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South Africa's emerging black middle class: A harbinger of political change?

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WIDER Working Paper 2014/147

South Africa's emerging black middle class

A harbinger of political change?

Robert Mattes*

November 2014

Abstract: South Africa has seen a significant increase in the size of the black middle class in the post-apartheid period, but the attitudinal consequences of indicators of the middle class, as of 2011, are inconsistent and modest in size. While members of the middle class are no more likely to hold democratic values than other black South Africans, they are more likely to want government to secure higher order, rather than basic, survival needs. They are less likely to identify with the governing African National Congress, turn out to vote, or voice their concerns by contacting officials or joining collective action. At the same time, intra-racial differences between middle class black respondents, on one hand, and middle class white, coloured and Indian respondents, on the other, are still substantial.

Keywords: South Africa, middle class, attitudes, survey, research, democracy

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1 Introduction

While definitions and estimates of its size differ, most analysts agree that the combination of a removal of apartheid restrictions and a series of public policy interventions such as affirmative action and black economic empowerment has moved a sizeable proportion of black South Africans into the middle class. At least since the classic statements of Seymour Martin Lipset (1959) and Barrington Moore (1966), comparative scholars of democratization have come to expect that the development and ultimate size of a country's middle class will assist the process of democratization due to that middle class' unique values, opinions and political behaviours. Within South Africa, some analysts expect the black middle class to prioritize different public policy concerns, be more critical of government performance and be less supportive of the governing African National Congress (ANC) than other black South Africans. Others have argued the exact opposite, pointing out that the new black middle class is dependent on clientelist government policies for its well-being. Others still have argued that the rise of the black middle class holds out the possibility of a new, cross-cutting cleavage that unites people of similar classes across the old apartheid divides of race and ethnicity.

But while most analysts agree that a middle class is characterized by a relatively high level of income, specific occupations and specific levels of education, there is little agreement on precisely what it is *about* being in the middle class that produces these effects. Is it the skills and world view imparted by certain types of occupation? Is it the physiological security that it entails? Or, is it the cognitive skills produced by higher education? Or in the case of South Africa, where the black middle class has rapidly developed only recently, is it simply the effect of a new generation socialized under democracy, with little memory of apartheid conflict or scarcity? In this paper, I review differing arguments about how the middle class is supposed to aid the endurance of democracy. I also review evidence about the growth of South Africa's middle class – variously defined. Based on the arguments of both comparative and South African scholars, I then develop a set of hypotheses that can be tested against available data from South African Afrobarometer surveys. I ask whether members of the emerging black middle class differ from other black South Africans in terms of their electoral behaviours – particularly in their alignment vis-à-vis the dominant ruling ANC – and other forms of political participation, such as conventional or unconventional collective action. I also investigate whether they are more critical of government performance, place different policy demands on government, or are more supportive of democracy. Finally, I test whether black middle class South Africans differ from their white, coloured or Indian middle class counterparts.

I find little evidence that members of the black middle class are any more supportive of democracy than other black South Africans, though there are signs that they are more likely to want government to deliver higher order goods, such as free speech and accountable government, rather than basic survival goods such as food, water or shelter. They are less likely to identify with the governing ANC. And they are also more likely to 'exit' the democratic system rather than 'voice' (Hirschmann 1970) their concerns by voting, contacting officials, or joining with others to achieve political outcomes, whether through conventional or unconventional forms of collective action. Finally, while intra-class differences amongst blacks are modest at best, intra-racial differences between middle class blacks, on one hand, and middle class white, coloured and Indian respondents, on the other, are still substantial. At least for now, the rise of the black middle class does not signal a new non-racial dimension in South African politics.

2 The South African context

From the time the ANC took political power in 1994, the transformation of the South African economy has been that party's overriding policy goal. While economic transformation, through the eyes of the ANC, has implied infrastructural development and economic growth, it has also included the eradication of destitution and homelessness, and the reduction of poverty. More importantly, economic transformation has been seen to also imply racial redistribution, which from the beginning has meant – among other things – the creation of a new, black middle class that would not only signal the accession of black South Africans to economic power, but would also act as a patriotic bourgeoisie and help drive the larger process of development.

As a governing party, ANC thinking about the process of general development has evolved over time, as articulated in a series of policy documents beginning with the short-lived expansionist Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP), the sharp shift to the neo-liberal Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) plan, and the later evolution to the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative (ASGISA). Since 2009, however, there has been far greater disagreement amongst economic policy makers, with key ministers calling for centralized planning and a developmental state that would put the country on a new growth path. Yet throughout the evolving policy rhetoric, there have been important constants to development policy in practice, in the form of building community infrastructure (electricity, piped water and sewage), building houses and clinics, widening access to free education, medicine and basic health care, and expanding access to social welfare grants.

There have also been several important constants in government efforts to build a black middle class by requiring affirmative action in public service hiring, and encouraging affirmative action in the private sector by setting demographic employment benchmarks, targets and time frames in sector-specific codes of practice, and requiring successful bidders for state contracts to achieve minimum numeric scores in terms of black economic empowerment. Even before these codes were put into place, big businesses – perhaps anticipating the need to get out in front of the legislative curve – began to engineer a series of empowerment deals that gave emerging black business persons significant shares in many of the country's largest corporations.

Some analysts have worried that these forms of largesse would simply cement yet another strand into the already oversized ANC electoral coalition. Yet a drop in ANC vote totals in metropolitan areas in the recent 2014 national elections – especially in Johannesburg, Pretoria and Port Elizabeth where the vote share of the Democratic Alliance (DA), whose liberal politics and (mostly) neo-liberal economics have long tied it to the white middle class, showed double-digit growth – has spawned worries that better-off black voters are increasingly less likely to acquiesce in the face of poor service delivery and corruption.

3 The political and theoretical importance of the middle class

Proceeding from the foundational conclusions of the classic studies of Lipset (1959) ('the more well to do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy') and Moore (1966) ('no bourgeoisie, no democracy'), a long line of studies have subsequently corroborated the empirical link between growth, wealth and democracy. And, with some few exceptions (Acemoglu et al. 2008), most analysts accept that this link is in some way causal (for the most recent examples, see Przeworski et al. 2000; Halperin, Siegle and Weinstein 2005; Epstein et al. 2006; Norris 2008; Teorell 2010). While analysts have been far less clear on the possible reasons *why* factors associated

with material wealth facilitate and/or sustain democracy, one important line of reasoning points to the role of the middle class.

Two, often overlapping, tendencies characterize attempts to conceptualize and operationalize the middle class. The first approach defines it simply in terms of its ‘middle-ness’: that is those people who occupy the middle strata of the income distribution in a given country (e.g. Seekings and Natrass 2005, 2014; Banerjee and Duflo 2008; Lufeka, Mabila and Aissa 2011; Visagie and Posel 2013). The second sees the middle class as a discrete category with unique characteristics. Many scholars have pursued both approaches interchangeably. For example, Karl Marx famously saw the ‘petty bourgeoisie’ of professionals, small traders and shopkeepers as a functional *buffer zone* between the poor (proletariat) and the wealthy (capitalists) (Marx and Engels 1992). And, according to Lipset (1959: 83), economic growth turns ‘the shape of the class stratification structure so that it shifts from an elongated pyramid, with a large lower class base, to a diamond with a growing middle class’. Yet it is not immediately clear why the sheer size of those occupying a middle point on an income distribution scale is relevant to democracy and democratic politics per se, unless there is something distinctive and unique to that group as a discrete category rather than as a middle space on a continuum. Thus, while Marx described the middle class as a buffer between the proletarians and capitalists, its real relevance stemmed from the fact that while its members shared many of the same values and aspirations of the capitalist class, they did not own the means of production (Huntington 1991; Marx and Engels 1992).

One causal path between the middle class and democracy may pass through the occupations that are widely associated with this stratum (Weber 1948). Just as the skills learned in the factory produce more modern values in developing countries (Inkeles 1969), the skills and expanding life chances acquired in middle class occupations – especially business, the professions, management and service sector – are said to transform values: drawing a regular salary, accumulating savings and pension funds, and owning property give middle class citizens a greater interest in the protection of private property and in gradual, rather than radical social, economic and political change (Lipset 1959; Banerjee and Duflo 2008). However, a different argument traces the causal path between the middle class and pro-democratic values not through occupation per se, but through higher levels of education that stimulate cognitive development and promote civic values (Lipset 1959; Huntington 1991; Dalton 2013). In the first instance, a sizeable middle class provides a critical mass of people who possess the organizational, financial, managerial and research skills to staff the legislatures, ministries, departments and agencies that make democracy work (Mattes and Mozaffar 2011). In the second instance, a sizeable middle class also provides a mass of citizens who make democracy work by supporting and participating in the institutions of democracy (Lipset 1959).

A third argument sees both occupation and education as mere markers of a much more important characteristic of the middle class: that is, sharply lower levels of scarcity and physiological insecurity. Based on the logic of Abraham Maslow’s (1954) hierarchy of needs, Ronald Inglehart argues that people value that which is in least supply (the ‘scarcity hypothesis’) (Inglehart and Abramson 1995; Inglehart and Welzel 2005). Thus membership in the middle class is less a marker for education than it is of people who experience relative abundance and physiological security: that is, people who have solved basic needs (e.g. food, water, shelter) and middle order needs (e.g. steady employment, physical safety, health care and old age pensions), and thus come to value higher order needs such as self-expression, democracy, gender rights and environmental protection.

However, Inglehart further specifies this argument in a way that has special relevance for South Africa. While fundamental political values are determined by scarcity or abundance, values are

formed and solidified during the period of late adolescence (the socialization hypothesis). Thus, the key question in a developing society is not so much the current size of the adult middle class, but rather the number of people who grew up under conditions of relative security and affluence. In South Africa, trade union and Communist Party members often describe the newly wealthy former leaders of the liberation struggle – figures such as Trevor Manuel, Cyril Ramaphosa, Tokyo Sexhale and Mamphele Ramphele – as ‘sell-outs’ and ‘class traitors’.¹ However, Inglehart’s theory predicts that these individuals would have retained the same basic values and policy goals they formed as young militants and revolutionaries. A values gap would emerge only between Manuel et al., on one hand, and their children, on the other: that is, members of the so-called Born Free generation who have grown up in middle class households and attend relatively privileged schools and universities.

While few South African scholars have explicitly addressed the issue of the new black middle class in terms of the survival of democracy, some have begun to focus on its implications for the quality of democracy and electoral politics. Echoing Maslow, Netshitenzhe (2014: 25) has argued that the marginal decline in ANC victory margins across the country’s metropolitan areas in the 2014 election ‘represents the voice of a middle strata that are dissatisfied with specific issues’.

Though their rise and sustenance depend directly or indirectly on government policies, they do not rely on state largesse in the form of access to water, electricity, social grants and other such basic services. And so ... other issues such as probity, ethics, accountability, decency in the conduct of politics ... start to assume prominence in their voting behaviour or even electoral participation.

At the same time, the logic of Albert Hirschman’s (1970) argument in *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* might predict that such dissatisfaction would, in fact, lead members of the middle class to ‘exit’ the formal democratic process rather than ‘voice’ their displeasure through voting or either individual or collective action, and that they would rather utilize their skills and ambitions to satisfy their goals outside of the political arena. Yet not all analysts agree that that the black middle class will necessarily be hostile to the governing party. Roger Southall (2012), for example, argues that successive ANC governments’ use of policy tools like affirmative action, black economic empowerment and state development contracts have drawn the new black middle class into a ‘state-party-class coalition’ with the ANC.

¹ Manuel began his political career as a student activist in Cape Town, a member of the South African Communist Party, and one of the leaders of the internal resistance movement, the United Democratic Front. After entering government in 1995, he became Minister of Treasury and presided over the government’s policy switch to a neo-liberal structural reform programme. Ramaphosa was originally the head of the National Mineworkers Union and then became secretary general of the African National Congress. Snubbed when it came to the position of deputy president in 1994, he entered the business world and started Shanduka Group, becoming one of the most successful businessmen men in South Africa with a net worth, according to Forbes, of US\$700 million. Sexhale was a senior figure in the South African Communist Party and close confidant of party leader Chris Hani. He was later premier of Gauteng province and after leaving politics also became one of the country’s wealthiest businesspersons as chairman of the mining conglomerate Mvelapanda Group. Ramphele was an activist in the Black Consciousness Movement and a close confidante of its leader Steven Biko. After working in civil society and academia, she left the country to become a senior vice-president of the World Bank. Since then, she has been a director of several companies and is listed by Forbes as one of the richest women in Africa.

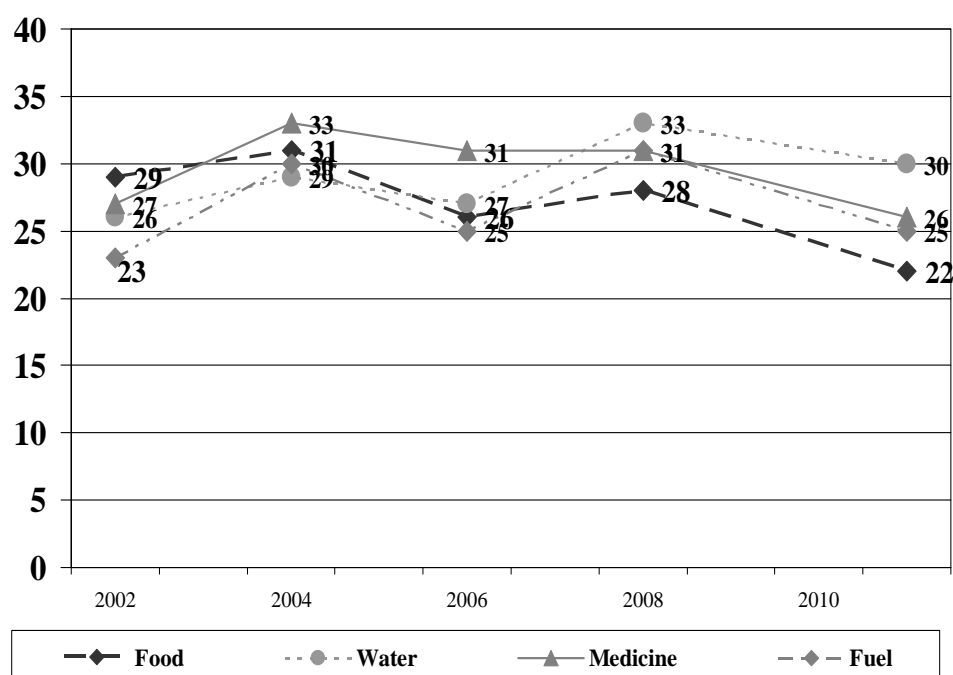
4 South African trends in well-being

Regardless of the policy shifts away from Keynes to Friedman and now apparently back again, the constants of actual delivery have resulted in major infrastructural achievements. Access to basic sanitation increased from 50 per cent of the population in 1995, the year after the country's first non-racial election, to 83 per cent by 2012. Access to a basic level of piped water went from 60 per cent to 95 per cent of all households over the same period, and the proportion with access to electricity went from 50 per cent to 86 per cent by 2014 (Presidency, Republic of South Africa 2014: 71–2). Approximately 3.7 million subsidized houses have been built, and the proportion of people in formal housing increased from 64 per cent in 1996 to 78 per cent in 2011 (Presidency, Republic of South Africa 2014: 67–8). In terms of health care, 1,500 new clinics and 18 public hospitals were built and half of the existing 400 public hospitals were renovated. Primary health care services are now provided free of charge to all people, and the proportion of people who use public clinics jumped from 45 per cent in 2004 to 60 per cent in 2012 (Presidency, Republic of South Africa 2014: 54, 105). In terms of education, the ANC government had built by 2012, 2,700 new schools and 84,500 new classrooms. Seventy-eight per cent of students received fee waivers, resulting in an increase in gross secondary school enrolment from 51 per cent in 1993 to 89 per cent by 2012, and 9 million children received free lunches every day at school (Presidency, Republic of South Africa 2014: 47–8, 103). Finally, the number of people receiving a social grant grew from 2.7 million in 1994 to 16 million in 2013 (mostly via the child support grant), and South Africa now spends 3.4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) on these and similar grants (Presidency, Republic of South Africa 2014: 45).

But the vast achievements in building infrastructure and widening access to public services have resulted in only modest improvements in well-being. While the percentage of people living under various income poverty lines has fallen, real household incomes have grown only in the top quintile and bottom decile, with trends in the bottom tenth wholly attributable to the effect of social grants (Bhorat and Van der Westhuizen 2010; Leibbrandt et al. 2010; Presidency, Republic of South Africa 2014: 45–6). Indeed, unemployment increased from 20 per cent in 1994 to 25 per cent in 2013 by the official measure, and from 32 per cent to 36 per cent by the expanded definition (Donnelly 2013).

With the contending effects of decreasing employment and increasing social grants, other quality-of-life indicators have shown little movement over time. Afrobarometer has developed a valid and reliable module that measures the extent to which people 'go without' a basket of basic necessities, including food, clean water, necessary medical care and fuel for home heating or cooking, as well as a cash income (Mattes 2008) (for wording see Appendix). According to Afrobarometer South Africa surveys conducted between 2002 and 2011, there was a real decrease in the percentage of respondents who reported frequent shortages of food. This drop has probably been concentrated amongst households that receive child support grants, as StatsSA surveys have found an even larger drop in reported hunger in households with children (Van der Berg, Louw and Du Toit 2007; Van der Berg 2010). All other indicators, however, show trendless variation over that same period. In corroboration of these data, Kane-Berman (2014) has cited government surveys that show that while almost 86 per cent of households are entitled to receive a basic minimum of free water each month, one-fifth of households say they have gone at least two consecutive days or longer without water. Thus, while the increasing size of the South African welfare state has managed to counter the effects of increasing unemployment, its limitations have meant that overall levels of lived poverty have not diminished.

Figure 1: Indicators of lived poverty over time



Source: Afrobarometer (various years), round 2, 2.5, 3, 4 and 5.

5 Estimates of South Africa's emerging black middle class

The clear trend in personal income across the first two decades of South African democracy has been one of stagnation across the bottom four-fifths of the population (helped in the bottom tenth only by social grants), but growth amongst the top fifth (Whiteford and Van Seventer 1999; Budlender 2000; Bhorat and Van der Westhuizen 2010; Leibbrandt et al. 2010). It is this growth that has generated the rapid expansion of a middle class amongst black South Africans. While the trends reviewed in the previous section were driven largely by state investments in infrastructure construction and social grants, the growth of the middle class has been driven by legislative changes regarding employment equity (affirmative action) and black economic empowerment.

Estimates of trends and the absolute size of the black middle class vary depending on whether one examines income, class or self-described class identity. The most systematic longitudinal attempt comes from a recent study of annual household surveys from 1993 to 2012 conducted by researchers at the University of Stellenbosch (Kotze et al. 2013). They found – using an income standard of R25,000 per annum (in 2000 prices, or US\$3,250) – that the absolute size of South Africa's black middle class grew from 350,000 in 1993 to almost three million by 2012. It is of interest that Southall (2012), using a strictly occupational approach, has come to roughly similar estimates, finding an increase in the number of black South Africans employed in non-manual, white-collar occupations growing from 840,000 in 1991 to 3.8 million in 2011. In relative terms, this represents a modest, though still significant, shift from 1 to 7 per cent of the black population. Perhaps more importantly, Kotze et al. (2013) calculate that the black share of the country's middle class (so defined) jumped from 11 to 41 per cent. This implies important shifts in a range of social phenomena, such as the nature and preferences of those able to purchase goods and services like automobiles, houses and insurance or to send their children to previously white public and private

schools, as well as the composition of the country's affluent suburbs. Blacks, for example, now take 53 per cent of all first degrees awarded by the country's universities (Kane-Berman 2014), and outnumber whites in terms of suburban home purchases (Presidency, Republic of South Africa 2014: 68).

Researchers from the Stellenbosch group have also calculated an alternative, multi-dimensional 'capabilities' measure consisting of employment, literacy, access to services such as clean water, sanitation and electricity, and ownership of assets such as a stove, refrigerator, radio and television (McAravey, Burger and Van der Berg 2014). They then reset the per capita income threshold so that the overall proportion defined as middle class in 1993 would be the same as that estimated by the capabilities approach (12 per cent). However, because these two sets are not composed of the same individuals, the proportion of blacks that qualify as middle class (so defined) in 1993, using both the income *and* capabilities measures, was just 4 per cent, but increased to 12 per cent in 2008 (and the black share of the middle class expanded from 17 to 45 per cent). However, if one uses *only* the capabilities approach, the percentage of middle class blacks began at 12 per cent and increased to 27 per cent (increasing from 32 to 60 per cent of that group) (McAravey, Burger and Van der Berg 2014).

6 Is the new black middle class different politically?

Thus, whether one uses an income, occupational, or capabilities-based approach, or some combination thereof, there appears to have been an exponential expansion of the black middle class over the past twenty years, though its precise size and relative growth is far from clear. Depending on the measure employed, the percentage of black South Africans who might be classified as middle class ranges anywhere from 8 to 27 per cent. And in terms of its overall economic impact, black South Africans now comprise anywhere from 40 to 60 per cent of South Africa's middle class.

But the *political* impact of this expansion depends greatly on whether the values, preferences, evaluations and behaviours of the black middle class actually differ in any important ways from other black South Africans. Unfortunately, none of the large household surveys collected by the South African state, universities or market research firms contain the necessary questions about political attitudes and behaviours that would allow us to examine these arguments. The most recent South African World Values Survey (2013) is not yet available to the wider scholarly community, and the previous one (2006) would be too old for our purposes, given the rapid and recent rise of the black middle class.

We do, however, have access to the 2011 South Africa Afrobarometer survey. It comprises face-to-face interviews, in a language of the respondent's choice, with a random, representative, area probability cluster sample of 2,400 South Africans aged 18 and over. The sampling frame consisted of census enumerator areas (EAs) and was stratified by province, rural-urban differences and dominant racial group. Four interviews each were conducted in 600 EAs that were selected from each strata with probability proportionate to population size. The dataset contains responses to a wealth of questions about a range of attitudes on democracy, political institutions, political parties and individual political participation that could serve as dependent variables in tests of the political impacts of class. In terms of measures of class – the independent variable – our theoretical interest is in identifying people who do not merely occupy the middle of the income scale between the extremes of the poor and rich, but rather those who, through what they do, their cognitive skills, or their freedom from physiological insecurity, may possess a distinctive set of interests or values that are conducive to democracy. Thus, in order to test the occupational argument, I would want

to be able to identify people in households where the head of household is fully employed and either does not work for others (business people, self-employed professionals or commercial farmers), or works for others within the middle hierarchies of professional and service sector firms, or public and corporate bureaucracies. In order to test the cognitive argument, I would want to identify those people who either have specialized post-secondary educational training or who attended university. And to test the physiological insecurity argument, I would want to identify those people who have access to key services and are free from want of basic necessities.

While earlier Afrobarometer surveys asked respondents about their own occupation (though not head of household for interviews with the unemployed, housewives, or dependent students), the question was dropped after 2006.² However, Afrobarometer has continued to ask a standard measure of educational attainment (measured as the highest level of schooling attained).³ As of 2011, just 8 per cent of all adult black respondents told Afrobarometer interviewers that they had any kind of training or education at a tertiary institution. In contrast, almost half of adult white respondents (47 per cent) had similar levels of education, though the proportions of Indian (10 per cent) and coloured (7 per cent) respondents were roughly equivalent to black South Africans (Figure 2).

Finally, the Afrobarometer module on lived poverty discussed above provides at least one element of a potential measure of physiological security. But instead of experiences of shortages of basic necessities, this measure would focus instead on those respondents who say they ‘never’ go without food, clean water, home cooking fuel, or necessary medical care. In the 2011 survey, 30 per cent of black respondents said they ‘never’ went without any of these four basic necessities.⁴ Yet many of these respondents may still lead relatively precarious lives, obtaining these necessities through basic survival strategies, rather than through access to modern municipal services and amenities, especially those who live in rural areas. Thus, we also utilize two recently added question items on whether respondents had piped water or flush toilets within the household. As of 2011, just one-third of all black respondents report having piped water (33 per cent) or a flush toilet (31 per cent) inside their household (as opposed to within a communal compound, or a facility outside the compound). Putting all of this together, the proportion of black respondents who never go without basic necessities *and* have piped water and a flush toilet inside their house comes to just 14 per cent. In contrast, the number of white adult respondents (78 per cent) who fit the same criteria is seven times higher, and the proportion of coloured (49 per cent) and Indian (57 per cent) respondents is three to four times as high. Overall, one-in-four (25 per cent) South Africans could be regarded as physiologically secure in 2011 (Figure 2).⁵

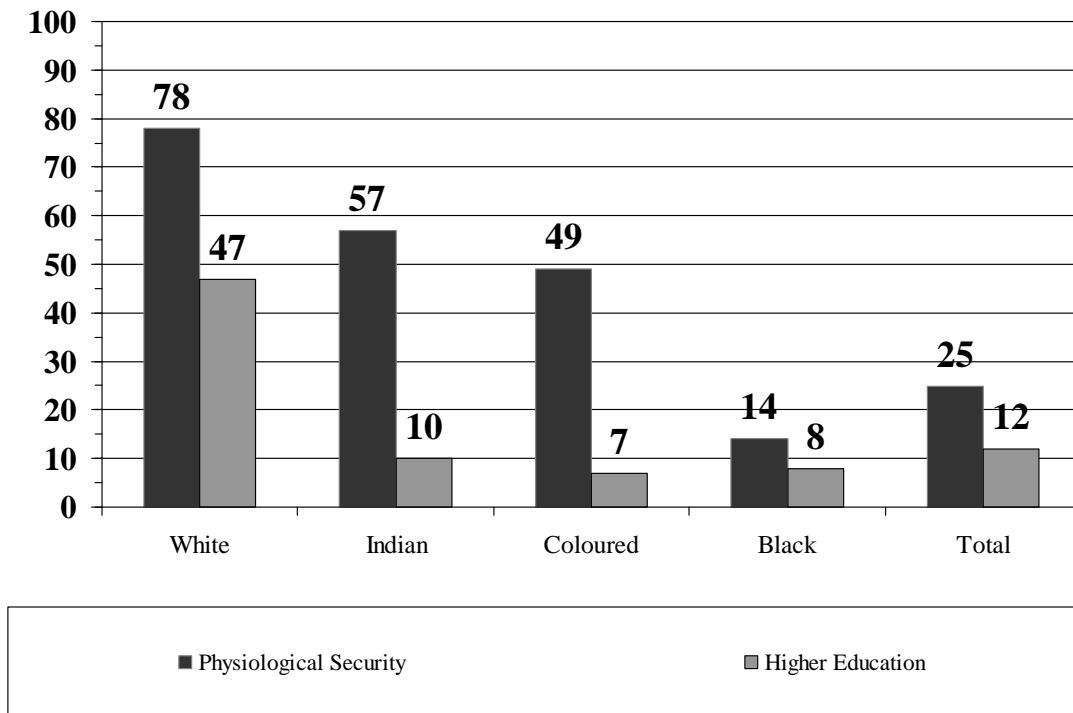
² Using comparable earlier surveys carried out by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) and Afrobarometer surveys from 2000 to 2006, the results indicate an increase in the proportion of black adults with a business or professional occupation from 7 per cent in 1997 to 13 per cent in 2006.

³ While the IDASA/Afrobarometer surveys track a consistent-over-time increase in the proportion of adult black South Africans who have completed high school (from 18 per cent in 1994 to 26 per cent in 2011), the data show trendless variation in the proportion of adults that say they have any tertiary education, or have completed an undergraduate university education.

⁴ The percentage of black South Africans who tell Afrobarometer fieldworkers they ‘never’ go without enough food, clean water, home fuel for cooking or heating, or necessary medical treatment has varied since 2000 between 28 and 26 per cent, but the data reveal no upward trend.

⁵ Seekings and Nattrass (2014) do not provide a racial breakdown of their estimates of South Africa’s changing class structure between 1993 and 2008, but they claim that the share of all households in 2008 with a head of household

Figure 2: Middle class indicators, 2011

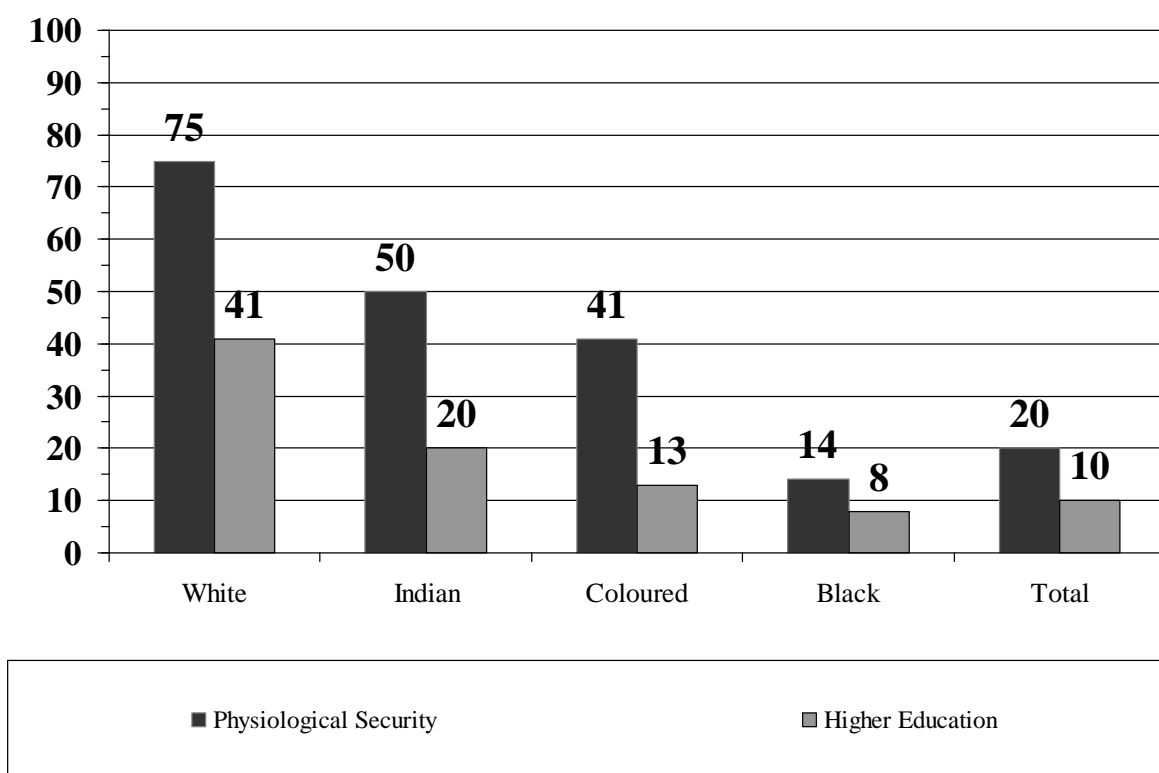


Source: Afrobarometer (2011), round 5.

Finally, in order to operationalize the Inglehart conceptualization that combines socialization and physiological security, I estimate the size of the young middle class, that is those South Africans who are likely to have passed through their formative years (14 to 22) since the passage of the 1996 constitution (known in South Africa as the ‘Born Frees’ and as of 2011, aged 18–34) under conditions of physiological security or having attained at least some post-secondary schooling. This yields an estimate of 7 per cent (physiological security) and 8 per cent (higher education) of all young black respondents, the exact same proportion as of the overall black adult population. The figures for younger white, Indian and coloured respondents are also very similar to that of the overall sample (Figure 3).

employed in business, professional and management, self-employed, and semi-professional sectors was 20 per cent (up from 17 per cent in 1993).

Figure 3: Born Free middle class indicators, 2011



Source: Afrobarometer (2011), round 5.

7 Political consequences

We now turn to the key question: to the extent that there is now an identifiable, though still relatively small, black middle class in South Africa, what consequences, if any, does this signal for the process of democratic consolidation in that country, either attitudinally or behaviourally? Using the most recently available Afrobarometer data from 2011, I create a measure of physiological security (that takes the value of 1 if respondents ‘never’ go without four basic necessities *and* have piped water and a flush toilet in the household, and 0 if otherwise), and a measure of cognitive skills (which takes the value of 1 if respondents have any kind of post-secondary training or at least some university education, and 0 if otherwise). I also create a dummy variable that measures the interaction of these two measures and equals 1 if a respondent was both physiologically secure and had some higher education. Finally, in order to test the socializing effect of having grown up secure and well educated, I create an indicator that takes the value of 1 if the respondent is aged 18–34 and is physiologically secure and has any higher education.

I begin by examining a few key bivariate correlations of physiological security and post-secondary education amongst black South Africans (Table 1). What this reveals, first of all, is that while the link between post-secondary education and physiological security is statistically significant and positive, it is rather modest (Pearson’s $r = .167$). In other words, these measures appear to tap relatively unique aspects of what one might consider middle class. The correlations also suggest that those black South Africans who are relatively secure in their enjoyment of basic physiological necessities and who have a post-secondary education are both more likely to be interested in politics and discuss politics with family and friends (*cognitive engagement*), and more likely to listen to radio and television news or read newspapers on a frequent basis (*news media use*). At the same time,

they are both less likely to live in rural areas (far more so for physiological security). Perhaps surprisingly, neither measure registers any significant differences between men and women or between the Born Frees and older respondents.

Table 1: Correlates of Class (Black South Africans)

	Physiological security	Higher education	Physiologically secure and higher education
Physiological security	--	0.167***	0.412***
Higher education	0.167***	--	0.561***
News media use	0.222***	0.226***	0.156***
Cognitive engagement	0.101***	0.121***	0.071**
Rural	-0.287***	-0.077***	-0.114***
Female	0.023	-0.021	-0.033
Born Free	0.012	-0.010	0.012

Notes: Cells display Pearson's r correlations, and levels of statistical significance: *p<= .05, **p<=.01 ***, p<=.001. N=1829

Source: Afrobarometer (2011), round 5.

The rest of the analysis proceeds in two parts. I first employ a series of multiple regression models to test whether members of the black middle class (as indicated by either physiological security, higher education, or a combination of the two), or younger members of the black middle class are indeed more likely than other black South Africans to value democracy, prefer different types of policy outcome, evaluate government performance more critically, withdraw their support from the governing ANC, or withdraw from democratic politics. In order to ensure that we are tapping the effects of class per se, and not its other correlates, I hold constant for the simultaneous effects of gender, rural/urban status, age, education, cognitive engagement, and news media use. Where the key comparisons in this section are between middle class blacks and their poorer, less educated compatriots, in the second and final portion of the analysis, I focus on all respondents who are physiologically secure and better educated to test whether racial differences are still significant amongst middle class South Africans.

In the first series of models, I test the Lipset argument that middle class citizens will have a greater stake in, and thus be more supportive of, democracy than their working class, agrarian or unemployed fellow citizens. More specifically, I employ three different measures of democratic values. First, I create an average scale of *Demand for civil liberties* (a two-item construct that taps respondents' opposition to government banning of dissenting organizations, or prior restraint of news media). Second, I use the well-developed index of *Demand for democracy* (a four-item average index that measures the extent to which respondents prefer democracy and reject one party rule, military rule, and presidential dictatorship) (Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005). And beyond support for a nominal regime type, I create a scale that taps *Demand for democratic institutions* (a six-item average scale that assesses whether people support regular elections, presidential term limits, parliamentary control of the legislative process, parliamentary oversight of the executive, opposition party criticism of government, and investigative news media) (for full wording and coding of each of these questions, see Appendix). While well-educated blacks score significantly higher on each of these scales, the size of the impact is very modest: one-fifth of a point on a five point scale (0 to 4) (Table 2). Moreover, there is no evidence that physiologically secure blacks (those who never go without basic necessities and have access to piped water and electricity in the household), those socialized since the end of apartheid, nor any respondent tapped by the middle class interaction terms, are more likely to hold democratic values than other black respondents.

Table 2: Consequences of class for democratic values (Black South Africans)

	Demand for civil liberties (0-4)	Demand for democracy (0-4)	Demand for democratic institutions
Constant	20.509	20.956	20.444
Physiological security	0.084	0.059	0.034
Higher education	0.222*	0.206*	0.219**
Secure * higher education	-0.080	-0.091	0.166
Born free	-0.038	-0.057	-0.011
Born free * secure *	-0.099	-0.138	-0.298
Higher education			
Rural	-0.021	-0.046	0.091*
Female	0.037	-0.042	0.061
News media use	-0.014	-0.014	-0.021
Cognitive engagement	-0.062*	0.008	0.066**
Multiple r	0.079	0.078	0.126
Adjusted R ²	0.001	0.001	0.011
N	1829	1829	1829

Notes: Cells display unstandardized OLS regression coefficients, and levels of statistical significance: *p<=.05, **p<=.01, ***p<=.001.

Source: Afrobarometer (2011), round 5.

Next, I explore whether better-off black South Africans prioritize different sets of issues and problems for government action. Afrobarometer asks respondents to list the three most important issues or problems that they think government should address. Following the work of Inglehart (Inglehart and Abramson 1995; Inglehart and Welzel 2005), I group the responses to this open-ended question into a series of dummy variables indicating *Basic physiological priorities* (e.g. poverty, hunger, disease, water, housing), *Economic middle order priorities* (i.e. employment, inflation, inequality), *Security middle order priorities* (i.e. crime, security, violence) and *Higher Order Priorities* (i.e. corruption, environment, rights and liberties, democracy). Because the new response categories are coded 0-1, I use logistic regression for these four models (Table 3).

The results show that well-being does, consistent with the Inglehart theory, make black respondents more likely to prioritize higher order needs, such as corruption, speech, civil liberties or democracy, and less likely to prioritize basic physiological priorities as goals of government action. Those who are both secure and have higher education are also less likely to prioritize issues around crime or law and order. However, there are no significant linkages between well-being or higher education and any other priority area. Young blacks are less likely to prioritize basic survival needs (though young middle class blacks are more likely), and are more likely to emphasize issues around economic growth and economic management, than are other black respondents. Thus, the likelihood that black South Africans want the government to focus on securing basic needs, physical security, or higher order needs is related to their level of well-being and socialization experience. But there are no linkages between class-related factors and the likelihood that people cite issues around growth, inflation, unemployment or inequality (the issues that are most frequently cited by black respondents). At least amongst black respondents, there seems to be a cross-class consensus behind the need for government to complement the impressive welfare state it has created with economic growth, expansion of employment, and keeping prices in check. Job creation, for example, has been routinely prioritized by anywhere from 60 to 70 per cent of respondents in every survey that has asked the questions since 1994.

Table 3: Consequences of class for issue priorities (Black South Africans)

	Basic physiological priorities	Economic middle order priorities	Security middle order priorities	Higher order priorities
Constant	10.957	10.600	-10.383	-10.748
Physiological security	-0.447** (0.639)	-0.029 (0.972)	0.268 (10.308)	0.591*** (10.805)
Higher education	-0.106 (0.900)	0.418 (10.518)	0.103 (10.109)	-0.544 (0.580)
Secure * higher education	-0.413 (0.662)	-0.444 (0.641)	-10.847* (0.158)	0.718 (20.050)
Born free	-0.303* (0.738)	0.490*** (10.632)	0.176 (10.193)	-0.139 (0.870)
Born free * secure * Higher education	10.490* (40.437)	-0.352 (0.704)	10.545 (40.688)	-0.563 (0.569)
Rural	0.128 (10.136)	0.294 (10.328)	-0.482*** (0.618)	-0.254* (0.775)
Female	0.404*** (10.498)	-0.106 (0.899)	-0.094 (0.910)	-0.364** (0.695)
News media use	-0.142* (0.868)	-0.068 (0.935)	0.192*** (10.211)	0.349*** (10.417)
Cognitive engagement	-0.094 (0.911)	0.182* (10.200)	-0.004 (0.996)	-0.137* (0.872)
Nagelkerke R ²	0.042	0.023	0.050	0.080
N	1829	1829	1829	1829

Notes: Cells display unstandardized logistic regression coefficients, levels of statistical significance. *p<=.05, **p<=.01, ***p<=.001) and the odds ratio.

Source: Afrobarometer (2011), round 5.

If middle class blacks are more likely to prioritize issues of corruption, governance and democracy as priorities for government action, and less likely to want government to focus on securing basic needs, does this mean that they may be more critical of government performance? To test this, I construct four separate measures of public evaluation of different aspects of government performance. The first three tap the extent to which respondents think the government is doing well or badly in 'handling' issues of *Macro-economic management evaluations* (i.e. managing the economy, creating jobs, controlling inflation or narrowing inequality), *Service delivery evaluations* (e.g. delivering houses, water, health care, electricity, and social grants), or *Controlling crime and corruption evaluations* (fighting crime and reducing official corruption). I also use a single item to measure *Presidential performance evaluations* that asked people to evaluate how well President Jacob Zuma had performed his job over the past 12 months. The results demonstrate that, among black respondents, neither physiological well-being nor higher education leads to a more negative performance assessment and, in one case (physiological security and service delivery), the relationship is significant and positive. And younger black respondents, though not younger black middle class respondents, consistently offer more positive evaluations across all three policy performance dimensions (Table 4).

Table 4: Consequences of class: government performance evaluations (Black South Africans)

	Macro economic management	Service delivery	Controlling crime and corruption	Presidential performance
Constant	0.623	10.404	10.043	20.135
Physiological security	0.063	0.155*	0.046	0.125
Higher education	0.112	0.079	0.134	0.087
Secure * higher education	0.010	0.145	-0.025	-0.176
Born free	0.220***	0.114**	0.177**	0.064
Born free * secure * Higher education	-0.022	-0.301	0.086	0.191
Rural	0.268***	0.043	0.347***	0.186**
Female	-0.017	0.020	0.004	-0.013
News media use	0.059**	0.084***	0.035	0.003
Cognitive engagement	0.176***	0.099***	0.106***	0.183***
Multiple r	0.250	0.215	0.178	0.158
Adjusted R ²	0.058	0.042	0.027	0.020
N	1829	1829	1829	1829

Notes: Cells display unstandardized OLS regression coefficients, and levels of statistical significance. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Source: Afrobarometer (2011), round 5.

I next test the electoral arguments advanced by Netshitenzhe (2014) (who has argued that the middle class has begun to desert the ANC) and Southall (2012) (who argues that it is becoming more supportive, relative to other voters). I examine whether the physiologically secure, those with higher education, or the young middle class differ from other black respondents in the extent of *ANC partisanship* (whether or not they say they ‘feel close’ to the ANC), *DA partisanship* (whether or not they say they ‘feel close’ to the liberal DA), *Voter turnout* (whether the respondent voted in the 2009 election), and *ANC vote* and *DA vote* (whether those who said they would vote in the next election would vote for the ANC or the DA ‘if an election were held tomorrow’) (actual survey question and response wordings are listed in the Appendix). Because each of these questions items has a dichotomous response choice I use logistic regression for these items (Table 5).

In line with the arguments of Netshitenzhe (2014), black voters who are physiologically secure, and who have been socialized since the end of apartheid (the Born Frees) are both less likely to identify with the ANC. Conversely, while just 1.2 per cent of all black respondents in the 2011 survey said they ‘felt close’ to the DA (as opposed to 55 per cent for the ANC), those respondents are disproportionately likely to have post-secondary education. In terms of voter turnout, younger black voters are less likely to say they voted in the previous (2009) election, even after removing those respondents who were actually too young to have voted. Much of this, however, is related to the standard cross-national finding of the negative relationship between youth and electoral participation (Norris 2003). At the same time, black respondents with higher education are *less* likely to say they vote, a finding that stands in sharp contrast to the standard relationships found in comparative studies (Norris 2003). Finally, younger black respondents are significantly less likely to say they would vote for the ANC ‘if an election were held tomorrow’. And while just 4 per cent of all black respondents said they would vote for the DA (compared to 90 per cent for the ANC), those few respondents are substantially more likely to come from the black middle class. Both physiologically secure respondents and those with higher education are significantly more likely to vote DA, as are younger black voters. In sharp contrast to the Southall (2012) argument, there is no evidence in these data that black economic empowerment or affirmative action policies are drawing the black middle class into even greater support for the ANC.

Table 5: Consequences of class for partisanship, voter turnout and vote choice (Black South Africans)

	ANC partisanship	DA partisanship	Voter turnout	ANC Vote	DA Vote
Constant	0.057	-40.961	10.499	20.147	-40.998
Physiological security	-0.521*** (0.594)	0.745 (20.106)	-0.313 (0.731)	-0.319 (0.727)	10.003* (20.727)
Higher education	-0.156 (0.856)	10.852*** (60.372)	-0.789** (0.468)	-0.655 (0.519)	10.571*** (40.813)
Secure * higher Education	0.176 (10.193)	-180.683 (0.000)	0.399 (10.490)	-0.015 (0.985)	0.449 (10.566)
Born free	-0.346*** (0.708)	0.432 (10.540)	-10.089*** (0.336)	-0.426* (0.653)	10.145** (30.144)
Born free * secure * Higher education	-0.785 (0.465)	160.683 (170.6m)	10.116 (30.050)	0.623 (10.864)	-10.669 (0.188)
Rural	-0.097 (0.908)	0.267 (10.306)	0.045 (10.047)	-0.468* (0.626)	0.764* (20.146)
Female	-0.130 (0.876)	10.181 (0.834)	0.271* (10.312)	0.202 (10.224)	0.267 (10.306)
News media use	0.014 (10.014)	-0.150 (0.853)	0.116 (10.123)	0.169* (10.184)	0.004 (10.004)
Cognitive Engagement	0.339*** (10.403)	0.255 (10.290)	0.166* (10.181)	0.057 (10.059)	0.008 (10.008)
Nagelkerke R ²	0.053	0.051	0.079	0.032	0.090
N	1829	1829	1624	1394	1394

Cells display unstandardized logistic regression coefficients, levels of statistical significance. *p<=.05, **p<=.01, ***p<=.001 and the odds ratio.

Source: Afrobarometer (2011), round 5.

Finally, I examine whether there is any evidence that the new black middle class is ‘exiting’ from the democratic process (Hirschmann 1970). I develop five different indices of participation beyond voter turnout. I create average scales of *Campaigning* (the extent to which respondents (during the 2009 election campaign) attended a campaign rally, persuaded others how to vote, or worked for a party or candidate), *Joining* (the extent to which respondents are active member of religious or civic associations), *Communing* (how frequently they attend community meetings or join political action groups), *Contacting* (how frequently they contact elected representatives, party officials or government officials), and *Protesting* (how frequently people attend protests and take part in political violence).

The results show that black respondents who have secured their basic necessities are indeed *less* likely to take part in election campaign activities or contact elected officials between elections, and substantially less likely to take part in forms of collective action such as communing and protesting than other black South Africans. At the same time, black respondents with higher education are *more* likely to take part in some of these activities (campaign politics and contacting officials between elections). While the Born Free generation is also less likely to join community organizations, contact officials, or take part in community affairs, this appears to be largely a result of the ageing process rather than class since – with one exception – the interaction of youth with well-being and higher education has no significant impacts.

Table 6: Consequences of class: political participation (Black South Africans)

	Campaigning	Joining	Communing	Contacting	Protesting
Constant	-00.023	00.064	20.364	00.096	0.668
Physiological security	-0.140**	-0.060	-0.517***	-0.152***	-0.614***
Higher education	0.253***	0.003	0.147	0.156**	0.130
Secure * higher Education	-0.044	-0.046	-0.403	0.023	0.041
Born free	-0.016	-0.094**	-0.652***	-0.127***	0.029
Born free * secure *	-0.304	-0.043	0.573	-0.048	0.164
Higher education					
Rural	0.047	0.127***	0.106	-0.075**	-0.134
Female	-0.102***	0.098**	-0.070	0.000	-0.184
News media use	0.064***	0.077***	0.054	0.049***	0.182***
Cognitive engagement	0.176***	0.170***	0.447***	0.084***	0.229***
Multiple r	0.341	0.278	0.344	0.290	0.187
Adjusted R ²	0.112	0.073	0.114	0.080	0.030
N	1624	1829	1829	1829	1829

Notes: Cells display unstandardized logistic regression coefficients, and levels of statistical significance. *p<= .05, **p<=.01. ***p<=.001.

Source: Afrobarometer (2011), round 5.

8 A non-racial middle class?

In the preceding analysis, the key comparison was between middle class blacks and their poorer, less educated compatriots. It revealed that physiological security, and higher education, often do lead to differing attitudes and behaviours, though the effects are far from consistent, and often quite modest in size. But the democratic promise of the emergence of a black middle class has been seen to arise not only from the possibility that it might generate a materialist cleavage amongst black South Africans – and thus, amongst other things, reduce the extent to which black South Africans vote as a block – but also from the possibility that it might create a new dimension of political cooperation and consensus amongst middle class voters, regardless of how they or their parents used to be categorized by the apartheid system.

Thus, in the final portion of this analysis, I focus only on those respondents (n=731) who are *either* physiologically secure *or* better educated to test whether racial differences are still significant amongst the increasingly pan-racial middle class South Africans (of the 731 respondents, in the weighted sample, 47 per cent were black, 31 per cent white, 16 per cent coloured, and 6 per cent Indian). I then re-run each of the analyses discussed above amongst this group of respondents with race indicated by a series of dummy variables with black as the excluded category. The results can be summarized fairly parsimoniously.

In terms of democratic values, race plays almost no role in differentiating amongst the attitudes of middle class South Africans (Table 7). In terms of what they regard as the ‘most important problem’ that government should address, whites are significantly less likely to cite basic necessities, and more likely to list issues of crime and security, as well as governance issues of corruption, the environment, political rights and democracy. Middle class coloured citizens are also more likely to cite these ‘higher order’ priorities (Table 8). More consistent racial effects can be seen when we turn to evaluations of government performance. With one exception (white respondents’ views of macroeconomic management), white, coloured and Indian middle class respondents are consistently more negative than middle class blacks in terms of their evaluations of government management of the economy, service delivery, and crime and corruption, as well

as presidential performance (with the largest differences coming with respect to evaluations of Jacob Zuma) (Table 9).

Table 7: Intra-class racial differences in democratic values (Physiologically secure and educated South Africans)

	Demand for civil liberties (0-4)	Demand for democracy (0-4)	Demand for democratic institutions
Constant	20.133	20.526	20.464
White	0.211*	0.072	0.066
Coloured	0.026	-0.117	0.007
Indian	0.129	-0.021	0.135
Born free	-0.121	-0.086	0.011
Rural	0.097	-0.021	0.112
Female	0.013	0.061	-0.023
News media use	0.110**	0.077**	0.033
Cognitive engagement	0.005	0.105**	0.029
Multiple r	0.166	0.204	0.092
Adjusted R ²	0.017	0.041	0.000
N	731	731	731

Notes: Cells display unstandardized OLS regression coefficients, and levels of statistical significance. *p<=.05, **p<=.01, ***p<=.001.

Source: Afrobarometer (2011), round 5.

Table 8: Intra-class racial differences in issue priorities (physiologically secure and educated South Africans)

	Basic physiological priorities	Economic middle order priorities	Security middle order priorities	Higher order priorities
Constant	0.633	20.065	-0.913	-0.795
White	-0.521** (0.594)	-0.440 (0.644)	0.703*** (20.019)	0.649*** (10.913)
Coloured	-0.200 (0.819)	-0.129 (0.879)	0.278 (10.320)	0.544* (10.740)
Indian	0.328 (10.388)	0.468 (10.596)	0.273 (10.313)	-0.459 (0.632)
Born free	-0.017 (0.983)	-0.104 (0.901)	0.251 (10.285)	-0.083 (0.921)
Rural	0.327 (10.386)	0.070 (10.073)	0.303 (0.739)	-0.160 (0.852)
Female	0.403** (10.496)	-0.080 (0.923)	-0.173 (0.841)	-0.193 (0.825)
News media use	0.013 (10.013)	-0.199 (0.819)	0.129 (10.138)	0.136 (10.146)
Cognitive engagement	0.058 (10.060)	0.414*** (10.512)	-0.089 (0.915)	-0.157 (0.855)
Nagelkerke R ²	0.037	0.049	0.051	0.062
N	731	731	713	731

Notes: Cells display unstandardized logistic regression coefficients, levels of statistical significance. *p<=.05, **p<=.01, ***p<=.001 and the odds ratio.

Source: Afrobarometer (2011), round 5.

Table 9: Intra-class racial differences in government performance evaluations (physiologically secure and educated South Africans)

	Macro economic management	Service delivery	Controlling crime and corruption	Presidential performance
Constant	0.837	10.921	10.373	20.168
White	-0.101	-0.272***	-0.390***	-0.679***
Coloured	-0.273**	-0.255**	-0.355***	-0.697***
Indian	-0.593***	-0.468***	-0.881***	-10.002***
Born free	0.131	0.084	-0.028	0.110
Rural	0.226*	-0.018	0.224	0.133
Female	0.013	-0.047	0.009	-0.018

News media use	0.064*	0.026	0.048	0.071
Cognitive engagement	0.121**	0.034	0.024	0.089
Multiple r	0.263	0.214	0.228	0.331
Adjusted R ²	0.059	0.035	0.041	0.091
N	731	731	731	731

Cells display unstandardized OLS regression coefficients, and levels of statistical significance. *p<=.05, **p<=.01, ***p<=.001.

Source: Afrobarometer (2011), round 5.

Very large racial differences emerge once we turn to issues of partisanship and voting. As with government performance evaluations, but by a far greater margin, white, coloured and Indian middle class respondents are consistently far less likely to identify with the ANC or to vote for it, and far more likely to identify with the DA and vote for it. Indeed, the models explaining vote choice in the mock ballot account for 71 and 64 per cent of the variance, with the three racial dummy variables doing almost all of the work. In the most extreme example, while physiologically secure black respondents were 2.7 times more likely (the odd ratio) to vote for the DA than poorer blacks (Table 5), the odds of a white middle class respondent voting for the DA are 158 times higher than a black middle class respondent (Table 10).

Table 10: Intra-class racial differences in partisanship, voter turnout and vote choice (physiologically secure and educated South Africans)

	ANC partisanship	DA partisanship	Voter turnout	ANC vote	DA vote
Constant	0.046	-30.949	10.027	20.723	-20.839
White	-40.973*** (0.007)	30.559*** (350.127)	-0.707** (0.493)	-60.552*** (0.001)	50.065*** (1580.334)
Coloured	-10.760*** (0.172)	30.060*** (210.325)	-0.522 (0.594)	-30.439*** (0.032)	30.447*** (310.402)
Indian	-20.288*** (0.101)	20.039*** (70.680)	-0.651 (0.522)	-30.808*** (0.022)	20.970*** (190.495)
Born free	-0.699*** (0.497)	-0.505* (0.604)	-0.761*** (0.467)	-0.421 (0.656)	0.070 (10.072)
Rural	-0.418 (0.658)	0.511 (10.667)	-0.101 (0.904)	-10.231** (0.003)	10.080* (20.945)
Female	-0.472* (0.624)	-0.039 (0.962)	0.018 (10.019)	-0.339 (0.713)	-0.025 (:976)
News media use	-0.035 (0.965)	0.043 (10.044)	0.202* (10.224)	0.103 (10.108)	-0.046 (965)
Cognitive Engagement	0.418*** (10.519)	0.158 (10.172)	0.086 (10.090)	-0.106 (0.899)	0.077 (10.081)
Nagelkerke R ²	0.409	0.368	0.054	0.709	0.640
N	731	731	655	488	488

Notes. Cells display unstandardized logistic regression coefficients, levels of statistical significance. *p<=.05, **p<=.01, ***p<=.001) and the odds ratio.

Source: Afrobarometer (2011), round 5.

Finally, with a few exceptions, white, coloured and Indian middle class respondents are consistently less likely than middle class blacks to have taken part in the 2009 election campaign, get involved in community politics, contact public officials or take part in political protest. In the most extreme, but by no means atypical example, in comparison to black respondents, whites score a full 1.2 points lower on the 5 point scale of participation in community politics (Table 11).

Table 11: Intra-class racial differences in political participation (physiologically secure and educated South Africans)

	Campaigning	Joining	Communing	Contacting	Protesting
Constant	0.112	0.130	10.332	0.008	0.625
White	-0.310***	-0.061	-10.231***	-0.278***	-0.602***
Coloured	-0.207***	-0.115	-10.067***	-0.172***	-0.535**
Indian	-0.364***	0.079	-10.067**	-0.207**	-0.325
Born free	-0.038	-0.110*	-0.304**	-0.114*	-0.064
Rural	0.194**	0.121	0.470***	-0.029	0.497**
Female	-0.084*	0.123***	-0.007	-0.027	-0.160
News media use	0.023	0.069**	0.148**	0.051***	0.102
Cognitive engagement	0.155***	0.120***	0.501***	0.100***	0.154*
Multiple r	0.421	0.251	0.485	0.379	0.245
Adjusted R ²	0.167	0.053	0.227	0.134	0.050
N	655	731	731	731	731

Notes: Cells display unstandardized logistic regression coefficients, and levels of statistical significance. *p<= .05, **p<=.01, ***p<=.001.

Source: Afrobarometer (2011), round 5.

9 Conclusions

Whether measured by income, occupation, physiological security or higher education, a sizeable proportion of black South Africans can now be called middle class. The political consequences of this development, however, remain limited. As of 2011, black South Africans who enjoy physiological security or have had access to higher education do not yet exhibit sharply different values with regards democracy, though there are some signs that their preferences for government action are beginning to diverge from poorer and less well-educated black respondents. As the theory of post-materialism (Inglehart and Abramson 1995; Inglehart and Welzel 2005) would predict, middle class blacks are more likely to want government to secure higher order needs of governance and self-expression and less likely to prioritize securing basic needs. Yet while diverging material interests and differing value priorities have not yet resulted in more critical evaluations of government performance, there are signs that they are leading to differences in voting behaviour. Black middle class respondents are less likely to identify with the dominant, ruling ANC, and more likely to say they would vote for the liberal, historically 'white' DA in a future election. Thus, there is no need to fear that by helping to create a new black middle class, the governing ANC has bought itself a new, growing constituency whose loyalty might sustain it if, or when, it begins to lose support amongst the homeless and unemployed. Finally, there are also signs that, in comparison to their poorer compatriots, black middle class respondents are more likely to exit from the democratic process than voice their concerns by voting, taking part in election campaigns, contacting elected representatives and government officials, or joining with others to achieve political outcomes, whether through conventional or unconventional forms of collective action.

While many have hoped that the rise of the black middle class will form a new, cross-cutting cleavage that unites people of similar classes across the old apartheid divides of race and ethnicity, racial differences between middle class blacks, on one hand, and middle class white, coloured and Indian respondents, on the other, are still substantial. Even though the income gap between blacks and whites is now smaller than amongst black South Africans (Leibbrandt et al. 2010; Bhorat and Van der Westhuizen 2010), there are still far greater racial differences in political participation and to a somewhat lesser extent in political preferences and performance evaluations amongst the middle class than between middle class and poorer blacks. At least for now, the rise of the black

middle class does not signal a new non-racial dimension in South African politics. Middle class South Africans are still far more likely to define their interests based on the deep history of apartheid rather than their current material status. In other words, class is still a nascent factor in South African politics.

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Appendix

Question wording for independent variables

Table 1: Correlates of class

Physiological security

Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family:

Gone without enough food to eat?

Gone without enough clean water for home use?

Gone without medicines or medical treatment?

Gone without enough fuel to cook your food?

(1=Never, 0=Just once or twice, Several times, Many times, Always, Do not know)

Post-secondary education

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

(1= Post-secondary qualifications other than university (e.g. a diploma or degree from a polytechnic or college), Some university, University completed, Post-graduate; 0 =No formal schooling, Informal schooling only, Some primary schooling, Primary school completed, Some secondary school, Secondary school completed)

News media use

How often do you get news from the following sources?

Radio

Television

Newspapers

Internet

(0=Never, Do not know, 1=Less than once a month, 2=A few times a month, 3=A few times a week, 4=Every day).

Cognitive engagement

How interested would you say you are in public affairs?

(0=Not at all interested / Do not know, 1= Not very interested, 2=Somewhat interested, 3=Very interested)

When you get together with your friends or family, would you say you discuss political matters?
(0=Never/Don't know, 1.5=Occasionally, 3=Frequently)

Table 2: Consequences of class for democratic values

Demand for civil liberties

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

Statement 1: Government should be able to ban any organization that goes against its policies.

Statement 2: We should be able to join any organization, whether or not the government approves of it.

(0=Agree very strongly with statement 1, 1=Agree with statement 1, 2=Agree with neither/Don't Know, 3=Agree with statement 2, 4=0=Agree very strongly with statement 2)

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

Statement 1: The media should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government control.

Statement 2: The government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things that it considers harmful to society.

(0=Agree very strongly with statement 2, 1=Agree with statement 2, 2=Agree with neither/Don not know, 3=Agree with statement 1, 4=Agree very strongly with statement 1)

Demand for democracy

Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion?

Statement 1: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.

Statement 2: In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.

Statement 3: For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.

(0 = Statement 3/Do not know, 2=Statement 2, 4=Statement 1)

There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives?

Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office.

The army comes in to govern the country.

Elections and parliament are abolished so that the president can decide everything.

(0=Strongly approve, 1=Approve, 2=Do not know, 3=Disapprove, 4=Strongly disapprove)

Demand for democratic institutions

Statement 1: We should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open and honest elections.

Statement 2: Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders.

Statement 1: Parliament should ensure that the president explains to it on a regular basis how his government spends taxpayers' money.

Statement 2: The president should be able to devote his full attention to developing the country rather than wasting time justifying his actions.

Statement 1: Opposition parties should regularly examine and criticize government policies and actions.

Statement 2: Opposition parties should concentrate on cooperating with government and helping it develop the country.

Statement 1: The news media should constantly investigate and report on government mistakes and corruption.

Statement 2: Too much reporting on negative events, like government mistakes and corruption, only harms the country.

Statement 1: Members of parliament represent the people; therefore they should make laws for this country, even if the president does not agree.

Statement 2: Since the president represents all of us, he should pass laws without worrying about what parliament thinks.

Statement 1: The constitution should limit the president to serving a maximum of two terms in office.

Statement 2: There should be no constitutional limit on how long the president can serve.

(0=Agree very strongly with statement 2, 1=Agree with statement 2, 2=Agree with neither/Do not know, 3=Agree with statement 1, 4=0=Agree very strongly with statement 1)

Table 3: Consequences of class for issue priorities

Basic physiological priorities

In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address?

(1=Poverty/Destitution, Farming/Agriculture, Food shortage/Famine, Drought, Land, Housing, Electricity, Water supply, Orphans/Street children/Homeless children, Health, AIDS, Sickness/Disease, Agricultural marketing; 0=All other answers)

Economic security middle order priorities

In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address?

(1=Management of the Economy, Wages, Incomes, Salaries, Unemployment, Rates, Taxes, Loans, Credit, Transportation, Communications, Infrastructure, Roads, Education, Services (Other); 0=All other answers).

Physical safety middle order priorities

In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address?

(1=Crime, Security, Political violence, Political instability, Political divisions, Ethnic tensions, War (international), Civil war; 0=All other answers)

Higher order priorities

In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address?

(1=Corruption, Discrimination/Inequality, Gender issues/Women's rights, Democracy/Political rights; 0=All other answers)

Table 4: Consequences of class for government performance evaluations

Macroeconomic management

How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Managing the economy

Creating jobs

Keeping prices down

Narrowing gaps between rich and poor

(0=Very Badly, 1=Badly, 2=Do not know/Have not heard enough, 3=Well, 4=Very well)

Service delivery

How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Improving the living standards of the poor

Improving basic health services

Addressing educational needs

Providing water and sanitation services

Ensuring everyone has enough to eat

Combating HIV/AIDS

Maintaining roads and bridges

Providing a reliable supply of electricity

(0=Very badly, 1=badly, 2=Do not know/Have not heard enough, 3=Well, 4=Very well)

Controlling crime and corruption

How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Reducing crime

Fighting corruption in government

(0=Very badly, 1=Badly, 2=Do not know/Have not heard enough, 3=Well, 4=Very well)

Presidential performance

Do you approve or disapprove of the way that President Jacob Zuma and the following people have performed their jobs over the past twelve months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

(0=Very badly, 1=Badly, 2=Do not know/Have not heard enough, 3=Well, 4=Very well)

Table 5: Consequences of class for partisanship, turnout and vote choice

Partisanship

Do you feel close to any particular political party?

(1=Yes; 0=No, Do not know)

ANC Partisanship

Do you feel close to any particular political party? If yes, which party is that??

(1=African National Congress; 0=All other parties, Do not feel close to a party, Do not know)

Voter turnout

With regard to the most recent national election in [20xx], which statement is true for you?

(1= You voted in the elections; 0=You were not registered or you were too young to vote, You decided not to vote, You could not find the polling station, You were prevented from voting, You

did not have time to vote, You did not vote because you could not find your name in the voters' register, You did not vote for some other reason, You do not know)

ANC Vote

If a national election were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?

(1=African National Congress' 0=All other parties, Would not vote, Do not know)

Table 6: Consequences of class for political participation

Campaigning

Thinking about the last national election in [20xx], did you:

Attend a campaign meeting or rally?

Try to persuade others to vote for a certain presidential or legislative candidate or political party?

Work for a candidate or party?

(0=No, Do not know; 1=Yes)

Joining

Now I am going to read out a list of groups that people join or attend. For each one, could you tell me whether you are an official leader, an active member, an inactive member, or not a member

A religious group that meets outside of regular worship services

Some other voluntary association or community group

(0=Not a member, Do not know, 1=Inactive member, 2=Active member. 3=Official leader)

Communing

Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year.

Attended a community meeting

Got together with others to raise an issue

(0=No, would never do this, 1=No, would if had the chance, 2=Yes, once or twice, 3=Yes, several times, 4=Yes, often)

Contacting

During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views?

A local government councilor

A member of parliament

An official of a government agency

A political party official

(0=Never. Do not know, 1=Only once, 2=A few times, 3=Often)

Protesting

Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year.

Attended a demonstration or protest march

Used force or violence for a political cause

(0=No, would never do this, 1=No, would if had the chance, 2=Yes, once or twice, 3=Yes, several times, 4=Yes, often)