm starts with a random choice of centroids. Therefore, it may yield different clustering results on different runs of the algorithm.

portantly between clusters that are most similar in terms of the other two indicators. Therefore, in characterising the five social classes, I focus on members' current standard of living and perceived opportunities for upward mobility, as detailed below (see **Table 1** to **Table 4**), and discuss how they perform with respect to other aspects of social class, such as education, employment status and race (see **Table 5**).¹³

According to the derived typology, the **"poor"** or lower class are those with the most precarious lives. This class is almost exclusively (96 per cent) African. Its members lack access even to basic goods and infrastructure. For example, only one in ten households in this grouping has a flushable toilet, and basically nobody possesses higher-end durable goods, such as microwaves, washing machines, or cars (which are available to more than one-third of the South African population and thus fit the basic definition of LSMs), let alone luxury goods. How does this material deprivation map onto other life chances? Individuals in this group are disproportionately less educated, with almost one-third having no or only primary education. Only one in five members of this group report being employed and only one in ten are in full-time employment. Accordingly, satisfaction levels are low among the poor and only every fifth individual in this group says that his or her life has improved over the last five years. While almost one in three individuals expect an improvement in their life over the next five years, an even larger share expects their living conditions to deteriorate even further.

Next, I identify a somewhat better-off lower class that is considerably more mobile. With a population share of 28 per cent, this class is the largest of the five groups and still almost exclusively black. Sixty per cent of these **"strugglers,"** as I call them, report having experienced an improvement in their living conditions over the past five years and close to 80 per cent expect life to get better in the near future. Despite their much more favourable perception of the opportunities for gaining a position in life, the strugglers are still closer to the poor than to their wealthier peers in terms of general characteristics, and in the event of a deterioration of overall economic conditions, they may be more vulnerable to poverty than they themselves believe. Specifically, the share of those in employment is just as low as for the poor (even though the ratio of full-time employment is somewhat more favourable), and although they are notably better educated than the poor (half of the individuals in this group have acquired at least some secondary education), education levels still trail markedly behind the other classes. The main distinction that may explain the difference in living standards and perceived life chances seems to lie in the geographic location. While 55 per cent of the poor live in informal rural or tribal areas, this is true for only 40 per cent of the strugglers. Conversely, 36 per cent of the strugglers reside in formal urban settlements, compared to 15 per cent of the poor. This is mirrored in a much better access to basic infrastructure, with the strugglers being three to four times more likely than the poor to have access to piped water and sanitation. The strugglers are also more likely to own basic devices, such as a televi-

13 Please note that all tables are presented at the end of this paper, starting from p. 25.

sion, fridge, or electric stove. Nevertheless, only one in ten members of this group is in a position to afford higher-end durables such as a washing machine or motor vehicle, and they cannot afford any type of luxury. Given their relatively unfavourable education and occupational outcomes, the well-being of this group is assumed to be highly dependent on the state in terms of access to water, electricity, social grants, and other basic services.

The next two groups are closest to what we may consider “**middle class**,” judging by their living standard, levels of education, and types of occupation. Together they comprise approximately 40 per cent of South Africa's adult population. They predominantly reside in formal urban areas (above 70 per cent) and are more likely to be employed full-time, and almost half have at least completed secondary education. They also have close to universal access to water, sanitation, and basic durables, and almost half own a washing machine or motor vehicle. Members of these two groups are also able to afford some luxury items, such as a deep freezer, vacuum cleaner, computer, or home theatre system. Although the upwardly mobile middle class does slightly better in all these dimensions than their downwardly mobile peers, as the name suggests, the main criterion of distinction between these two groups is their perspective on perceived life chances. The downwardly mobile – or “**anxious**” middle class, as I call them – is the most downbeat of all five classes. Fifty-five per cent of this group perceived deteriorating living conditions over the past five years, 36 per cent saw no change, and fewer than 10 per cent believed that life had improved during this period. This past experience maps onto a highly pessimistic outlook on the future, with close to 60 per cent expecting cutbacks in their standard of living. The upwardly mobile stratum of the middle class, which I call the “**climbers**,” is quite the opposite. Almost 80 per cent of them experienced an improvement in living conditions over the past five years, and close to 90 per cent expected to do even better in the future. Their satisfaction with the overall conditions of life is close to that of the upper class, whereas their downwardly mobile peers align with the lower classes in their overall perception of life. With close to 80 per cent of the climbers being black, this group may be closest to what other studies have termed South Africa's new black middle class, whereas the anxious group tends to comprise parts of the old middle class, with a somewhat higher share of white and coloured people.

The smallest group – the upper class, or “**elite**” – is distinguished from the other four classes by its luxurious lifestyle. Almost everyone in this group owns all types of basic and high-end durables, including motor vehicles and home computers; the vast majority has a home security service or domestic worker; and at least half own luxury durables such as a home theatre system, a tumble dryer, or a dishwasher. Many of them also have a pool and air conditioning. Members of this group almost exclusively reside in formal urban areas; are disproportionately highly educated, with almost half having a university degree; and are generally in full-time employment. Among the five classes, the elite is the most satisfied with its standard of living and general conditions of life. However, while this class seems to have been at the top of the South African wealth distribution for quite some time, its top-end

standard of living may be under threat. Forty-three per cent of the elite perceived a deterioration in their life over the past five years and 52 per cent expected future cutbacks.

4 Analysis of the Link between Class and Democratic Attitudes

I now turn to the main research interest of this paper: the extent to which there is an identifiable link between social class and political attitudes, and the ways in which South Africa's middle class may be expected to shape the nation's process of democratic consolidation and the public policy agenda. Drawing on Inglehart and Welzel (2005), I broadly base my assessment on three rival approaches developed within the political culture school (summarised in **Table 6**) to theorise the link between people's attitudes or value orientations and the performance and stability of democratic institutions.¹⁴ My focus here lies on the channels or "types of attitudes" that each of the three approaches believes essential to ensuring the quality and stability of democracy. In particular, I am interested in the differences in attitudes across the five defined social classes. It is important to note that it is not my main concern, and it would be beyond the scope of this paper to evaluate or compare the three approaches' relative importance for system performance (see Inglehart and Welzel (2005) for an empirical assessment). However, it seems reasonable to assume that, in a democratic system, legitimacy and system support are likely relevant for the process of democratic consolidation. In the first subsection, therefore, I assess the association between class and general support for democracy as the preferred form of government, as well as satisfaction with system performance (provision of public goods and services) and trust in public institutions as pillars of democratic legitimacy (the "legitimacy" camp). Next, given that system support alone is unlikely to suffice for a democracy to flourish, in the second subsection I investigate class differences in attitudes and value orientations of a broader social concern (the "civics" camp). Here I focus on people's participation in democratic life (including attitudes toward voting and general interest in politics) and support for civil liberties (including freedom of association, opinion, press and media, as well as the right to protest). In addition, I investigate the factors that determine people's priorities for public policy – for example, the importance they attach to poverty, security concerns, corruption, and education. The final subsection then concentrates on South Africa's black middle class explicitly and contrasts the identity-building effect of race versus class.

14 The premise common to these approaches is that mass tendencies in individual-level attitudes have some relevance at the system level. This premise may be considered not to be a particularly strong assumption if a democratic system is presumed, and is not the prime concern of this paper.

4.1 *System Support and the Legitimacy Assigned to Democratic Institutions*

In this subsection, I assess the association between class and levels of generalised democratic support, including three aspects: (i) support for democracy as the preferred system of governance, (ii) trust in the adherent public institutions, and (iii) satisfaction with system performance and service delivery. In addition to living standards, life satisfaction, and social mobility, on which the class categories are based, I explore the relevance of education and employment in explaining differences in attitudes towards democracy. I also control for differences by province and settlement type, and by age, gender, and race.

4.1.1 *System Preferences for Democracy*

The first aspect I focus on is people's general approval of a democratic system, which I consider a precondition for public pressure to sustain democracy. In the SASAS, this system-level support is captured by a question that asks which of the following three statements is closest to the respondents' own opinion: (a) "Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government"; (b) "In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable"; or (c) "For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have." Overall, only about half of respondents perceived democracy as strictly preferable, whereas one in five thought that a non-democratic government could be preferred and one in four felt that it did not matter.¹⁵ Following Cheeseman (2015), I treat these three answer possibilities as a scale of commitment to democracy and fit an ordered probit regression model to investigate the characteristics that closely associate with people's general attitudes toward democracy.¹⁶

Table 7 displays the regression results. In line with Cheeseman's (2015) findings with respect to the Kenyan middle class, the SASAS data reveal that class is an important correlate of support for democracy, while differences by race are rather negligible. Apart from white respondents, who appear significantly more likely to favour a democratic government, everything else being equal, race has little effect on pro-democratic attitudes. The class dummies remain significant when controls for education and occupation are added to the model. Without these controls, the elite appear to exhibit the highest support for democracy. However, this effect is mainly attributable to the high share of tertiary-educated members of this group, who are significantly more pro-democracy than those with lower levels of education. With respect to the occupational status, I find a significant difference between those in full-time employment and the unemployed, with the latter being significantly less likely to strictly favour democratic rule. Holding both education and employment fixed, the climbers are the most pro-democratic group, followed by the strugglers, the elite, the anxious, and, finally, the poor.

15 The relatively low system support for democracy in this survey is striking. For comparison, in the 2011 Afrobarometer survey, approximately 72 per cent of all South African respondents perceived democracy as the most preferable kind of government.

16 Cheeseman (2015) uses the same question from the Afrobarometer to assess support for democracy among the Kenyan middle class.

In order to disentangle which of the class-defining criteria are likely to drive this ordering, I run a second set of regressions with the underlying measures of social class as explanatory variables. For simplicity, I aggregate the basic (LSM Basic) and luxury (LSM Luxury) living standards measures into a single wealth index (LSM). **Table 8** reports the results. I find strong evidence of a hump-shaped non-linear relationship between household wealth and pro-democratic views. This result, which supports classical assumptions on the pro-democratic role of the middle class, is robust across specifications. In addition, those people with higher satisfaction in life tend to show higher support for democracy. Given the observed pro-democratic attitudes of the climbers and the strugglers, we may expect mobility to also play a role, but the variable just misses the 10 per cent significance level in these regressions.

As an additional check, I run a multinomial probit model on the three answer options: democracy is strictly preferable, a non-democratic government can be preferable, or it doesn't matter. The results reported in **Table 9** suggest that the patterns observed in the ordered probit regressions are mainly driven by a difference between the two most conflicting views – respondents who consider a democratic government strictly preferable versus those who believe it does not matter at all for someone like them. Higher life satisfaction and higher mobility both reduce the likelihood that respondents will consider the latter statement closest to their opinion.

4.1.2 Trust in Public Institutions

Next, I investigate the extent to which South Africans trust in public institutions. The SASAS names a number of institutions and asks respondents to indicate their level of trust on a five-point scale. From these, I select eight that I believe to be of particular relevance for the functioning of democracy: (a) the national government, (b) the local government, (c) political parties, (d) courts, (e) the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), (f) the parliament, (g) the police, and (h) the defence force. For each of these dimensions, I summarise the answer possibilities such that the options “strongly trust” and “trust” are coded as 1, and 0 is used for “neither trust nor distrust,” “distrust,” and “strongly distrust.” I then regress each of these binary trust variables on the set of class indicators and controls using a probit regression model.

The results are reported in **Table 10**. Important discrepancies in trust levels appear to exist along both class and racial divides. Everything else being equal, the upwardly mobile strugglers tend to have significantly higher trust in public institutions than their somewhat poorer peers. Similarly, the climbers are, on average, much more trustful of public institutions than those in the downwardly mobile anxious middle class, who show the lowest levels of institutional confidence. Specifically, approximately 45 per cent of the poor either trust or strongly trust the national government. This share is, on average, 17.5 per cent higher among the strugglers and 12.7 per cent higher among the climbers, but 11.1 per cent lower among the anxious. If class is held fixed, black South Africans generally report higher trust in the

selected institutions than respondents of other race groups. Specifically, while the black population tends to be most trustful of the national government, average trust levels are 7.2 per cent lower among the coloured population, 24.6 per cent lower among the Indian population, and 33.6 per cent lower among the white population. Trust in the local government overall tends to be lower (34 per cent), and between-group differences are smaller but follow the same pattern.

One may note that trust in one institution tends to be positively correlated with trust in any other institution. In consequence, very similar patterns are observed for most indicators under analysis. However, there are some notable differences. While the strugglers show high trust in all institutions under analysis, trust levels tend to be more differentiated among the climbers. Specifically, the climbers express strong trust in the IEC – South Africa's election management body, established to ensure that elections at all levels are free and fair – and the parliament. However, they are not more trustful than the poor of political parties, courts, or the police.¹⁷

It remains difficult to determine what drives these patterns. While one may suspect that reported trust levels are closely linked with other basic personality traits or optimism, findings by Newton and Norris (2000) and others suggest that “it is primarily governmental performance that determines the level of citizens' confidence in public institutions” (p. 72). This implies that governmental performance is perceived differently by members of different social classes, who may be affected differently by government policies. In this sense, particularly those people who perceive themselves as upwardly mobile may attribute part of this upward mobility to favourable public policies. In the next subsection, I further assess the extent to which satisfaction with governmental performance differs across social classes.

4.1.3 Satisfaction with System Performance

In this subsection, I first investigate people's general satisfaction with the performance of democracy. This analysis is based on a SASAS question that asks respondents how satisfied they are with “the way that democracy is working in South Africa.” I subsume the five answer options into a binary indicator variable – equal to 1 if the respondent is “very satisfied” or “satisfied,” and 0 otherwise – and fit a probit regression model to investigate the relationship with (the determinants of) social class. The results are reported in columns one and two of **Table 11**. The patterns are similar to the class differences observed above with respect to people's trust in public institutions, which supports the assumption that satisfaction with system performance increases institutional confidence. The strugglers and the climbers tend to be the most satisfied with the way democracy is working in South Africa; this finding may be unsurprising, given that things seem to be working in their favour and they see consider-

¹⁷ When looking at the dimensions of class individually, I observe that overall life satisfaction and mobility are both positively associated with higher trust in all political institutions, whereas higher material wealth negatively relates to trust in courts and the police.

able chances for upward mobility under the present system. On the contrary, the poor and the downwardly mobile stratum of the middle class tend to be the least satisfied.

Going beyond this more general question, I additionally assess people's satisfaction with the provision of public goods and services, as two specific aspects of governmental performance not directly linked to being a democracy. I use PCA to construct two separate indicators. The first captures respondents' satisfaction with the provision of public infrastructure, including supply of water and sanitation, provision of electricity, removal of refuse, and affordable housing. The second captures respondents' satisfaction with the provision of other public goods and social services, including access to healthcare, treatment for sexually transmitted infections (including HIV/AIDS), provision of social grants (such as child support grant or old age pension), and education. Both indicators are normalised to a range between 0 and 1, where higher values indicate higher levels of satisfaction. For a detailed description, please refer to Appendix A.2.

The results reported in **Table 11** (columns three to six) suggest that the poor are significantly less satisfied with the provision of public infrastructure than the materially better-off parts of society. This finding likely relates to the fact that more than half of the poor live in informal rural settlements, where infrastructure provision tends to be of most concern, especially for those with little financial means.¹⁸ However, the wealthiest people are not the most satisfied. Indeed, I find evidence of a non-linear but hump-shaped relationship between household wealth and average levels of satisfaction with the provision of basic public goods, which also expands to basic social services and remains significant even after controlling for levels of overall life satisfaction. This may suggest that as people become better off they form higher expectations and become more demanding, also with respect to the quality of public goods and services. In terms of infrastructure provision, however, this seems to be true only for those at the very top of the distribution. By contrast, average satisfaction with the provision of public services such as healthcare and education already starts declining at lower wealth levels. My findings further provide support for the suspicion that the rise in living standards experienced by the two most mobile groups – the strugglers and the climbers – was at least partially facilitated by government policies, given that those two groups tend to be the most satisfied with the provision of public goods. The difference remains significant even when being a grant recipient is controlled for, which suggests that healthcare and education are playing roles that are at least as important in this regard.

4.2 Attitudes and Value Orientations of a Broader Social Concern

System support and satisfaction with governmental performance tend to be important pillars of society that grant governmental systems legitimacy and stability. However, one could ar-

¹⁸ In part, this finding also results directly from my definition of social class, given that the derived basic measure of living standards incorporates dwelling characteristics such as housing type and access to water and sanitation.

gue that the defining criteria of democracies are the institutionalisation of civil liberties and legal rights and the political participation of citizens. Therefore, in the following, I investigate how social class relates to political attitudes surrounding these two key aspects of democratic systems. I also examine the relationship between class and policy preferences of broader social concern.

4.2.1 Participation in Democratic Life

How do South Africa's five social classes differ in their political participation? I use PCA to construct two indices. The first captures positive attitudes towards voting and the second reflects a higher interest in and understanding of politics (see Appendix A.2.). Both indices are normalised to a range between 0 and 1.

The association between class and these two continuous indicators is estimated using OLS regression. The detected patterns reported in **Table 12** corroborate my earlier results on support for democracy. The estimates show that life satisfaction and mobility are significantly positively correlated with a stronger belief in voting as an effective instrument to influence politics. Moreover, I find indicative evidence of a hump-shaped non-linear effect of wealth on more favourable attitudes towards voting. Richer, better educated, and more mobile respondents tend to show a greater interest in politics.

Accordingly, the climbers are the strongest supporters of democratic rule and the most interested in politics, and they hold the firmest beliefs that voting makes a difference. By contrast, the anxious – although comparable to the climbers in terms of standard of living, education, and employment – share attitudes that align most closely with the poorest group in society. This finding is corroborated when examining respondents' past voting behaviour. Among the anxious, almost two-thirds of those who did not vote say they were not interested and almost one in five report being disillusioned with politics. The same is true for only about half of the climbers. Yet, disillusion with politics seems highest among the elite, where one in three members who did not vote reports this as the main reason.

Despite their interest in politics and belief in voting as an effective tool, the climbers are not necessarily the most active vis-à-vis other forms of political engagement. For example, there are no significant between-class differences in terms of having contacted a government official or taken part in a protest action.

4.2.2 Support for Civil Liberties

I now look at people's tolerance for government constraints on their rights as citizens, a critical limitation to the exercise of "effective democracy."

The analysis builds on a set of five statements included in the SASAS questionnaire. Respondents are asked to state their level of agreement with various views on how the country should be governed (see Appendix A.2.). The first four statements capture respondents' support for civil liberties, and the fifth their attitudes towards corruption. All five variables are

measured on a five-point scale recoded such that higher values indicate higher support for civil rights.

Contrary to the preceding analysis on democratic attitudes in general, I find no significant association between the class categories and support for civil rights. However, when the class categories are broken down into their constituent parts, some interesting patterns emerge; these are reported in **Table 13a**. Most remarkably, higher life satisfaction and mobility are associated with lower opposition to restrictions in the freedom of information, opinion, and expression, and align with lower support for the immediate dismissal of corrupt politicians. However, I find some support for a hump-shaped relationship between wealth and the acceptance of mass action to express one's opinion.

The higher tolerance of government constraints on civil rights may result from some affiliation of the upwardly mobile with the national government. In fact, 61 per cent of the strugglers and 53.6 per cent of the climbers report feeling "very close" or "quite close" to the governing *African National Congress (ANC)*, while the same is true for 50.6 per cent of the poor, 40.5 per cent of the anxious, and 10.0 per cent of the elite. However, the effect of mobility remains negative and significant, even when self-rated closeness to the ANC is controlled for, as **Table 13b** shows. This could be interpreted as indicative evidence of a status quo bias among those who are doing well under the current government and expect to do even better in the future, and are therefore aiming to avoid threats to the present order.

Race remains a relevant factor in shaping preferences on how South Africa should be governed. While whites show the strongest opposition to any government authority in preventing citizens from criticising it (freedom of opinion) and government control of what information is given to the public (freedom of the press and media), black South Africans are the most tolerant of these limitations of political freedom. However, blacks are most supportive of the view that mass action is an acceptable way for people to express their views in a democracy (freedom to protest), which is also positively associated with feeling close to the ANC.

4.2.3 Priorities for Public Policy

In line with post-materialist theories (Inglehart 1990), some analysts have predicted that South Africa's middle class, or specifically the new black middle class, will move the public policy agenda away from the provision of basic goods and services toward the delivery of higher-order goods (Mattes 2015). The main argument of these analysts is that members of the middle class (unlike most of the poor) do not rely directly on state largesse in the form of access to basic services. Therefore, they are considered more likely to prioritise different public policy concerns that better address their specific needs, such as investments in education and infrastructure (Netshitenzhe 2014). Some commentators also expect the middle class to be increasingly critical of some aspects of government performance (Everatt 2013, 2014).

Below, I re-examine those arguments and assess the association between class and different public policy priorities. Specifically, I focus on a SASAS question that asks respondents to select the three most important challenges facing South Africa today from a list of 18 policy areas. I limit the analysis to the seven top challenges named by at least 10 per cent of all respondents: (a) unemployment, (b) crime and safety, (c) poverty, (d) HIV/AIDS, (e) corruption, (f) service provision/delivery, and (g) education.

Table 14 and **Table 15** report the results. Approximately three-quarters of all respondents select unemployment among the top three challenges. Class does not seem to have any impact on this choice. Naturally, those looking for a job place greater emphasis on this concern.

Crime and safety, by contrast, tend to become more of a concern with increasing household wealth. In particular, people who have just escaped poverty (the strugglers) and the upwardly mobile stratum of the middle class (the climbers) are most interested in protecting their newly earned standard of living. But concerns about poverty are decreasing among those two upwardly mobile groups. While one's own level of attainment and peer-group observations may cause mobile individuals to overestimate the chances of gaining a position in life for those at the bottom of society, egoism or self-interest may lead them to oppose redistributive policies closely associated with concerns about poverty.

In line with post-materialist theories (Inglehart 1990), my results further confirm earlier studies arguing that materially better-off South Africans tend to prioritise higher-order needs, such as corruption and education, and are less likely to prioritise basic service provision (Mattes 2015). The poor and the strugglers are most likely to rank public service provision/delivery among the top three challenges. However, the climbers also assign higher priority to service provision and lower priority to fighting corruption than the, admittedly somewhat poorer, stagnant or downwardly mobile middle-class stratum and the elite. The strong and significant negative association between mobility and prioritising corruption gives rise to the suspicion that clientelism may play a non-negligible role in explaining the climbers' ascension of the social ladder. But there is also a strong and significant positive association between mobility and priorities for education, with the climbers being the most likely to select education among the top three challenges. This suggests that higher educational attainments also tend to play an important role in creating opportunities for social and economic advancement.

Finally, the selection of HIV/AIDS among the top three challenges is not influenced by any dimension of social class, including education and employment. By contrast, the most relevant factors that explain differences across respondents are race and geography.¹⁹

19 These patterns relate closely to very high infection rates in South Africa's mainly black townships. Due to considerably lower infection rates, white and coloured South Africans are found to be significantly less concerned with the epidemic. While HIV prevalence remains high among the general population, it also varies markedly between regions. HIV infection rates are lowest in the Northern and Western Cape regions; accordingly, I find that respondents resident in these provinces are the least concerned with HIV/AIDS. Surprisingly,

4.3 *South Africa's Black Middle Class in Focus: Class Identity and Partisanship*

4.3.1 *Race and Class Identity*

Embedded in the concept of class is the recognition that members of the same class distinguish themselves from other parts of society not only through a distinct way of life, but also through a belief in the existence of shared interests and value-orientations, which is generally assumed to require a common class identity or class consciousness (Arthur 2014). For the South African case, however, a number of studies have concluded that although class starts to matter for the way in which political preferences are formed, race still frequently conveys identity and shapes behaviour in more important ways than inter-class differences do (see, inter alia, Burger et al. 2014; Mattes 2015).

My descriptive statistics support these findings: More than 90 per cent of all black South Africans consider race an important part of their identity. When asked to select the three most important determinants that describe themselves, 40.5 per cent chose race or ethnic background as the second most important factor, after family and marital status. Social class was the least frequently reported determinant (11.7 per cent). Similarly, three in four African respondents report feeling very attached to people who speak the same language as themselves, and two in three report feeling very attached to people of the same race group. By contrast, only about one in three feel very attached to those in a similar financial position as themselves.

Despite race looming large in South Africa, even when I restrict the sample to African respondents and redo the analysis of subsections 4.1 and 4.2, I find that the described class patterns persist in these subsample regressions (detailed results are available from the author upon request). This suggests that the exclusive focus on absolute living standards alone – dominant in most of the economics literature – may mask important differences in the political attitudes of those who perceive themselves as winners or losers under the present system. The following section illustrates this argument by focusing on the extent of ANC support among black South African voters specifically.

4.3.2 *Partisanship and Voting Behaviour*

While some commentators have argued that South Africa's emerging black middle class is the key agent to place checks on government performance, its dependence on the state has raised doubts about this claim. Some scholars have argued that certain policy tools such as affirmative action, black economic empowerment, and state development contracts may have drawn large parts of the new black middle class into a partisan "state-party-class coalition" (Southall 2012, 2016; Handley 2015). "The more dependent [the black elite and middle class] are upon the ruling party for their welfare, the more they are likely to support it" (Southall

respondents in KwaZulu-Natal, the province with the highest HIV prevalence, are not the most worried; concerns are highest among those living in Free State and the Eastern Cape.

2016: 203). If this is indeed the case, this dependence could play out negatively on the functioning of South Africa's democracy by reducing both the responsiveness of voters to politicians' non- or misperformance and, *in consequence*, politicians' incentives for good governance.²⁰

I investigate the extent of support for the ruling ANC across social classes using three binary outcome measures: (a) feeling very close or quite close to the ANC; (b) having voted for the ANC in the last national election; and (c) would vote for the ANC if there was a national election tomorrow. On average, more than half (57.2 per cent) of black respondents report feeling either very close or quite close to the ANC, while the same applies to between one-fifth and one-quarter of coloured or Indian/Asian respondents and approximately 2 per cent of white respondents. Moreover, 70.0 per cent of the black respondents in the 2012 SASAS data report having voted for the ANC in the last national election (in 2009), as opposed to approximately 25 per cent of the coloured or Indian/Asian population and about 3.2 per cent of the white population. The differences are even more pronounced with regard to the self-reported voting intention if there were a national election tomorrow. Here, 80.4 per cent of the black respondents (and 1.8 per cent of the white respondents) say they would vote for the ANC. Even when holding other characteristics fixed, whites still show a 50 per cent lower probability of supporting the ANC than black respondents.

Despite these clearly *demarcated differences* in party support and voting patterns across race groups, I also detect significant differences within the group of black respondents, reported in **Table 16**. While an average of 67.5 per cent of black respondents classified as poor reported feeling either very close or quite close to the ANC, the strugglers and climbers were, *ceteris paribus*, 13.5 per cent and 12.0 per cent more inclined to feel close to the ANC, respectively (column (1)). Similarly, these two upwardly mobile groups were 7.3 per cent and 10.1 per cent more likely to report having voted for the ANC in the last national election, respectively, and expressed a significantly higher tendency to vote for the ANC in the future. As opposed to the climbers, the anxious middle class did not show significantly higher support for the ANC, and the black elite was, *ceteris paribus*, up to 10 per cent less likely to have voted for the ANC in the last election, compared to the poor.

5 Conclusion

Since the fall of apartheid, South Africans have become less concerned with ensuring the existence of democracy and more with safeguarding its quality and sustainability. In particular, the ANC's dominant character and the lack of a system of opposition institutions that are

20 As a large body of empirical work has shown, "[s]trong partisanship reduces voter responsiveness to politicians' performance (Anderson 2000; Hellwig and Samuels 2008; Kayser and Wlezien 2011; Moehler and Lindberg 2009) and undermines their ability to remove corrupt and nonperforming politicians from office (Eggers 2014). From the politicians' point of view, strong partisanship reduces elected officials' incentives to exert energy toward providing quality basic services to their constituents (Keefer and Khemani 2009)" (Asunka 2016: 1).

essential for the healthy functioning of democracy (Jung and Shapiro 1995: 270) have been exposed as the main threats to democratic consolidation and accountability (see also Gilimoe and Simkins 1999). These concerns have intensified over the past decade, particularly due to several corruption scandals by officeholders and increased government interference in the work of the media, which has resulted in a downgrading of South Africa's press freedom status to "partly free" (Freedom House 2010).

Against this background, some commentators have placed high expectations on South Africa's emerging (black) middle class to become a key agent in demanding greater political accountability and placing checks on government performance (Everatt 2013, 2014). My results provide an even more nuanced perspective by highlighting how perceptions of life chances tend to condition the role that the middle class can be expected to assume in the process of democratic consolidation.

The upwardly mobile middle class (the climbers) shows the strongest generic support for democratic rule. They are the most interested in politics, which means they inherit the firmest beliefs that voting makes a difference. By contrast, although the anxious or downwardly mobile middle class are comparable to the climbers in terms of their standard of living, levels of education and employment, they show signs of political resignation, similar to the poorest in society. Instead of raising their concerns, however, members of this frustrated middle class not only fear losing status but also appear likely to lose faith in democratic rule and opt out of the democratic process.

Nevertheless, I find little reason to believe that those who have recently ascended the social ladder, or are expecting to do so in the near future, are inclined to take on a more *critical or demanding stance in politics*. On the contrary, higher life satisfaction and upward mobility are associated with lower opposition to government constraints on the freedom of information, opinion, and expression. People who are more satisfied with their lives at present and perceive themselves as upwardly mobile are also less likely to demand the immediate dismissal of corrupt politicians. They tend to show higher satisfaction with government performance, and be more supportive of the ANC government. Furthermore, concerns about poverty are declining among those with high perceived chances of upward mobility.

My findings indicate a status quo bias among those doing well under the established system. This suggests that the exclusive focus on absolute living standards – dominant in most of the economics literature – may mask important discrepancies in the political attitudes of those who perceive themselves as winners or losers under the present system. Going beyond these considerations, we may ask how the observed patterns would change if the ambitious hopes articulated by the strugglers and the climbers were dashed. This could explain why black middle-class South Africans have been observed to be shunning the ANC and its politics in recent years (Everett 2013; Mattes 2015).

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Tables

Table 1. Typology of South Africa’s Social Classes

Average index score (0 to 1) by social class/cluster	LSM basic	LSM luxury	Life satisfaction	Upward mobility	Share of adult population
Lower class “poor”	0.15	0.01	0.37	0.48	18.15%
Upwardly mobile lower (middle) class “strugglers”	0.52	0.02	0.46	0.76	27.81%
Downwardly mobile middle class “anxious”	0.80	0.10	0.55	0.33	21.52%
Upwardly mobile middle class “climbers”	0.87	0.16	0.62	0.80	20.18%
Upper class “elite”	0.97	0.66	0.76	0.41	12.34%


Low 0  1 High

Source: Analysis based on South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2012.

Note: N = 1894; shares are weighted. Population restricted to 18 years or older.

Table 2. Asset Ownership across South Africa’s Social Classes

Average asset ownership, shares (%)		Poor	Strugglers	Anxious	Climbers	Elite	Total
BASIC	House, cluster, townhouse	34.2	75.2	89.5	91.9	98.1	77
	Tap water in house/on plot	22.9	63.7	92.2	96.5	93.4	72.7
	Flush toilet in/outside house	10.8	41.3	80.4	89.7	99.1	61.1
	TV set	35.3	88.4	97.1	95.1	98.0	83.2
	Electric stove	23.9	82.4	94.7	98.1	97.5	79.5
	Fridge/freezer combination	21.0	77.8	97.7	99.6	99.7	78.9
	DVD player/Blu-ray player	8.9	64.6	84.2	91.7	94.5	67.9
	Microwave oven (in working order)	3.1	33.9	88.0	92.7	98.5	59.8
	Washing machine	0.1	9.8	57.0	71.2	99.7	41.7
	Motor vehicle	1.1	8.8	41.3	60.9	99.3	36.1
Subscription-based private satellite TV		0.0	9.9	41.8	61.2	90.6	35.3
LUXURY	Deep freezer (in working order)	1.4	8.1	35.3	39.1	87.9	28.9
	Computer (desktop or laptop)	1.0	5.3	27.9	47.3	93.4	28.8
	Home theatre system	2.0	12.5	24.6	47.7	58.6	26
	Vacuum cleaner/floor polisher	0.3	1.7	16.2	24.3	88.0	19.8
	Telkom home telephone (excluding cell phone)	0.2	2.2	15.5	20.4	71.6	16.9
	Tumble dryer	1.3	1.3	6.7	14.1	69.1	13.4
	Home security service	0.8	0.6	4.1	7.2	76.2	12.1
	Domestic worker (live-in/part-time)	0.0	0.9	4.6	11.7	66.7	11.8
	Dishwashing machine	0.0	0.0	2.4	4.4	56.1	8.3
	Swimming pool	0.0	0.0	1.4	1.9	48.7	6.7
Air conditioner (excluding fans)	0.0	0.0	0.3	2.6	37.0	5.2	

Low 0%  100% High

Source: Analysis based on South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2012.

Table 3. Life Satisfaction across South Africa's Social Classes

Average level of satisfaction	Poor	Strugglers	Anxious	Climbers	Elite	Total
Scale from 1 "very dissatisfied" to 5 "very satisfied"						
Taking all things together, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?	2.5	3.3	2.8	3.8	3.9	3.2
Scale from 1 "completely dissatisfied" to 10 "completely satisfied"						
Thinking about your own life and personal circumstances, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole?	4.3	5.5	5.7	7.1	7.8	5.9
How satisfied are you with your standard of living?	3.7	5.1	5.6	6.8	7.7	5.6
How satisfied are you with what you are achieving in life?	3.9	5.0	6.0	6.6	7.8	5.7
How satisfied are you with your future (financial) security?	3.3	4.1	4.7	5.7	6.5	4.7
How satisfied are you with your occupation (study/job)?	2.9	4.1	4.7	5.9	7.5	4.8

Source: Analysis based on South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2012.

Table 4. Social Mobility across South Africa's Social Classes

Shares (%)	Poor	Strugglers	Anxious	Climbers	Elite	Total
In the last 5 years, has life improved, stayed the same or gotten worse for people like you?						
Improved	20.6	61.9	9.2	78.8	27.9	42.3
Stayed the same	41.4	35.4	36.0	20.6	28.7	32.8
Gotten worse	38.0	2.7	54.7	0.6	43.5	24.9
Do you think that life will improve, stay the same or get worse in the next 5 years for people like you?						
Improve	30.5	79.6	11.2	88.6	23.3	50.8
Stay the same	31.7	18.6	29.5	10.5	24.6	22.4
Get worse	37.8	1.8	59.3	1.0	52.1	26.8

Source: Analysis based on South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2012.

Table 5. Characteristics of South Africa's Social Classes

Shares (%)	Poor	Strugglers	Anxious	Climbers	Elite	Total
Settlement type						
Urban, formal	14.6	36.3	71.8	76.6	93.8	55.2
Urban, informal	18.2	15.5	9.1	6.5	0.0	10.9
Tribal	54.7	41.7	14.4	14.4	1.6	27.7
Rural, formal	12.5	6.5	4.7	2.6	4.6	6.2
Race						
African	95.6	95.7	68.9	78.7	18.1	76.9
Coloured	3.4	4.2	18.5	12.6	9.5	9.5
Indian or Asian	0.2	0.1	2.7	2.5	10.9	2.5
White	0.8	0.0	10.0	6.2	61.5	11.1
Level of education						
Primary or less	32.5	18.0	13.4	12.9	0.5	16.4
Secondary, excl. matric	41.6	50.6	39.9	30.2	11.8	37.7
Matric* or equivalent	24.5	27.8	35.3	39.6	33.5	31.9
Tertiary education	1.4	3.7	11.4	17.4	54.2	14.1
Employment status						
Employed full-time	10.9	14.8	24.8	28.4	56.8	24.2
Employed part-time	10.4	7.1	8.0	10.0	6.1	8.3
Unemployed	50.1	53.4	38.3	23.8	10.2	38.2
Inactive	28.6	24.7	28.9	37.8	27.0	29.3

Source: Analysis based on South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2012.

*Note: In South Africa, matric (or matriculation) refers to the qualification received on graduating from high school.

Table 6. Political Culture Approaches on the Link between Individual-Level Attitudes and Democracy

<p><u>Common Premise:</u> There is a population-system linkage, such that mass tendencies in individual-level attitudes and value orientations impact on the performance and stability of democratic institutions at the system level.</p>		
<p><u>"Civics" Camp:</u> Attitudes and value orientations of a broader social concern impact most on the stability and performance of democratic institutions.</p>		<p><u>"Legitimacy" Camp:</u> Legitimacy assigned to political objects impacts most on the stability and performance of democratic institutions.</p>
<p><u>"Human Development" Approach:</u> Self-expression values based on liberty aspirations and liberty tolerance have the strongest impact.</p>	<p><u>"Communitarian" Approach:</u> Voluntary activity in associations, interpersonal trust and norm obedience have the strongest impact.</p>	<p><u>"System Support" Approach:</u> Mass confidence in public institutions, satisfaction with system performance and system preferences for democracy have the strongest impact.</p>

Source: Inglehart and Welzel (2005b: 5).

Table 7. Relationship between Class and Support for Democracy

Ordered PROBIT regression (coefficients)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Class (Base: Poor)				
Strugglers	0.3774*** (0.0905)	0.3530*** (0.0934)	0.3976*** (0.0920)	0.3801*** (0.0947)
Anxious	0.3307*** (0.1030)	0.2862*** (0.1059)	0.3497*** (0.1055)	0.3030*** (0.1081)
Climbers	0.4715*** (0.1066)	0.4509*** (0.1101)	0.4463*** (0.1108)	0.4330*** (0.1139)
Elite	0.4853*** (0.1311)	0.3823*** (0.1383)	0.4765*** (0.1369)	0.3779*** (0.1432)
Tertiary education		0.0510** (0.0234)		0.0515** (0.0242)
Employment (Base: full-time)				
Part-time or less			0.0656 (0.1179)	0.0758 (0.1206)
Unemployed			-0.2074** (0.0832)	-0.1914** (0.0849)
Inactive			-0.1272 (0.0868)	-0.1044 (0.0893)
Race (Base: African)				
Coloured	0.0732 (0.0933)	0.1048 (0.0948)	0.0758 (0.0940)	0.1089 (0.0956)
Indian or Asian	-0.2153* (0.1232)	-0.1851 (0.1242)	-0.2186* (0.1274)	-0.1923 (0.1284)
White	0.2418** (0.1151)	0.2423** (0.1166)	0.2473** (0.1186)	0.2452** (0.1200)
Demographic controls ^a	YES	YES	YES	YES
Settlement fixed effects ^b	YES	YES	YES	YES
Province fixed effects ^c	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	1,787	1,719	1,725	1,662
R-squared	0.0293	0.0297	0.0315	0.0324

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Analysis based on South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2012.

Note: Estimated constant effects at cut-off values have been omitted from the regression table.

a Demographic controls include respondent's age in completed years, age squared, and sex (male=0, 0 otherwise).

b Settlement fixed effects cover four settlement types (urban formal, urban informal, tribal, and rural formal).

c Province fixed effects cover South Africa's nine provinces.

Table 8. Determinants of the Relationship between Class and Support for Democracy

Ordered PROBIT regression				
(coefficients)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Measures of social class				
Living standard				
LSM	1.2603*** (0.4407)	1.2067*** (0.4421)	0.8310* (0.4494)	
LSM squared	-1.0423** (0.4690)	-1.0038** (0.4696)	-0.9109* (0.4715)	
LSM basic				0.2578* (0.1484)
LSM luxury				-0.3264* (0.1952)
Life satisfaction			0.9857*** (0.1916)	0.9895*** (0.1916)
Mobility		0.1975 (0.1210)	0.1802 (0.1215)	0.1764 (0.1216)
Tertiary education	0.0551** (0.0245)	0.0559** (0.0245)	0.0451* (0.0247)	0.0467* (0.0248)
Employment (base: full-time)				
Part-time or less	0.0675 (0.1205)	0.0771 (0.1207)	0.1237 (0.1212)	0.1282 (0.1213)
Unemployed	-0.2146** (0.0844)	-0.1985** (0.0850)	-0.0835 (0.0881)	-0.0796 (0.0879)
Inactive	-0.1182 (0.0892)	-0.1121 (0.0893)	-0.0794 (0.0898)	-0.0757 (0.0896)
Race (base: African)				
Coloured	0.0874 (0.0955)	0.1032 (0.0960)	0.0662 (0.0965)	0.0668 (0.0965)
Indian or Asian	-0.2101 (0.1294)	-0.1781 (0.1309)	-0.2268* (0.1315)	-0.2239* (0.1314)
White	0.2424* (0.1243)	0.2784** (0.1262)	0.2327* (0.1268)	0.2443* (0.1276)
Demographic controls	YES	YES	YES	YES
Settlement fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES
Province fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	1,662	1,662	1,662	1,662
R-squared	0.0291	0.0299	0.0378	0.0380

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Analysis based on South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2012.

Note: Estimated constant effects at cut-off values have been omitted from the regression table.

Table 9. Robustness Check for the Relationship between Class and Support for Democracy

Multinomial PROBIT regression (coefficients)

Base: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government	For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.			In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
Measures of social class						
LSM	-1.9798*** (0.7415)	-1.8626** (0.7452)	-1.2085 (0.7609)	-0.6773 (0.7543)	-0.6625 (0.7563)	-0.5986 (0.7670)
LSM squared	1.5121* (0.8219)	1.4175* (0.8248)	1.2771 (0.8317)	0.8064 (0.7800)	0.7923 (0.7810)	0.7631 (0.7824)
Life satisfaction			-1.7215*** (0.3214)			-0.0827 (0.3288)
Mobility		-0.3899* (0.2038)	-0.3477* (0.2055)		-0.0333 (0.2047)	-0.0340 (0.2052)
Tertiary education	-0.1061** (0.0445)	-0.1096** (0.0446)	-0.0927** (0.0451)	-0.0381 (0.0395)	-0.0380 (0.0395)	-0.0378 (0.0398)
Employment (base: full-time)						
Part-time or less	-0.0661 (0.2018)	-0.0851 (0.2022)	-0.1675 (0.2039)	-0.1168 (0.2040)	-0.1170 (0.2042)	-0.1187 (0.2051)
Unemployed	0.3291** (0.1426)	0.2933** (0.1438)	0.0838 (0.1500)	0.3050** (0.1432)	0.3011** (0.1442)	0.2946** (0.1492)
Inactive	0.2024 (0.1520)	0.1925 (0.1521)	0.1298 (0.1536)	0.1443 (0.1500)	0.1435 (0.1502)	0.1445 (0.1508)
Race (base: African)						
Coloured	-0.1709 (0.1579)	-0.2039 (0.1589)	-0.1525 (0.1607)	0.0420 (0.1644)	0.0396 (0.1652)	0.0440 (0.1660)
Indian or Asian	0.3115 (0.2311)	0.2466 (0.2338)	0.3392 (0.2355)	0.4725** (0.2115)	0.4640** (0.2140)	0.4725** (0.2149)
White	-0.5826*** (0.2249)	-0.6635*** (0.2290)	-0.5725** (0.2310)	0.1956 (0.2018)	0.1850 (0.2052)	0.1967 (0.2057)
Constant	-0.3958 (0.4899)	-0.1251 (0.5102)	0.7495 (0.5388)	-0.9999** (0.5078)	-0.9771* (0.5286)	-0.9574* (0.5613)
Demographic controls	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Settlement fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Province fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	1,662	1,662	1,662	1,662	1,662	1,662

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Analysis based on South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2012.

Table 10. Relationship between Class and Trust in Public Institutions

Marginal effects from PROBIT regression	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	National government	Local government	Political parties	Courts	IEC	Parliament	Police	Defence forces
Class (Base: Poor)								
Strugglers	0.0840*** (0.0172)	0.1752*** (0.0331)	0.0924*** (0.0351)	0.1205*** (0.0302)	0.1258*** (0.0381)	0.1751*** (0.0370)	0.1489*** (0.0337)	0.0768** (0.0363)
Anxious	-0.0421** (0.0198)	-0.1110*** (0.0387)	-0.0699* (0.0413)	-0.0270 (0.0365)	-0.0693 (0.0434)	0.0815* (0.0423)	-0.0755* (0.0393)	-0.0918** (0.0424)
Climbers	0.0612*** (0.0204)	0.1270*** (0.0398)	0.0898** (0.0421)	0.0564 (0.0371)	0.0587 (0.0451)	0.2315*** (0.0439)	0.1152*** (0.0406)	0.0228 (0.0437)
Elite	-0.0169 (0.0258)	0.0040 (0.0528)	0.0243 (0.0542)	-0.0125 (0.0509)	-0.0447 (0.0574)	0.1045* (0.0555)	0.0126 (0.0537)	-0.0885 (0.0560)
Tertiary education	0.0131 (0.0170)	-0.0625* (0.0364)	-0.0399 (0.0370)	-0.0449 (0.0351)	0.0264 (0.0383)	0.0525 (0.0373)	0.0077 (0.0362)	-0.0206 (0.0380)
Employment (base: full-time)								
Part-time or less	0.0049 (0.0209)	0.0513 (0.0430)	-0.0402 (0.0450)	0.0467 (0.0395)	-0.0013 (0.0472)	0.0138 (0.0468)	0.0438 (0.0438)	-0.0216 (0.0467)
Unemployed	-0.0122 (0.0152)	0.0354 (0.0314)	-0.0453 (0.0324)	0.0100 (0.0295)	0.0044 (0.0342)	-0.0385 (0.0334)	0.0292 (0.0317)	0.0239 (0.0334)
Inactive	0.0157 (0.0160)	0.0620* (0.0333)	-0.0215 (0.0342)	0.0511 (0.0313)	0.0435 (0.0359)	0.0120 (0.0349)	0.0841** (0.0336)	0.0375 (0.0352)
Ethnicity (base: African)								
Coloured	-0.0091 (0.0176)	-0.0718** (0.0343)	0.0065 (0.0361)	-0.0223 (0.0330)	0.0531 (0.0385)	-0.0985*** (0.0370)	-0.0654* (0.0350)	0.0337 (0.0373)
Indian or Asian	-0.1307*** (0.0228)	-0.2464*** (0.0473)	-0.1041** (0.0514)	-0.1103** (0.0484)	-0.1247** (0.0515)	-0.2218*** (0.0495)	-0.2777*** (0.0494)	-0.0569 (0.0514)
White	-0.1091*** (0.0216)	-0.3356*** (0.0467)	-0.1275*** (0.0460)	-0.1020** (0.0438)	-0.1039** (0.0478)	-0.2139*** (0.0456)	-0.3189*** (0.0465)	-0.0853* (0.0468)
Demographic controls	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Settlement fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Province fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	1,448	1,728	1,713	1,696	1,666	1,666	1,695	1,732
R-squared	0.1738	0.151	0.0463	0.0715	0.0653	0.0763	0.139	0.0388

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Analysis based on South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2012.

Table 11. Relationship between Class and Satisfaction with Governmental Performance

Marginal effects from PROBIT (1)-(2) and OLS (3)-(6) regression	System performance (Binary indicator)		Infrastructure provision (Index on scale 0 to 1)		Public services (Index on scale 0 to 1)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Class (base: poor)						
Strugglers	0.2895*** (0.0327)		0.1945*** (0.0168)		0.1104*** (0.0167)	
Anxious	0.0285 (0.0407)		0.2052*** (0.0190)		0.0586*** (0.0193)	
Climbers	0.2630*** (0.0402)		0.2531*** (0.0198)		0.0907*** (0.0201)	
Elite	0.1251** (0.0530)		0.2173*** (0.0246)		0.0545** (0.0262)	
Measures of social class						
LSM		0.1723 (0.1633)		0.9586*** (0.0770)		0.1470* (0.0796)
LSM squared		-0.3545** (0.1738)		-0.8054*** (0.0801)		-0.2150** (0.0865)
Life satisfaction		0.3914*** (0.0675)		0.1938*** (0.0319)		0.2242*** (0.0337)
Mobility		0.5492*** (0.0396)		0.1290*** (0.0204)		0.1573*** (0.0218)
Tertiary education	-0.0685* (0.0358)	-0.0680* (0.0358)	0.0037 (0.0041)	0.0016 (0.0041)	-0.0001 (0.0045)	-0.0014 (0.0045)
Employment (base: full-time)						
Part-time or less	0.0165 (0.0433)	0.0506 (0.0427)	-0.0269 (0.0205)	-0.0075 (0.0201)	0.0420** (0.0211)	0.0576*** (0.0208)
Unemployed	-0.0540* (0.0315)	0.0161 (0.0319)	-0.0223 (0.0147)	0.0058 (0.0149)	0.0150 (0.0155)	0.0501*** (0.0157)
Inactive	0.0078 (0.0331)	0.0228 (0.0327)	-0.0113 (0.0155)	-0.0056 (0.0151)	0.0288* (0.0164)	0.0355** (0.0161)
Race (base: African)						
Coloured	-0.0779** (0.0348)	-0.0876** (0.0344)	-0.0183 (0.0165)	-0.0323** (0.0162)	-0.0565*** (0.0174)	-0.0633*** (0.0172)
Indian or Asian	-0.2220*** (0.0489)	-0.1966*** (0.0492)	-0.0572*** (0.0221)	-0.0665*** (0.0220)	-0.1242*** (0.0239)	-0.1198*** (0.0240)
White	-0.1722*** (0.0438)	-0.1028** (0.0452)	-0.0254 (0.0205)	-0.0262 (0.0209)	-0.1514*** (0.0227)	-0.1364*** (0.0231)
Constant			0.4331*** (0.0501)	0.1934*** (0.0541)	0.5235*** (0.0520)	0.3424*** (0.0562)
Demographic controls	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Settlement fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Province fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	1,729	1,729	1,631	1,631	1,493	1,493
R-squared	0.120	0.152	0.2791	0.3193	0.1396	0.1754
Adj. R-squared	0.1196	0.1522	0.268	0.309	0.125	0.161

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Analysis based on South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2012.

Table 12. Relationship between Class and Interest in Politics and Attitudes toward Voting

OLS regression	Voting makes a difference		Interest in politics	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Class (base: poor)				
Strugglers	0.0970*** (0.0179)		0.0929*** (0.0212)	
Anxious	0.0389* (0.0209)		0.0423* (0.0240)	
Climbers	0.1305*** (0.0217)		0.1224*** (0.0251)	
Elite	0.1016*** (0.0290)		0.1073*** (0.0314)	
Measures of social class				
LSM		0.1988** (0.0862)		0.1980** (0.0992)
LSM squared		-0.1834* (0.0944)		-0.0766 (0.1036)
Life satisfaction		0.1703*** (0.0368)		0.0607 (0.0417)
Mobility		0.1381*** (0.0240)		0.1256*** (0.0267)
Tertiary education	0.0037 (0.0048)	0.0032 (0.0048)	0.0180*** (0.0052)	0.0165*** (0.0053)
Employment (base: full-time)				
Part-time or less	0.0293 (0.0229)	0.0427* (0.0229)	0.0274 (0.0262)	0.0381 (0.0263)
Unemployed	-0.0142 (0.0168)	0.0067 (0.0173)	-0.0089 (0.0188)	0.0037 (0.0195)
Inactive	0.0112 (0.0180)	0.0155 (0.0179)	-0.0118 (0.0197)	-0.0079 (0.0197)
Race (base: African)				
Coloured	0.0108 (0.0198)	0.0016 (0.0198)	-0.0326 (0.0212)	-0.0399* (0.0213)
Indian or Asian	-0.1120*** (0.0280)	-0.1154*** (0.0282)	-0.0595** (0.0287)	-0.0665** (0.0293)
White	0.0584** (0.0244)	0.0722*** (0.0251)	-0.0505* (0.0259)	-0.0531* (0.0273)
Constant	0.5008*** (0.0572)	0.3496*** (0.0624)	0.1612** (0.0633)	0.0613 (0.0702)
Demographic controls	YES	YES	YES	YES
Settlement fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES
Province fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	1,431	1,431	1,701	1,701
R-squared	0.0910	0.1023	0.0755	0.0776
Adj. R-squared	0.0748	0.0863	0.0617	0.0638

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Analysis based on South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2012.

Table 13a. Relationship between Class and Support for Civil Rights and Condemnation of Corruption

Ordered PROBIT regression (coefficients)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Freedom of association	Freedom of opinion	Freedom of press and media	Right to protest	Combating fraud and corruption
Measures of social class					
LSM	0.5705 (0.4118)	-0.3538 (0.3962)	0.0276 (0.3977)	0.7044* (0.3961)	0.4808 (0.4427)
LSM squared	-0.7858* (0.4295)	0.6498 (0.4157)	0.4109 (0.4189)	-0.7028* (0.4137)	0.4190 (0.4778)
Life satisfaction	0.0523 (0.1738)	-0.2749* (0.1664)	-0.0700 (0.1667)	-0.4876*** (0.1664)	-0.1197 (0.1876)
Mobility	-0.0205 (0.1111)	-0.4497*** (0.1074)	-0.7016*** (0.1077)	0.0037 (0.1069)	-0.3062** (0.1209)
Tertiary education	0.3360*** (0.0900)	0.3664*** (0.0867)	0.2034** (0.0864)	0.0466 (0.0854)	-0.0261 (0.0986)
Employment (base: full-time)					
Part-time or less	-0.2457** (0.1083)	-0.2005* (0.1047)	-0.1583 (0.1053)	0.0416 (0.1048)	-0.2240* (0.1153)
Unemployed	-0.0196 (0.0813)	-0.2007*** (0.0778)	-0.1534** (0.0778)	-0.0539 (0.0780)	0.0599 (0.0878)
Inactive	0.0042 (0.0824)	-0.1300 (0.0792)	-0.1291 (0.0794)	0.0278 (0.0791)	-0.1069 (0.0897)
Race (base: African)					
Coloured	-0.0356 (0.0883)	0.2281*** (0.0851)	0.2426*** (0.0846)	-0.3106*** (0.0846)	0.3489*** (0.0985)
Indian or Asian	-0.1302 (0.1206)	0.3029*** (0.1155)	0.3385*** (0.1159)	-0.1764 (0.1159)	0.1939 (0.1341)
White	-0.0759 (0.1128)	0.9211*** (0.1106)	0.9428*** (0.1110)	-0.9505*** (0.1087)	0.1124 (0.1247)
Demographic controls	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Settlement fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Province fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	1,726	1,720	1,729	1,723	1,737
R-squared	0.0187	0.0555	0.0729	0.0486	0.0435

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Analysis based on South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2012.

Note: Estimated constant effects at cut-off values have been omitted from the regression table.

Table 13b. Relationship between Class and Support for Civil Rights and Condemnation of Corruption, Controlling for Closeness to the ANC

Ordered PROBIT regression (coefficients)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Freedom of association	Freedom of opinion	Freedom of press and media	Right to protest	Combating fraud and corruption
Measures of social class					
LSM	0.4962 (0.4371)	-0.3225 (0.4194)	0.3075 (0.4212)	0.7319* (0.4205)	0.3951 (0.4701)
LSM squared	-0.7205 (0.4704)	0.5640 (0.4545)	0.1112 (0.4579)	-0.7182 (0.4528)	0.5256 (0.5278)
Life satisfaction	-0.0116 (0.1865)	-0.1625 (0.1779)	-0.0497 (0.1785)	-0.6470*** (0.1785)	-0.1131 (0.2007)
Mobility	0.0039 (0.1215)	-0.4319*** (0.1168)	-0.6658*** (0.1171)	-0.0773 (0.1166)	-0.2847** (0.1320)
Feeling close to the ANC	0.0067 (0.0677)	-0.2391*** (0.0646)	-0.2834*** (0.0644)	0.1674*** (0.0648)	-0.0966 (0.0715)
Tertiary education	0.3558*** (0.0995)	0.3700*** (0.0955)	0.1442 (0.0949)	0.0539 (0.0939)	0.0471 (0.1098)
Employment (base: full-time)					
Part-time or less	-0.3126*** (0.1167)	-0.1931* (0.1125)	-0.1990* (0.1132)	-0.0204 (0.1126)	-0.1813 (0.1246)
Unemployed	-0.0581 (0.0885)	-0.1886** (0.0844)	-0.1616* (0.0845)	-0.0662 (0.0847)	0.0506 (0.0951)
Inactive	-0.0421 (0.0898)	-0.1582* (0.0859)	-0.1692** (0.0861)	-0.0001 (0.0859)	-0.1253 (0.0975)
Race (Base: African)					
Coloured	0.0119 (0.0997)	0.1630* (0.0950)	0.1849* (0.0949)	-0.1982** (0.0948)	0.2706** (0.1108)
Indian or Asian	-0.0350 (0.1391)	0.2243* (0.1323)	0.3011** (0.1329)	-0.1203 (0.1331)	0.1770 (0.1562)
White	-0.0686 (0.1274)	0.8446*** (0.1242)	0.8219*** (0.1243)	-0.8686*** (0.1226)	0.0001 (0.1409)
Demographic controls	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Settlement fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Province fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	1,516	1,514	1,519	1,510	1,523
R-squared	0.0197	0.0613	0.0761	0.0529	0.0457

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Analysis based on South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2012.

Note: Estimated constant effects at cut-off values have been omitted from the regression table.

Table 14. Relationship between Class and Priorities for Public Policy

Probit regression (marginal effects)	Unemploy- ment	Crime and safety	Poverty	HIV/AIDS	Corruption	Service provision	Education
Class (base: poor)							
Strugglers	0.0073 (0.0332)	0.0818** (0.0380)	-0.0311 (0.0353)	0.0213 (0.0327)	0.0462 (0.0375)	-0.0168 (0.0242)	0.0743** (0.0310)
Anxious	-0.0150 (0.0373)	0.0660 (0.0430)	0.0045 (0.0404)	0.0494 (0.0377)	0.1691*** (0.0400)	-0.1112*** (0.0298)	0.0846** (0.0342)
Climbers	-0.0256 (0.0386)	0.1145** (0.0447)	-0.0675 (0.0427)	0.0335 (0.0394)	0.0989** (0.0423)	-0.0846*** (0.0312)	0.1528*** (0.0336)
Elite	-0.0129 (0.0468)	0.0630 (0.0564)	0.0328 (0.0544)	0.0263 (0.0517)	0.1933*** (0.0501)	-0.1119*** (0.0424)	0.1343*** (0.0406)
Tertiary education	-0.0558* (0.0296)	0.0415 (0.0376)	-0.0554 (0.0378)	-0.0574 (0.0357)	0.0335 (0.0320)	0.0344 (0.0288)	0.0414* (0.0234)
Employment (base: full-time)							
Employed part-time or less	0.0430 (0.0386)	-0.0975** (0.0476)	0.0266 (0.0455)	0.0511 (0.0411)	-0.0226 (0.0417)	-0.0217 (0.0361)	0.0330 (0.0312)
Unemployed	0.1212*** (0.0284)	-0.0098 (0.0337)	0.0738** (0.0324)	-0.0334 (0.0301)	-0.0590* (0.0302)	0.0165 (0.0251)	-0.0346 (0.0241)
Inactive	0.0499* (0.0287)	-0.0015 (0.0354)	0.0433 (0.0344)	-0.0154 (0.0323)	-0.0560* (0.0312)	0.0461* (0.0264)	0.0018 (0.0240)
Race (base: African)							
Coloured	0.0262 (0.0321)	0.0049 (0.0377)	-0.0023 (0.0358)	-0.0684** (0.0344)	-0.0330 (0.0338)	-0.0015 (0.0285)	0.0336 (0.0254)
Indian or Asian	-0.0551 (0.0410)	0.2221*** (0.0517)	-0.0915* (0.0490)	-0.0425 (0.0466)	0.0437 (0.0436)	-0.0625 (0.0440)	0.0018 (0.0361)
White	-0.1536*** (0.0410)	0.1621*** (0.0517)	-0.2589*** (0.0490)	-0.1684*** (0.0466)	0.0870** (0.0436)	-0.0213 (0.0440)	0.0167 (0.0361)
Demographic controls	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Settlement fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Province fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	1,749	1,749	1,749	1,749	1,749	1,749	1,749
R-squared	0.0725	0.0512	0.0475	0.0737	0.0854	0.1120	0.0667

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Analysis based on South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2012.

Table 15. Determinants of the Relationship between Class and Priorities for Public Policy

Probit regression (marginal effects)	Unemployment	Crime and safety	Poverty	HIV/AIDS	Corruption	Service provision	Education
Measures of social class							
LSM	0.1749 (0.1499)	0.3861** (0.1785)	-0.1263 (0.1705)	-0.0641 (0.1562)	0.7796*** (0.1707)	-0.2831** (0.1242)	0.3987*** (0.1376)
LSM squared	-0.1858 (0.1506)	-0.2069 (0.1871)	0.0527 (0.1838)	0.0046 (0.1673)	-0.4427*** (0.1700)	0.0864 (0.1435)	-0.2028 (0.1342)
Life satisfaction	-0.2531*** (0.0637)	-0.0314 (0.0744)	-0.0132 (0.0712)	0.0765 (0.0665)	-0.0222 (0.0670)	0.0956* (0.0530)	0.0027 (0.0529)
Mobility	-0.0124 (0.0394)	0.0690 (0.0480)	-0.1102** (0.0462)	0.0407 (0.0433)	-0.1506*** (0.0418)	0.0471 (0.0354)	0.0951*** (0.0336)
Tertiary education	-0.0325 (0.0301)	0.0250 (0.0382)	-0.0370 (0.0384)	-0.0527 (0.0362)	0.0186 (0.0322)	0.0358 (0.0292)	0.0364 (0.0239)
Employment (base: full-time)							
Employed part-time or less	0.0310 (0.0387)	-0.0895* (0.0478)	0.0149 (0.0457)	0.0497 (0.0413)	-0.0195 (0.0417)	-0.0151 (0.0364)	0.0406 (0.0314)
Unemployed	0.0896*** (0.0292)	-0.0055 (0.0349)	0.0621* (0.0336)	-0.0244 (0.0312)	-0.0616** (0.0311)	0.0323 (0.0259)	-0.0321 (0.0249)
Inactive	0.0357 (0.0287)	0.0015 (0.0355)	0.0355 (0.0345)	-0.0124 (0.0325)	-0.0604* (0.0311)	0.0497* (0.0266)	0.0041 (0.0240)
Race (base: African)							
Coloured	0.0369 (0.0321)	-0.0062 (0.0379)	0.0058 (0.0360)	-0.0600* (0.0346)	-0.0470 (0.0336)	-0.0044 (0.0285)	0.0291 (0.0255)
Indian or Asian	-0.0264 (0.0418)	0.1949*** (0.0529)	-0.0651 (0.0498)	-0.0305 (0.0476)	0.0121 (0.0442)	-0.0570 (0.0448)	-0.0065 (0.0368)
White	-0.1174*** (0.0287)	0.1296*** (0.0355)	-0.2278*** (0.0345)	-0.1534*** (0.0325)	0.0437 (0.0311)	-0.0063 (0.0266)	0.0087 (0.0240)
Demographic							
controls	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Settlement fixed effectss	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Province fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	1,749	1,749	1,749	1,749	1,749	1,749	1,749
R-squared	0.0815	0.0525	0.0477	0.0740	0.0963	0.1120	0.0699

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Analysis based on South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2012.

Table 16. Relationship between Class and Support for the ANC (African respondents only)

Marginal effects from PROBIT regression for the subsample of African respondents	(1) Feeling close or very close to the ANC government	(2) Voted for the ANC in the last national election	(3) Would vote for the ANC if there was a national election tomorrow
Class (base: poor)			
Strugglers	0.1352*** (0.0398)	0.0731** (0.0305)	0.1157*** (0.0294)
Anxious	0.0515 (0.0506)	0.0155 (0.0333)	0.0251 (0.0336)
Climbers	0.1201** (0.0519)	0.1011** (0.0427)	0.0749** (0.0371)
Elite	-0.0544 (0.1042)	-0.0985* (0.0563)	-0.0698 (0.0626)
Tertiary education	-0.0808 (0.0574)	-0.0449 (0.0363)	-0.0513 (0.0370)
Employment (base: full-time)			
Part-time or less	-0.0611 (0.0612)	-0.0220 (0.0379)	-0.0221 (0.0408)
Unemployed	-0.0054 (0.0444)	0.0122 (0.0312)	-0.0030 (0.0312)
Inactive	-0.0583 (0.0512)	0.0368 (0.0372)	0.0332 (0.0363)
Demographic controls	YES	YES	YES
Settlement fixed effects	YES	YES	YES
Province fixed effects	YES	YES	YES
Observations	997	664	866
R-squared	0.0734	0.174	0.108

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Analysis based on South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2012.

Appendix

A.1. Description of Class-Defining Criteria

1. Living Standards Measure (LSM):

Index based on characteristics of the main dwelling the household occupies and the set of assets present in the household (in working order).

Table A1a. LSM Basic

Factor analysis/correlation	Number of obs	=	2190
Method: principal-component factors	Retained factors	=	1
Rotation: orthogonal varimax (Kaiser off)	Number of params	=	11

Factor	Variance	Difference	Proportion	Cumulative
Factor1	7.63889	.	0.6944	0.6944

LR test: independent vs. saturated: $\chi^2(55) = 2.5e+04$ Prob> $\chi^2 = 0.0000$

Variable	Rotated factor loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances		Scoring coefficients ($\hat{\theta}$) ^a
	Factor1 = LSM	Uniqueness	Factor1 = LSM
a) House, cluster, town house	0.6977	0.5133	0.0913
b) Tap water in house/on plot	0.8152	0.3354	0.1067
c) Flush toilet in/outside house	0.8446	0.2867	0.1106
d) TV set	0.8105	0.3430	0.1061
e) Electric stove	0.8407	0.2932	0.1101
f) Fridge/freezer combination	0.9178	0.1577	0.1202
g) DVD player/Blu-ray player	0.7983	0.3627	0.1045
h) Microwave oven (in working order)	0.9027	0.1851	0.1182
i) Washing machine	0.8805	0.2247	0.1153
j) Motor vehicle	0.8076	0.3478	0.1057
k) Subscription-based private satellite TV	0.8297	0.3116	0.1086

^a method = regression; based on varimax rotated factors

Note: Before the principal components were estimated, all variables were centred at zero and scaled to have a unit variance. The index based on the scores for factor1 has mean zero and was normalised to have a unit variance by dividing the factor score by the standard deviation of the first principal component.

Table A1b. LSM Luxury

Factor analysis/correlation	Number of obs	=	2338
Method: principal-component factors	Retained factors	=	1
Rotation: orthogonal varimax (Kaiser off)	Number of params	=	11

Factor	Variance	Difference	Proportion	Cumulative
Factor1	7.77376	.	0.7067	0.7067

LR test: independent vs. saturated: $\chi^2(55) = 2.7e+04$ Prob> $\chi^2 = 0.0000$

Rotated factor loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances			Scoring coefficients (θ) ^a
Variable	Factor1 = LSM	Uniqueness	Factor1 = LSM
a) Deep freezer (in working order)	0.7630	0.4178	0.0982
b) Computer (desktop or laptop)	0.8478	0.2812	0.1091
c) Home theatre system	0.5749	0.6695	0.0740
d) Vacuum cleaner/floor polisher	0.8942	0.2004	0.1150
e) Telkom home telephone (excl. cell phone)	0.8179	0.3311	0.1052
f) Tumble dryer	0.8610	0.2586	0.1108
g) Home security service	0.9236	0.1469	0.1188
h) Domestic worker (live-in/part-time)	0.8909	0.2064	0.1146
i) Dishwashing machine	0.8853	0.2163	0.1139
j) Swimming pool	0.8828	0.2207	0.1136
k) Air conditioner (excluding fans)	0.8501	0.2774	0.1094

^a method = regression; based on varimax rotated factors

Note: Before the principal components were estimated, all variables were centred at zero and scaled to have a unit variance. The index based on the scores for factor1 has mean zero and was normalised to have a unit variance by dividing the factor score by the standard deviation of the first principal component.

2. Life Satisfaction and 3. Upward Social Mobility:

In order to prevent the mobility measure from being driven by respondents' general attitude (optimism or pessimism) towards life, two uncorrelated principal components are extracted from the full set of questions, where one captures overall life satisfaction and the other (which is orthogonal to the former) captures upward social mobility.

Table A1c. Life Satisfaction and Upward Social Mobility

Factor analysis/correlation	Number of obs	=	2217
Method: principal-component factors	Retained factors	=	2
Rotation: orthogonal varimax (Kaiser off)	Number of params	=	15

Factor	Variance	Difference	Proportion	Cumulative
Factor1	3.35756	1.60755	0.4197	0.4197
Factor2	1.75001	.	0.2188	0.6384

LR test: independent vs. saturated: $\chi^2(28) = 6700.82$ Prob> $\chi^2 = 0.0000$

Variable	Rotated factor loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances			Scoring coefficients ^a	
	Factor1	Factor2	Uniqueness	Factor1 = Life satisfaction	Factor2 = Mobility
a) Taking all things together, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?	0.5662	0.341	0.5632	0.1419	0.1444
b) Thinking about your own life and personal circumstances, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole?	0.7977	0.1323	0.3461	0.2394	-0.0096
c) How satisfied are you with your standard of living?	0.8301	0.0959	0.3018	0.2538	-0.0355
d) How satisfied are you with what you are achieving in life?	0.8322	0.0168	0.3072	0.2634	-0.0841
e) How satisfied are you with your future (financial) security?	0.7256	0.0801	0.4671	0.2223	-0.0333
f) How satisfied are you with your occupation (study/job)?	0.6909	0.068	0.518	0.2126	-0.0368
g) In the last 5 years, has life improved, stayed the same or gotten worse for people like you?	0.1216	0.8777	0.2148	-0.0608	0.5232
h) Do you think that life will improve, stay the same or get worse in the next 5 years for people like you?	0.0204	0.9085	0.1742	-0.0965	0.5535

^a method = regression; based on varimax rotated factors

Note: Before the principal components were estimated, all variables were centred at zero and scaled to have a unit variance. The indices based on the scores for factor1 and factor2 have mean zero and were normalised to have a unit variance by dividing the factor score by the standard deviation of the first and second principal components, respectively.

A.2. Description of Value Indicators

1. **Support for democracy:** Answer to the question about which of the following three statements is closest to the respondent's own opinion.
 - a) Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.
 - b) In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.
 - c) For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.
2. **Voting:** Index based on degree of agreement or disagreement (scale 1–5) with the following statements [Note: **(a)**, **(b)**, and **(d)** recoded in reverse order such that higher values indicate more positive attitudes toward voting/democracy]:
 - a) Whether I vote or not makes no difference.
 - b) After being elected all parties are the same, so voting is pointless.
 - c) It is the duty of all citizens to vote.
 - d) Voting is meaningless because no politician can be trusted. Plus
 - e) whether the respondent would vote if there were a national election tomorrow.
3. **Interest in politics:** Index based in equal proportions on **(a)** how interested individuals are in politics and **(b)** how often politics seem so complicated that the individuals cannot really understand what is going on. [Note: **(b)** recoded in reverse order such that higher values indicate greater understanding].
4. **Support for fundamental freedoms:** Degree of agreement or disagreement (scale 1–5) with the following statements.
 - 4.1 **Freedom of association:** Citizens should have the right to form or join organisations freely, such as political parties, business associations, trade unions and other interest groups.
 - 4.2 **Freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression:** The government should have the authority to prevent citizens from criticising it. [Note: recoded in reverse order such that higher values indicate more liberal/democratic views.]
 - 4.3 **Freedom of the press and other communications media:** The government should be in control of what information is given to the public. [Note: recoded in reverse order such that higher values indicate more liberal/ democratic views.]
 - 4.4 **Freedom to protest:** Mass action is an acceptable way for people to express their views in a democracy.
5. **Trust in public institutions:** Index based on the extent of trust (scale 1–5) respondents have in the following public institutions in South Africa: **(a)** the national government, **(b)** the local government, **(c)** political parties, **(d)** courts, **(e)** the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), **(f)** the parliament, **(g)** the police and **(h)** the defence force.

6. **Satisfaction with provision of public infrastructure:** Index based on how satisfied or dissatisfied (scale 1–5) respondents are with the way that the government is handling the following matters: **(a)** supplying water and sanitation; **(b)** providing electricity; **(c)** removing refuse; and **(d)** ensuring affordable housing.
7. **Satisfaction with provision of public services:** Index based on how satisfied or dissatisfied (scale 1–5) respondents are with the way that the government is handling the following matters: **(a)** access to healthcare; **(b)** treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) incl. HIV/AIDS; **(c)** social grants (such as child support grants, old-age pensions, etc.); and **(d)** education.
8. **Most important challenges:** The three most important challenges facing South Africa today chosen from a list of 18 policy areas below [plus other (specify) and do not know]. I focus on the top seven challenges that at least 10 per cent of all respondents selected from the list.

Table A2a. The Three Most Important Challenges Facing South Africa Today

Policy Area	Share of respondents who chose this policy area among three most important challenges (%)
1) Unemployment	76.4
2) Crime and safety	47.5
3) Poverty	33.9
4) HIV/AIDS	30.7
5) Corruption	27.3
6) Service provision/delivery	16.5
7) Education	13.6
8) Affordable housing	9.6
9) Economic and financial issues	6.2
10) Xenophobia	5.1
11) Racism	4.8
12) Political issues	4.3
13) Human rights	3.3
14) Work-related issues	3.0
15) Environmental issues	2.4
16) Family and youth issues	2.1
17) Land reform issues	1.7
18) Religion and culture issues	0.6

Source: Analysis based on South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2012.

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